

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

Friday 13 March 2015

Comparative Political Economy; Comparative Public Policy

You must answer a total of three (3) questions for this examination. You have five (5) hours to do so. You must answer one (1) question from the core section and one (1) question from each of the two (2) subfield sections.

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

1. Why are some institutions easily changed, whereas others persist despite no longer being functionally optimal or no longer serving dominant interests? Illustrate your argument using at least two empirical cases, one of institutional persistence and one of institutional change.
2. Does economic development cause political democracies to emerge? Outline the various positions in this debate. What do we know, and what do we not know about the relationship between democracy and development?

SECTION 2. SUBFIELD 1 – COMPARATIVE POLITICAL ECONOMY

1. Does globalization represent a threat for democracy? Why or why not?
2. What is the best explanation for the diversity of capitalist systems?

SECTION 3. SUBFIELD 2 – COMPARATIVE PUBLIC POLICY

1. Across advanced industrialized democracies, some national policy-making environments appear to translate the preferences of a majority of citizens into policy more faithfully than do other national policy-making environments. What types of policymaking environments are most conducive to the translation of majority preferences into policy outputs, and why? Consider organizational, institutional, or any other features of the policymaking environment that you consider to be important.
2. Economic inequality has been on the rise throughout most of the advanced industrialized world over the last two decades. Drawing on findings from the comparative public policy literature, under what sorts of conditions (institutional, organizational, informational, etc.) would we expect to see the adoption of public policies that dampen rising inequality? And when would we expect to see policy that permits or exacerbates rising inequality?