

Political Economy Field Exam

August 2009

Instructions: Answer three of the following questions, choosing questions to show the breadth as well as the depth of your knowledge. Closed book exam, but feel free to refer to political economy reading list for spelling.

1. How does the field of industrial organization in economics help to illuminate politics? What are some limits of industrial organization models in explaining political behavior?
2. What are some theories that could help explain cross-national variation in the response to financial crises of the sort the world has experienced in the past months? Suggest some empirical strategies for how to test the theories.
3. In an increasingly integrated global economy, what is the scope for national economic policy? How do we know?
4. Sketch out and evaluate several arguments about how electoral institutions shape political motivations over economic policy. How can we distinguish between the effects of electoral rules and the effects of underlying reasons for electoral rule choice?
5. Consider some empirical strategies for how to differentiate between materialist, institutionalist, and cultural explanations for the stability of property rights. Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches for addressing this issue.
6. What accounts for cross-national and sectoral variation in female labor force participation rates? What, if any, are the consequences of FLFPR for politics?
7. Evaluate two or three competing theories of transition to democracy. How does specification of the dependent variable differ, and with what consequences for empirical strategies to test the theory?
8. Some theories of distributive politics predict distribution to "swing" voters, while others suggest that political parties will reward their "core" voters. What are the theoretical rationale for each position, and what is the evidence? How productive has the debate between these positions, and what are some possible directions for future research?
9. Commitment problems seem endemic to politics in many substantive areas, such as transitions to democracy, monetary policy, union-firm negotiations, and other areas. Please discuss the role of commitment problems in at least two research topics of your choosing. How does the inability to commit to policies over time

lead to political failures (inefficient equilibria)? How can institutional innovations increase the ability of political actors to commit to policy?

10. Does inequality affect the likelihood that democracy emerges or persists? Evaluate the theory and evidence in support of or against these propositions.