

COMPARATIVE POLITICS**Major Exam****Day 2**

ANSWER **TWO** OF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS. BE SURE **NOT** TO FRAME BOTH YOUR ANSWERS AROUND THE SAME METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES.

1. How are path-dependent theories different from more traditional theoretical constructions? What implications would these differences have for the testing of hypotheses? What distinctive challenges do path-dependent theories present? Does path dependency pose any special challenges specifically for quantitative analysis (i.e., that are not in principle also present in qualitative efforts at theory testing)? Illustrate your answers to all these questions with reference to a specific work or works that exemplifies either "best practice" (i.e., that very effectively overcomes these challenges) or one that fails precisely because it ignores or inadequately addresses these issues. In your answer be specific as to how the difficulties were directly addressed or the consequences of ignoring them.
2. Cross-national quantitative studies (including those based both survey research and aggregate data) must address a number of problems of "comparability." Identify and discuss in detail several different types of cross-national comparability problems. Why do these problems arise, and can anything be done to minimize their impact? Are there certain kinds of research questions where these issues are more problematic than others?.
3. Arend Lijphart, and many others after him, have argued that the characteristic methodological problem of comparative politics research is "too few cases, too many variables." Others, however, argue that this represents far too limited an understanding of the kinds of data and methodologies that are available to comparativists and that are appropriate for their research.
 - a. What do you think? Evaluate representative studies employing 'small-n' and 'large-n' types of data in comparative politics with respect to their strengths and limitations in regard to the goals of understanding political processes.
 - b. In doing so, you should also make clear what you think are the appropriate goals that comparative research should strive for.
4. Many adherents to the rational choice approach regard "culture" studies as complementing their own research methodology, particularly insofar as these studies might provide answers to the problems of dissimilar "preference orderings" in different social or cultural contexts. Others, however, regard the fundamental differences between the methodological approaches (particularly with regard to "thick description" types of culture studies) as being so severe that they are incompatible in the research enterprise. Discuss. In your essay, be sure to discuss in detail the intellectual underpinnings of both these approaches.