



CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, LOS ANGELES
COLLEGE OF NATURAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Department of Political Science

A STUDENT GUIDE TO THE COMPREHENSIVE EXAM

This guide is for students choosing the comprehensive examination (“comps”) option for the MA degree in Political Science. Students who wish to write an MA Thesis should contact the MA Advisor for further information and consultation.

Overview of the Comprehensive Exam

The comprehensive exam is an essay-based, multi-question and multiple section examination that includes questions in each of the following areas: *Political Theory*, *American Politics*, and *Global Politics* (International Relations/Comparative Politics). The exam is given twice a year, in the fall and spring semesters. *Students are tested in only two of three areas, one of which must be the area of concentration.*

In the comprehensive exam, you are expected to demonstrate mastery—both in terms of understanding and/or in application—of basic and advanced concepts in the areas listed above. The exam questions focus on course-specific material (that is, material covered in any of the seven required seminars and/or in your three concentration courses) *and* on material considered essential to a sound understanding—and basic mastery—of each field. In other words, you are expected to have an understanding and knowledge of material not necessarily covered in the MA program’s required coursework.

The comps are not simply a larger, more important version of a course-based exam or research assignment. Rather, they are meant to reflect a transition from “student” to early-stage professional. In this regard, responses to the questions in the comps will reflect your potential to contribute to the intellectual or academic development of the field as an independent scholar, analyst, or thinker. This is a major reason why all students—even those who consistently earn “A’s” in 500- level coursework—must prepare thoroughly and intensively for the comprehensive exam. *There is no guarantee, no matter how well you may have performed in your coursework, of passing the comps.*

Preparing for the Comprehensive Exams

Once you decide to take the examination, there are several steps you should take. First, review sample questions from past examinations and/or the study guide for specific sections, which are included in the Appendix. In addition, *hard copies of previous exams are maintained in a binder in the MA office for your perusal* (the binder must not be removed from the office). Second, you may wish to schedule an appointment with the faculty members in your concentration area and secondary field. In your appointment, discuss the general and *specific* requirements for which you will be held responsible. Third, give yourself adequate time to prepare. Many students begin their preparation during the preceding semester or summer prior to the exam.

Registering for Comps

Comps are offered both fall and spring semesters. To take the comps, students must (1) be in good standing (i.e., have a GPA of 3.0 or higher), (2) have “advanced to candidacy” (this is done after completing 12 semester units of required coursework and passing the Postbaccalaureate Writing Proficiency Requirement); and (3) have completed all course work except for one or two courses you may take simultaneously with enrollment for the exam. You will need a **permit to enroll** for the comps. You should request the permit from the MA advisor or through the department office staff. Once the permit is entered, you enroll in POLS 5960 in the same manner as you would enroll in any other course.

Note that if you decide *not* to take the comps after enrolling, you must officially drop the course according to the add/drop schedule issued by the university. *Failure to drop the course will count as an attempt.*

Schedule and Format

The exam is normally scheduled to begin during the tenth week of the semester. The exam is given on campus in one of the department seminar rooms. The details are as follows:

1. No notes, no books, or any other study aids are allowed when taking the exam (the only exception: dictionaries). The exams must be **hand written** using Blue Books. You must bring your own Blue Books to the exam. Please note: the Blue Books are subject to inspection and/or randomly redistributed—do not make any marks in your books.
2. You must test in your major area/concentration, but will then choose *one* of the remaining two areas—that is, you will **test in 2 of 3 areas**. You will be required to answer three questions in your major area/concentration, and two questions in your elective area for a total of five questions.
3. The exam will be scheduled over three consecutive days, with one exam area (i.e., American, theory, global) given on each day.
4. If you are testing in your major area, you will have **6.5 hours** to complete your exam; if you are testing in an elective area, you will have **4 hours**. Each testing day will be scheduled for 7 hours, which includes a half-hour mandatory lunch break. The first session will run from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. followed by a second session from 1:30 to 4:00 p.m. Between 1:00 and 1:30 is a mandatory lunch break. **Only those of you testing in your major area will return for the second session. Students who are taking an area as an elective will have only four hours to complete their exam.**
5. Students must be available on the scheduled day of the exam—no exceptions will be allowed under any circumstances.

