COMPARATIVE POLITICS EXAM STRUCTURE AND READING LIST

This memo outlines the basic structure of the Comparative Politics subfield exam and offers a list of suggested readings for students preparing for it. The list is meant as a study aide, not as an exhaustive set of limits on what students are expected to know. Part of students’ responsibility for the exam is to be up to date on relevant readings that may not be on the list. Professors reserve the right to evaluate them on their mastery of the field distinct from mastery of this exact set of readings.

MAJOR EXAM. The major exam takes place in a one-day, eight-hour time period, with one hour for lunch. Non-native speakers are allowed nine hours plus one for lunch. The exam is closed book: students leave their belongings in the department office and write on a department computer in a room or office provided by the department. Students will be given their questions at 9am and must perform a final save of their answers to the exam laptop no later than 6pm (7:00 PM for non-native speakers). The major exam has three sections:

i. Core: broad theoretical questions that engage epistemological, methodological, conceptual themes (see Core part of reading list), and rely on mastery of all three substantive thematic areas of the reading list (see three thematic sections of reading list). Write one essay from choice of two questions.

ii. Cross-regional questions. Write one essay from choice of three questions. The three questions will be drawn identifiably from the three areas of the core seminars (and the three related thematic areas of the reading list), and will all ask for essays that engage empirics from two regions of the world (see regional list and instructions below).

iii. Regional focus questions, tailored by student regional focus (see below). Students will have choice of two questions. Questions may be on any theme. Students should expect these two questions to draw on the two thematic areas least related to their primary intellectual focus (e.g., a student with main interests in political economy and development should expect questions in this section that speak to states & regimes and state-society relations).

Regarding regional focus (for question 3): When applying to take the exam, students will announce a primary regional focus from the following options: Western Europe, Eastern Europe and Former Soviet Union, Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia and Oceania, South Asia, North Africa and Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, North America. They will write one essay from choice of two. Questions can be on any theme.

MINOR EXAM. The minor exam is comprised of the first two sections of the major exam. Students do not need to declare regional focuses because they do not take the regionally-tailored part of the exam. Minor-exam takers have six hours, plus an hour for lunch, and take the exam under the same conditions as the major exam. The exam begins at 9am and must be completed by 4pm, or 5pm for non-native speakers.
COMPARATIVE POLITICS LIST: Overview of Format

The Core
1. Theory: Overviews/Interests/Institutions/Ideas & Culture
2. Methods: General/Small-N/Interpretive
3. Historical Antecedents
4. Selections from thematic areas

Political Economy & Development
1. Origins of Capitalism
2. Political Economy of Developed Societies
3. Political Economy of Developing Societies
4. Economic Reform and Social Response

States & Regimes
1. State Formation
2. Regime Origins in the West
3. Democracy: Foundations
4. Democratization

States & Society
1. State-Society Relations & Interest Intermediation
2. Parties & Electoral Systems
3. Social Movements & Revolution

A Suggestion for Studying

We advise the following basic plan of study:

1. Do not start at the beginning of the list. Instead begin with the last three sections of the Core list (Political Economy & Development Core, States & Regimes Core, and States & Society Core). These are the substantive examples of the “greatest hits” in comparative politics. The overviews and methods discussions will not make much sense until you are familiar with several substantive arguments.
2. Once you are familiar with these last 3 sections of the Core, then return to overviews, methods and historical antecedents.
3. Then turn to the more detailed lists in the specific areas.
4. Leave some time in your study plan to search for important (especially recent) readings that may not be on the list. Ask professors and other students for suggestions.
THE COMPARATIVE LIST

SECTION 1: THE CORE

Theory Overviews & Founding Statements

Overviews

              World Politics 48(1): 1-49
Lichbach, Mark Irving, and Alan S. Zuckerman, eds. 2009. Comparative Politics: 

Interests

Green, Donald, and Ian Shapiro. 1994. Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory: A 
              Critique of Applications in Political Science. New Haven: Yale University Press.
Hirschman, Albert. 1970. Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, 
              New York: Cambridge University Press.
Olson, Mancur. 1971. Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of 
              Berkeley: University of California Press.

Institutions


**Ideas/culture**


**Methods**

**General and Large-N**


Small-N


Interpretive


Historical antecedents & major referents


**Political Economy & Development Core**


**State & Society Core**

**States & Regimes Core**


SECTION 2: THEMATIC AREAS

Political Economy & Development

1. *Origins of Capitalism*


2. *Political Economy of Developed Societies*

and Social Rigidities. New Haven: Yale University Press.

3. Political Economy of Developing Societies

4. Economic Reform and Social Response


States and Regimes

1. Defining and Measuring Regime Types


2. Regime Origins: Democracy & Dictatorship


Politics, vol. 55, no. 4: 517-549.


Lipset, Seymour Martin. 1959. “Social Requisites” in APSR 53:1


3. Democracy and Dictatorship: Foundations


Geddes, Barbara. 2003. Paradigms and Sand Castles, Chapter 2 and Appendix A.


Gandhi, Jennifer and Adam Przeworski. “Cooperation, Cooptation and Rebellion under Dictatorship.” Economic and Politics 18 (1).


4. Democratization: Transition, Consolidation, and Collapse


Bunce, Valerie and Sharon Wolchik. 2011. *Defeating Authoritarian Leaders in*
Postcommunist Countries. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Levitsky, Steven and Lucan A. Way. 2006. ‘Linkage versus leverage: Rethinking the international dimension of regime change.’ Comparative Politics. 38(4): 379

States & Societies
1. State Formation

2. Theories of the State, State Power, and State-Society Relations
3. Interest Intermediation, Parties, & Electoral Systems


4. Social Movements & Revolution
Skocpol, Theda. 1979. States and Social Revolutions: a Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China. New York: Cambridge University Press.
5. Politics of Identity: Nationalism, Ethnicity, Religion, Culture