

Political Theory Comprehensive Exam
August 2013

Answer three of the following questions. You must choose one question from each section.

Section I

1. What is the best argument for majority rule?
2. What is the significance of “the fact of pluralism” for theories of social justice?
3. What role, if any, should religion play in liberal democratic politics?

Section II

4. Explain and evaluate Marx’s criticism of the State.
5. Explain and evaluate Aristotle’s account of political revolutions.
6. Explain and evaluate Machiavelli’s argument that internal political discord can be beneficial for freedom.

Section III

7. Argue for or against the following statement: “William Riker is correct. Public choice theory decisively undermines the effort to legitimate modern politics on the basis of a robust conception of democratic life.”
8. Argue for or against the following statement: “Despite fashionable critiques, the distributive paradigm of social justice – elaborated by Rawls and others – should remain the foundation of further serious work in the field.”
9. Argue for or against the following statement: “Arendt, Habermas, and others big names may struggle heroically to reinvigorate the meaning of political citizenship. But these efforts mistake the modern condition, which diverts ordinary people to seek the meaning of life in countless private pursuits. A satisfactory theory of political legitimacy must accept this fundamental fact, and reflect on its implications.”