Additional procedures

1. No food will be allowed in the testing room, but you can bring in bottled water and other drinks.
2. To repeat: the 30-minute lunch break is mandatory, and you must bring your lunch with you.
3. You are not allowed to bring any electronic device (e.g., cell phones, PDAs, iPads, laptop computers, etc.) into the exam room. You will be asked to leave all your belongings in the Department Office during the duration of the exam. Any student caught with an electronic device in the exam room is subject to automatic disqualification!
4. Students with a learning disability must contact OSD prior to the exam to make arrangements. These arrangements must be in place well before the scheduled exam date.
5. ***After registering for the exam (POLS 5960), you must inform the current MA advisor of your choice for the second area (Political Theory, American Politics, or Global Studies)***

Evaluation and Grading Procedures

The evaluation process is designed to maximize fairness: the results of any exam are never determined by a single opinion or viewpoint, and every effort is made to maximize a balanced, unbiased reading of each student's exam. To achieve this, each section of your exam will be evaluated by at least two faculty members in a "blind review" process. This means that faculty readers will not know whose exam they are reading. Both faculty members must agree in their evaluation (i.e., both must agree to "pass" or to "fail" an exam). If there is disagreement, the two initial readers will first consult with one another. If their consultation does result in an agreement by *both readers* to "pass" or "fail" the exam, then a third faculty member will evaluate the exam. The decision of the third reader will determine the final result, although, if deemed appropriate, further consultation will take place among all three faculty readers. During this process, the identity of the student will remain unknown to the faculty readers.

Each section of the exam is graded separately, so to pass the comprehensive exam as a whole, you must earn a "pass" in each of the two sections you have chosen.

*In your area of concentration, it is possible to pass even when failing to answer one question adequately. (Remember, this part of the exam is composed of 3 questions.) The decision to pass the entire section, however, depends on the overall strength of your responses. If, for example, each of the other two responses is considered a "weak" or "marginal" pass, you may still fail the entire section. If all but one answer is very strong (i.e., a high pass), on the other hand, you may pass the section as a whole. *The faculty readers are allowed to exercise discretion based on their overall assessment.**

*In your secondary area, the exam is composed of only two questions. To pass this exam, *both of your answers must pass*: passing only *one* of the two questions is insufficient to pass.*

Retaking the MA Exam

If you fail both sections of the exam, you automatically have a second opportunity to take the entire exam in the following (or later) semester. If you fail *one* of the two sections, you must still retake the exam, *but you only need to retake the section of the exam you did not pass on your first attempt*. If you fail to pass one or more sections of the exam twice, you will not earn the MA degree from CSULA.

FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions)

Is there a page minimum or maximum for the exam?

No. You may write as much as you think is necessary to adequately answer the question. Nonetheless, concise, well organized, and cogently argued responses are preferred. On the other hand, short answers, especially very short answers, are not likely to receive a passing evaluation. Anything less than two pages is almost certain to fail.

Can I consult books, notes, and other sources during the exam?

No. The exam also requires you to read and sign and “Honor Code” statement. This statement will provide further details.

Can I be penalized for “bad” handwriting?

The short answer is yes. If the faculty readers cannot read what you have written, then they cannot properly evaluate your response. And, if they cannot evaluate your response, then you most likely will fail the exam. This means that you must pay attention to your handwriting: write as neatly and as legibly as you can.

What if I cannot come to campus on the scheduled days of the exam?

The department does not have the capacity to schedule exams on an individual basis. If you cannot come to campus when the exam is scheduled, then you should not take the exam that semester. There are no exceptions to this rule.

