

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION: COMPARATIVE POLITICS
MAJOR FIELD
5 HOURS

14 March 2014

(*Comparative Political Economy / Political Economy of Development*)

You must answer a total of four (4) questions for this examination. You have 5 hours to do so. You must answer one (1) core substantive / theoretical question (Section 1.1) section and the fourth methodology question (Section 1.2). You must also answer one (1) question each from your subfield sections (Sections 2 and 3, respectively).

In your answers to any of the questions below, please be sure to present an argument and to refer to relevant readings and empirical examples.

SECTION 1. CORE QUESTIONS

Section 1.1 Substantive / Theoretical questions

1. In recent times, a debate has emerged amongst political scientists about whether "institutions matter" - that is, about whether they have an independent effect on political processes and outcomes. Discuss the main approaches to understanding institutions that are prevalent in our discipline and describe how each approach sheds light on this question.
2. A previous editor of *Comparative Political Studies* (a leading journal in comparative politics) had an informal policy of rejecting single-country studies on the grounds that such studies were not inherently comparative and thus out of place in a journal of comparative politics. Do you accept the editor's proposition that single-country studies are not comparative in nature and hence not really part and parcel of comparative politics? Explain why you agree or disagree with this proposition, making clear what qualities identify a piece of research as part and parcel of comparative politics.
3. What is the relationship between state development and regime development?

Section 1.2 Methodology Question

4. Propose and justify a plausible research design for empirically investigating ONE of the 3 substantive questions that you have answered elsewhere in your Comparative Politics exam. Your answer should entertain and discriminate between alternative hypotheses, and regardless of whether you opt for a qualitative or quantitative approach, it should consider the relative strengths and the weaknesses of either approach in answering the research question.

PLEASE NOTE: You may NARROW the scope of the substantive question in order to formulate a testable causal hypothesis.

SECTION 2. COMPARATIVE POLITICAL ECONOMY QUESTIONS

1. Offer an explanation for the origin of variations among types of capitalist systems. Please use examples from at least three countries in your answer.

2. Do you agree with the proposition that capital markets have put national governments into a straitjacket with limited autonomy for national policy priorities? Either way, what is the causal mechanism for that process? What are the implications for sovereignty and democracy?
3. What explains the depth of the Euro crisis, in comparison to the partial rebound after the 2008 financial crisis in places like the US, Canada, or Japan?

SECTION 3. POLITICAL ECONOMY OF DEVELOPMENT QUESTIONS

1. Some influential work in the political economy of development has been criticized for treating institutions as a "black box". Discuss some of the literature that has opened the black box and focused on specific institutional characteristics and their effects of development and redistribution. What are the strengths and weaknesses of these two competing approaches.
2. Political economy scholars have frequently used the logic of the "Prisoner's Dilemma" to shed light on some of the key problems faced by countries in the developing world and on potential solutions to this problem. Drawing on the existing literature on political economy that has employed this logic, discuss the usefulness of this approach to understanding the key challenges faced by developing countries?
3. Institutions are thought to play a key role in facilitating co-operation and co-ordination and in lowering transaction costs. What are the factors that serve as substitutes for formal institutions which are typically believed to be weak in the developing world? How effective are these substitutes and how do their effects differ from those of formal institutions?