

## Political Theory Comprehensive Exam

January, 2012

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

### Section I

1. What is meant by “the political” in the writings of the following thinkers: Aristotle, Tocqueville, Schmitt, and Rawls. After discussing their views as fully as time permits, which do you believe offers the most useful approach to the study of politics.
2. Certain modern political philosophers regard peace as the highest moral imperative. Discuss the role of war and peace in three of the following: Plato, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Kant, and Hegel. To what extent do they regard peace as a virtue?
3. Much of political theory is concerned with how to control princely/executive power. Discuss the role of this power in the writings of three of the following: Aristotle, Machiavelli, Locke, Rousseau, and the Federalist. What mechanisms do these thinkers envision to control the power of the executive; what measures do they include to accommodate the need for leadership?

### Section II

1. “The ‘Enlightenment’ which discovered the liberties, also invented the disciplines.” (Michel Foucault) Consider Foucault’s claim concerning the Enlightenment in the light of Habermas’s account in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*.
2. “Identity politics is the enemy of justice.” Discuss with reference to at least five authors on part II the reading list.
3. “If the power literature were to be re-conceptualized through the lens of *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty*, it would be more useful.” Discuss

### Section III

1. “In recent decades many theorists of democracy have debated whether it should be geared toward preference-aggregation, designed to compute the general will, or concerned instead with deliberative processes that can hold out the hope—at least—of manufacturing agreement. Protagonists on both sides of this debate ignore an older and better democratic tradition, stretching from Locke to Schumpeter, in which democracy is concerned with neither.” Discuss.
2. The European nation-state has been theorized as representing the ‘march of reason on earth’ (Hegel); as anticipating the emergence of a new cosmopolitan or as revealing the perennial weaknesses and blind-spots of liberalism. Discuss with reference to **three** thinkers from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

3. "Every theory of politics rests on a philosophical psychology: a set of assumptions about human motivation, malleability, and aspirations. Yet every philosophical psychology is controversial. How, then, can political theory advance?" Discuss with reference to at least four authors on the list, at least one of whom should be drawn from each part of the reading list.

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