IMPORTANT NOTE ON EVALUATION

The following statement applies to all three sections of the examination.

In general, your answers in all sections will be judged for their responsiveness to the specific question or questions (and the specific requirements), their skilled and sufficient citation of the relevant literature, and their clarity of organization. *The most important criterion, however, is a clear demonstration of your knowledge and mastery of the relevant material.* If applicable, the arguments you advance must be defended against plausible counter-arguments. Moreover, the material used in your answer to any question should not substantially overlap with (much less repeat) the material used in your responses to other questions. (If you wish to make a similar point in different questions, simply refer to the relevant passage.) Take time to organize, edit and proofread your answers.

APPENDIX

Selected Examples of Comprehensive Exam Questions

(Note: Copies of the most recent actual exams are available for viewing in the POLS Dept Main office in a binder.

You are welcome and encouraged to review the most recent exams.)

Political Theory (sample questions)

1. In book I of the *Politics*, Aristotle famously states that “man is by nature a political animal” (1253a1-5). What does he mean by this? In what ways are we meant for political life? What does his answer imply about the purposes of government and citizenship? Is Aristotle’s conception of politics more compelling than current social science definition that focus on power and the question of who gets what, when and how?
2. Karl Popper, Thomas Kuhn, Emre Lakatos, and Paul Feyerabend advanced different theories about the nature of scientific discovery, the growth of scientific knowledge, and the relevance of scientific method in distinguishing scientific truth from other forms of knowledge. Critically analyze and compare their theories on these issues. Which theory or view of science seems most relevant to social science research? Explain.
3. “Political science is not and never will be as ‘scientific’ as the natural sciences. It is highly doubtful that the social sciences will ever produce universally valid explanations about human behavior. Thus the periodic attempts of political scientists to forge a common ground through methodological consensus in order to build a dominant scientific paradigm are based on a faulty analogy with the natural sciences as well as a failure to appreciate the inherent limitations of social science research.” Write an essay in which you critically analyze this statement with reference to the writings of Alexander Rosenberg (*Philosophy of Social Science*), James W. Davis (*Terms of Inquiry: On the Theory and Practice of Political Science*), and Ruth Lane (*The Politics Model*).
4. “Aristotle, unlike Plato, favored a realistic approach to attaining the good life. In Aristotle’s view, the polity was the “most practicable constitution” because it was the most stable, yet it was a far cry from the ideal state. By contrast, Plato’s political theory does not allow for such practical tradeoffs precisely because the good life is only attainable under ideal conditions. It follows that the most important values in Plato’s political theory, unlike that of Aristotle, are social harmony and political stability.” Critically discuss the merits of the statement above
5. “Plato’s political theory is profoundly apolitical and anti-democratic; whereas, Aristotle’s political theory demonstrates the intrinsic value of political activity for all human beings.” Critically discuss the statement above with respect to the

following: (a) theory of human nature; (b) conception of justice in the individual and the state; and (c) view of political participation and political rule.

6. “Morality is all nice and good. In the realm of international politics, however, such considerations only increase the likelihood and devastations of war.” Discuss with reference to both “The Melian Dialogue” and the “Mytilenean Debate” from Thucydides’ *Peloponnesian War*.
7. In the *Social Contract*, Rousseau claims that those who don’t go along with the general will ought to be “forced to be free.” What does Rousseau mean by this? Can he make this claim while remaining consistent to his position that social contracts come from volition? Is *The Social Contract* a recipe for twentieth century totalitarianism.
8. What is Arendt’s critique of Marx? Which aspects of his theory does she *embrace*? Which does she reject? Does Marx conceive of politics in a manner that is consistent with Arendt’s call for “action?” If so, why? If not, why not?
9. “Both Hobbes and Marx refute the classical idea that political life is “natural” and therefore essential to the fulfillment of human nature. Rather, both theorists would agree that politics is a necessary evil, an institution created by human beings to maintain order and to ensure social stability. It follows that the science of politics is primarily concerned with power and the nature of domination in society, not moral ideals associated with justice, the rule of law, or self-government.” Discuss critically.
10. Unlike scissors or thoroughbreds, there is no one identifiable purpose or *telos* of humans. The ends of men are many and philosophers who try to determine what the proper activities for humans are only succeed in promoting tyranny.” Discuss ritically in reference to Plato, Aristotle and/or Cicero.

