

Department of Political Science, Yale University

Field Examination in Comparative Politics

August 23th 2012

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 7 hours.

1. Several studies suggest the existence of a strong link between (social) welfare and (interstate) warfare. Discuss the implications of this link for the study of nationalism, democracy, development, and state building/capacity.
2. Is geography as exogenous as it is often argued? Bring in empirical examples and explore the implications of exogenizing/endogenizing geography for at least two major political science theories.
3. What do we know about the consequences of acute economic crisis on the politics of advanced democracies? What does the study of the political effects of economic crises in poor democracies and autocracies tell us?
4. The phenomenon of political persistence has been debated within several fields of comparative politics, whether in the study of social cleavages, partisan loyalties or ethnic identities. What are the major theoretical disagreements the issue of persistence has raised, and which arguments have provided more compelling empirical evidence in support of their position?
5. A number of influential arguments in comparative politics are based on specifying the effects of inequality on a political outcome, including the likelihood of democratization, the level of economic redistribution, or the pervasiveness of social conflict. How would you synthesize these disparate arguments into a single larger theory or 'master debate' of the effects of inequality on politics?
6. Public critiques of political science (such as those demanding its exclusion from NSF funding) have drawn attention to the discipline's weak record of forecasting major political events, including the end of the Cold War, or more recently the fragility of authoritarian regimes in the Middle East. Using concrete empirical examples, discuss whether such critiques are justified, especially of the field of comparative politics. Further, discuss whether a 'science' of comparative politics is helped or hindered by this type of aspiration.