

POLITICAL THEORY COMPREHENSIVE EXAM

August 2011

Answer three questions, one from each section. Your examination will be evaluated as a whole, so avoid repeating yourself.

Section I

1. Is patriotism a virtue? Discuss with reference to three of the following: Plato or Aristotle; Machiavelli or Hobbes; Rousseau or Kant. After discussing these as fully as time permits, give your own considered view.
2. Thymos -- often translated as spiritedness -- is arguably the most important aspect of Plato's theory of politics and human nature in the Republic. What does he mean by this term and what function does it play in the book? After analyzing this concept as fully as you can, discuss some of its subsequent uses in the theories of two modern political philosophers.
3. The term megalopsychia -- often translated as magnanimity or greatness of soul -- is one of the twin peaks of moral-political excellence in Aristotle's ethical writings. What function does this term play for Aristotle? In what respects can greatness of soul be considered a virtue at all? After analyzing this concept as fully as you can, how would it be regarded by three of the following: Augustine, Hobbes, Kant, Nietzsche, or Rawls.

Section II

1. What alternatives are there to analyzing power by reference to its multiple faces? What, if any, are the advantages of the alternatives?
2. A renewed commitment to the national community is the best hope for social justice and democratic politics in the conditions of global capitalism. Discuss.
3. Attempts to define "culture" and to give an account of its value are both chimerical and unnecessary for providing an account what is owed to linguistic, subnational, indigenous and ethnic minorities in specific contexts. Discuss.

Section III

1. Schumpeter described Rousseau's theory of democracy as the "classical theory of democracy." Why? What would Plato and Aristotle have said about that characterization?
2. Does social and political criticism presuppose a commitment to Enlightenment ideals of reason and autonomy? Can there be "critique" beyond the Enlightenment?
3. Does social science presuppose ethical commitments? Can there be "value-free" social science?