

**Comparative Politics
Major Exam**

Day 1

ANSWER FOUR OF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS, TWO FROM PART A & TWO FROM PART B. BE SURE TO PROVIDE ILLUSTRATIVE EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE IN SUPPORT OF THEORETICAL ARGUMENTS.

PART A: Answer two of the following questions.

1. Are elections effective instruments of political accountability?
2. Many comparativists concerned with democracy have shifted their attention from democratic transitions and consolidation to the issue of the quality of democratic governance. Choose one or two crucial components of the quality of democratic governance and propose a research design that addresses the question of variation in “democratic quality” over either time or space.
3. “There is no common ground between those who see institutions as historical products of societal development and those who treat them as the expression of rational choices by strategically acting individuals and organizations. To attempt to synthesize the two approaches obfuscates, rather than clarifies, explanation.” Do you agree?
4. Does the “classic” literature on the development and stabilization of party systems in older (Western) democracies serve as a useful framework for understanding the development and stabilization of party systems in “Third Wave” democracies?

PART B: Answer two of the following questions.

5. How should we think about ethnic (or other) identity? To what extent is identity a useful variable for explaining political phenomena? Discuss with reference to one or more substantive issues in comparative politics.
6. “The study of mass voting behavior has lost its theoretical moorings and has turned into little more than the over-technical study of the impact of short-term forces in individual elections.” Discuss.

7. Discuss the relationship between political democracy and economic development. In particular, what progress have we made toward sorting out the potentially endogenous relationship between the two concepts?

8. Institutional scholar frequently takes as a given the characteristics of a particular institution and examines the incentives that it produces for individual agents. Can such a line of scholarship account for institutional change, insofar as the underlying assumption of such scholarship is that institutions structure agents' actions? If agents can change the character of institutions, doesn't this render meaningless the idea of institutional incentives? Consider these questions in the context of a particular literature of your choosing, and identify within it the knowledge gains that have been made utilizing institutionalist approaches, but also the limits that are reached. Has anyone yet developed an adequate institutional theory of institutional change AND stability? Is this a worthy goal? Alternatively, should we be looking outside of institutions to understand institutional change and stability?

9. In his seminal work, James MacGregor Burns defines leadership as "the reciprocal process of mobilizing, by persons with certain motives and values, various economic, political, and other resources, in a context of competition and conflict, in order to realize goals independently or mutually held by both leaders and followers." How important is the study of leadership as a part of political science? What are the various arguments made for and against focusing our research efforts on the study of leadership? What approach(es) or research direction(s) seems to you most promising and why?