

Department of Political Science, Yale University
Field Examination in Comparative Politics
August 2008

INSTRUCTIONS: This is a closed book, closed notes exam, with access to a clean copy of the reading list only. You are required to answer 3 questions (each answer comprises one-third of the exam grade). The exam has a strict 21 page limit (double-space, 12 font). You have 8 hours.

1. To what extent do social preferences explain micro-foundational puzzles concerning political participation, collective action, nationalism and political identity? Choose two of the four issues, identify compelling puzzles, and assess the contributions and limitations of this approach.
2. Theories of party systems and political behavior were developed mainly with reference to the advanced democracies. Do these theories apply to “new” democracies? Why or why not?
3. Discuss the current status of ethnic cleavages as an explanatory variable compared to other types of cleavage, e.g. class. Pick two major dependent variables and discuss the explanatory weight (including the particular causal pathways) of ethnicity over other types of cleavages. Do discuss both the substance of the issue and the methods used by researchers to estimate the causal weight of the different types of cleavages.
4. The 1990s saw a flurry of theorizing about political institutions and how they explained variation in important outcomes across countries and regions – outcomes such as regime stability, democratic accountability, and economic growth, among others. In light of accumulated research, which institutions seem to really matter, and which do not?
5. Much of the literature on institutional change and path dependence has focused on explaining differences among the welfare states of the OECD countries. Can this literature also contribute to our understanding of state formation and regime change in non-OECD countries? What are its limitations? How must the literature be amended to address these issues?
6. What have we learnt about civil wars in the last decade and how is this knowledge useful in comparative politics?