

Ph.D. Comprehensive Exam in Political Economy

August 2017

Instructions: Answer 3 of the following questions. Choose questions that show the depth and breadth of your knowledge. You may refer to the Political Economy Exam reading list for authors' names and titles but no other material.

1. Why do some theories of economic policy assume Downsian politics and others assume that interest groups dominate? What are the scope conditions of these different approaches? Illustrate your answer with some specific examples.
2. Riker famously called political institutions “congealed tastes.” What does this position assume about how institutions form and operate? Assess and critique.
3. How well does “modernization theory” stack up to evidence about democratization? What are the key mechanisms in the theory? Is there room for debate? Along what dimensions?
4. Consider at least two arguments for the gender wage gap. What empirical strategies can help establish a better causal understanding?
5. How would materialist, institutionalist, and cognitive approaches explain Brexit? How does the Brexit example shed light on the strengths and weaknesses of these lenses?
6. Evaluate sociotropic versus self-interested reasons for anti-immigration sentiment. How are the politics of immigration similar to or different from trade and finance?
7. Is economic regulation a “transfer of income from consumers to producers”? Under what conditions?