American Politics

Guidelines for Preparing for the Comprehensive Exam in American Politics

MA students should begin their preparation by ensuring that they have a solid “textbook” understanding of American politics, which they may have previously attained in their undergraduate academic experience, but which they can also obtain by a close reading of a good textbook in American government. Two that would be especially recommended are Samuel Kernell, Gary C. Jacobson, Thad Kousser, and Lynn Vavreck, *The Logic of American Politics* and Marc Landy and Sidney Milkis, *American Government*. Other introductory texts are also suitable (they tend to be very similar). It is recommended that you especially focus on the chapters on the Constitution, Congress, the presidency, parties and elections, and voting, political participation, and public opinion.

Once students are certain that they have a strong grasp of the basics of American politics, they should review all their course work and assigned readings in their courses in American politics at CSULA. At a minimum, this will include POLS 504 in American Political Behavior and POLS 505 in American Political Studies (primarily focused on national political institutions). Many students will also have taken various 400-level courses in American politics as well as possibly a graduate directed study – all materials from these courses should be reviewed closely as well.

The exam will be structured in such a fashion that all students will have to answer at least **one** question in the field of US Institutions, and **one** question in the field of Political Behavior. A solid understanding in these fields is *mandatory*. In addition, those who choose American Politics as their main concentration will also be required to answer a **third** question from an additional section that usually contains several questions that involve both institutional and behavioral questions.

Section I: US Institutions (POLS 505)

Students should know the following:

1. Origins, structure, and main provisions of the US Constitution; debates over the extent to which Constitution is democratic (or should be); debates about the effects of the Constitution on governance and policy-making.
2. Distinctive path of political development in the US in comparison to Canada, Europe, and other industrialized countries (see debates over liberalism; American exceptionalism; development of welfare state policy; effects of race and class identities; lack of a major socialist party).
3. Powers, development, and organization of the office of the presidency, and concepts that political scientists have devised to understand this office (traditional vs. modern presidency; “imperial” presidency; “partisan” presidency; advantages and disadvantages of presidential power; etc.).

4. Powers, development, and organization of Congress, and concepts that political scientists have devised to understand this institution (electoral incentives; pork-barrel and particularized benefits; theories of committees and parties; quality of representation and legislation; role in foreign policy; interest group influence; etc.). Pay special attention to the rise of partisan polarization alongside the persistence of divided government, and associated debates.
5. Relationship between the presidency and Congress, and explanations for changes in this relationship over time and in different policy areas (domestic policy vs. foreign; conditions for presidential success; partisan polarization; etc.).
6. Powers, development, and structure of the judicial branch, and debates related to this institution (origins and effects of judicial review; judicial activism and judicial restraint; effects of partisanship; impact of Supreme Court on political outcomes; social consequences of Court decisions; etc.).
7. Origins, nature, and significance of US federalism, and corresponding debates (different versions or types of federalism; evolution of federalism over time; effects of federal aid and grants; advantages and disadvantages; etc.).
8. History and current role of political parties in the American political system, and debates among political scientists over the appropriate role for parties (concept of responsible party government; polarized parties; origins and effects of two-party system; nature of party coalitions; effects of parties on policymaking; etc.). Nominating processes used by the parties, including the presidential nominating process and efforts to reform it. Effects of Progressive-era reforms on parties and partisan mobilization. Electoral realignment theory and critiques.
9. Basic aspects of elections in the US: federal election campaign finance laws; campaigning; role of media; quality of campaigning; etc. Redistricting and gerrymandering. Competitiveness of congressional elections and incumbency effect. Consequences of single-member, simple-plurality electoral systems.
10. Rise and current role of interest groups in the American political system, and their influence over policymaking (collective action problems; elitist vs. pluralist perspectives; social movement formation; political strategies; iron-triangles and issue- networks; relationship of groups to parties).
11. Growth and extent of federal bureaucracy. Decline of patronage, rise of civil service, and associated questions of political control and neutral competence.
12. Relationships between government and the media; news-gathering techniques; journalist/ government relations; role of media in presidential campaign politics; effects of news media on society.

