

## Political Theory Comprehensive Exam, August 2016

Answer three questions, one from each part  
Your exam will be evaluated as a whole, so avoid repeating yourself

### Part One

1. Which injustices should be endured, which merit civil disobedience, and which justify revolution? Discuss with reference to Hobbes, Locke, and Rawls.
2. Plato, Aristotle, and Locke all had a good deal to say about rearing children. How are their views about this related to their political philosophies? What, if anything, should we infer from the fact that contemporary political philosophers for the most part ignore the subject?
3. How illuminating is it to speak of medieval political philosophy? What differentiates it from ancient and modern political philosophy? What is gained and what lost from such efforts at periodization? Discuss with reference to at least three authors on the list.

### Part Two

4. Nineteenth century thinkers such as Tocqueville and Mill saw the basic choices of politics as resolving into a confrontation between liberty and equality. Twentieth century thinkers, by contrast, have been more interested in distinguishing kinds of freedom from one another and arguing over “equality of what?” Why have the questions changed? Is this good or bad? Why?
5. In 1970, President Nixon was forced to withdraw his nomination of G. Harrold Carswell to the United States Supreme Court after Carswell was widely criticized for being a mediocre judge. Senator Roman Hruska of Nebraska objected on the grounds that mediocre people also deserved representation on the Court. How would Rousseau, Tocqueville, and Nietzsche have evaluated Hruska’s claim? Who would have been the most convincing? Why?
6. In §42 of the *First Treatise*, Locke writes: “... a man can no more justly make use of another’s necessity to force him to become his vassal, by withholding that relief God requires him to afford to the wants of his brother, than he that has more strength can seize upon a weaker, master him to his obedience, and with a dagger at his throat offer him death or slavery.” How would Marx, Mill, and Rawls evaluate this claim? Who would be most compelling? Why.

### Part III

7. In 2006 the United Nations declared that all governments have a Responsibility to Protect populations under their control from genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and ethnic cleansing. Resolution 1674 empowers the Security Council to authorize external intervention if it judges that a government has failed to meet this responsibility. Evaluate this innovation from the perspectives of any three authors on the reading list. Who makes the best argument? Why?

8. Compare Locke, Rousseau, and Marx on private property. Whose view is most helpful today? Why?
9. “What divides liberals from republicans is their theories of power. Liberals want to hem it in while republicans want to divide it up. Either approach can make sense, but combining them is a bad idea. So much for liberal republicanism.” Discuss with reference to any three authors on the list. Whose view is most compelling? Why?

**End of Exam**