

Comprehensive Exam Questions

1. Approaches

- a. Is it possible and/or necessary to have universal moral standards for political judgments from the standpoint of post-metaphysical approaches to political theory? Compare and contrast Foucault, Gadamer, and one other political thinker on this question.
- b. What place should political theory have within political science? In particular, what is the proper relationship (if any) between normative and/or critical political thought and empirical political science? Discuss, with reference to at least three political thinkers.
- c. Given that a key objective of political philosophy is to judge what is by reference to what ought to be, how is immanent critique possible? Discuss at least three thinkers who have contributed importantly to the approach of immanent critique.

2. Thinker: Arendt

- a. For Hannah Arendt, political judgment is different than moral judgment, both as a kind of activity, and in its demands on political organization. Explain Arendt's reasoning, particularly with reference to her concept of the public sphere. Reference at least two of Arendt's interpreters in your answer.
- b. What resources does Hannah Arendt's thought offer for thinking about the places and roles of diversity in contemporary polities? Reference at least two of Arendt's interpreters in your answer.
- c. In contrast to many of her contemporaries, Hannah Arendt viewed totalitarianism not as exemplifying an excessive political organization of society, but rather as the limiting case of the destruction of "the political". Explain Arendt's reasoning. In your answer, reference at least two of Arendt's interpreters.

3. Thinker: Weber

- a. For Max Weber, the rationalization of Western institutions was at best a mixed blessing, and at worst a tragedy. Explain Weber's interpretation of Western history as one of increasing rationalization, and relate his assessment of rationalization to his view of humans and human potentials. Draw on Weber and at least two of his interpreters.

- b. “Not ideas, but material and ideal interests, directly govern men’s conduct. Yet very frequently the ‘world images’ that have been created by ideas have, like switchmen, determined the tracks along which action has been pushed by the dynamic of interest” (Weber, “The Social Psychology of World Religions”). Explain this quotation. Discuss how Max Weber’s understanding of social science takes into account cultural causes of political actions and institutions. Draw on Weber and at least two of his interpreters.

4. Theme: Ethno-cultural diversity accommodation

- a. Which theories of multiculturalism offer the most promising approaches to questions of ethno-cultural diversity? Discuss at least three thinkers, explaining the strengths and limitations of their approaches.
- b. Can formal recognitions of (and policies that respond to) cultural claims be consistent with the norms of free and equal citizenship? Under what conditions might they be consistent, and under what conditions do they conflict? Discuss this question, making use of at least three theorists who address ethno-cultural diversity accommodation.
- c. Does deliberative democratic theory offer any resources for questions of accommodation of ethno-cultural diversity? Discuss at least three thinkers whose work is relevant to this question.