

International Relations Field Exam August 2010

Please answer one question from each section. Keep in mind that you will be evaluated not only on your knowledge of the relevant literature, but also on your ability to think independently and make a compelling argument. Where appropriate, references to empirical evidence or illustrations are encouraged.

Answer one (1) of the following:

I.A. Anarchy is perhaps the key concept in justifying the existence of IR as a separate field of study. It has been posited that whereas relations within states are hierarchical, those between states are anarchical. Yet critics have questioned the usefulness of characterizing the international environment as anarchic, particularly during the last two decades, in which the United States has been the preponderant power. Do you think anarchy still justifies IR as a separate realm of study? Or is hierarchy perhaps a more useful way to characterize international relations? How do the two interact and how can scholarship better capture their interrelation?

I.B. Imperfect information and informational asymmetries have come to play a central role in international relations theory. Discuss the theoretical role of information in models of conflict and cooperation. How is the concern with information related to earlier work on perception and misperception? What testable implications flow from the new treatment of information?

Answer one (1) of the following:

II.A. The internal characteristics of nation-states affect their security policies in non-trivial ways. Discuss, with attention to both theory and evidence, and consider the implications for the study of international relations.

II.B. What are the causes of interstate war and to what extent have those causes changed over time? Is there a useful distinction to be drawn between the causes of war and the specific motives of the participants for fighting?

Answer one (1) of the following:

III.A. It has been argued that non-state actors and international organizations are more influential in international politics than ever before. Does IR need to become less state-centric or are existing theories adequate to explain international politics? Discuss with reference to at least two issue areas.

III.B. Why do domestic trade-policy coalitions take the forms that they do? Compare and contrast the implications of Heckscher-Ohlin and Ricardo-Viner models of international trade for coalition formation. Discuss the impact of collective-action problems and domestic political institutions on coalition formation about trade policy. What do these models of coalition formation imply for patterns of actual trade policy making? What are the strengths and weaknesses of this approach to explaining national trade policies?