

**COMPARATIVE POLITICS COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION  
DECEMBER 2007**

**IMPORTANT INSTRUCTIONS:** This is a closed-book, closed-notes exam. No materials outside of what you have stored in your head may be used to assist you in writing essays in response to the following questions.

**Major Field Instructions:** Answer one question from Part I, one question from Part II, and two questions from Part III. You have six hours to complete the examination.

**Minor Field Instructions:** Answer one question from Part I and **either** one question from Part II and one question from Part III **or** two questions from Part III. You have four and one-half hours to complete the examination.

**Part I: General Theory**

1. In light of theoretical innovations and debates over the past two decades, do you consider the field of comparative politics to be increasingly fragmented or increasingly coherent? How should comparative research be conducted so as to contribute to whichever of these two possible trends you see as most beneficial for the field?
2. Can scholars in the 21<sup>st</sup> century learn anything from the “grand” social theories of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (e.g., Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Simmel)? Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of at least two classical social theorists in light of contemporary approaches to comparative political analysis.

**Part II: Comparative Methodology**

1. To what extent does the method of “process tracing” provide an appropriate response to recent criticisms of qualitative methodology?
2. With reference to one major field of comparative politics, assess the relative contributions of quantitative, qualitative, and formal approaches. To what extent do you see the feasibility and the desirability of combining these approaches?

**Part III: Applied Theory**

1. Is there a general theory of state formation that spans time and space? If not, what steps might we take to achieve one? Or is that goal either infeasible or undesirable?

2. The theory of the rentier state has been advanced to explain such diverse outcomes as regime types, revolutions, economic development, and civil war. Is the theory able to fulfill these large responsibilities?

3. What does it mean to claim that economic development causes democracy?

4. How, how much, and why does variation in the degree of party system institutionalization affect how parties and elections “serve as instruments of democracy” (to echo the title of an influential book by G. B. Powell)? Discuss with reference to at least two country cases. Be sure to motivate explicitly your choice of cases.

5. What factors contribute to the emergence of contemporary ethnic conflicts?