Section II: Political Behavior (POLS 504)

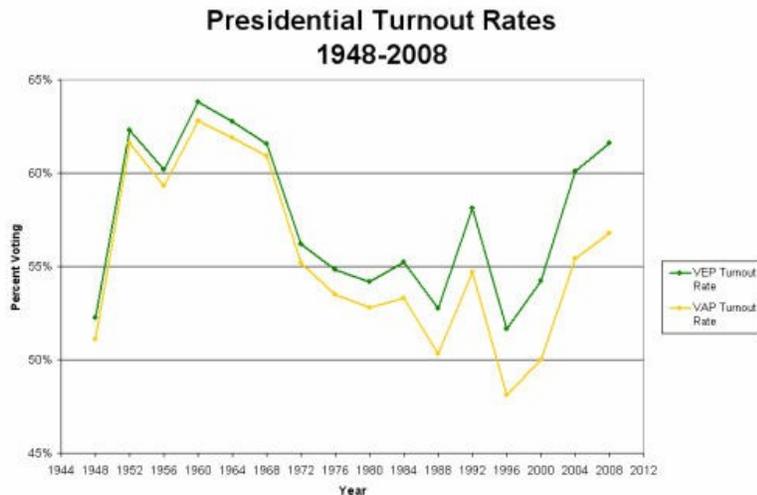
Students should have the following:

1. A comprehensive understanding of predominant theories of vote choice – How do people think about their decision and what influences it. Can it be predicted?
2. A thorough understanding and informed opinion about why people choose or choose not to participate in politics.
3. A working knowledge of what moves public opinion and the role that elites play in the process.
4. The ability to critique and assess the methods and data used to study political behavior.
5. The aptitude to discuss what moves public opinion and an understanding of Framing, Priming, and Agenda Setting.
6. A proper appreciation for the contributions made by John Zaller, and a working knowledge of the history and development of the academic study of Political Behavior.
7. A capacity to make and critique rational choice explanations of the vote and turnout.
8. The ability to differentiate voting behavior in primaries v. general elections, in state and local v. federal elections, and Congressional v. presidential elections.

American Politics/Sample Questions

1. Phillip Converse's article/chapter, "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics" is arguably the most important contribution to contemporary explanations of public opinion and vote choice. Discuss the contribution of the piece and make an argument about whether or not more contemporary explanations of vote choice have adequately addressed Converse's concerns about the lack of "constraint" exhibited by the "American Voter."
2. Evaluate and make an argument about the following claim: The theories presented in the *American Voter* and John Zaller's *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion* provide entirely incompatible claims about public opinion and ultimately vote choice.

- The graph below charts the voter turnout in U.S. presidential elections between 1948 and 2008. What explains the rise and fall of turnout over time? Do individual-level (rational choice) explanations adequately explain these trends, or do institutional factors? Be sure to address both explanations and make the case that it is one more than the other.



1. “[A] report, from the Center for the Study of the American Electorate, put 2012 voter turnout at 57.5% of all eligible voters, compared to 62.3% who voted in 2008 and 60.4% who cast ballots in 2004. In 2000, the turnout rate was 54.2%.” As a political scientist, how do you explain these numbers?
- In a presidential debate in 1980, Ronald Reagan famously asked the American people, “Are you better off today than you were four years ago?” Is this a relevant question to ask the American public? Would voter’s response to that question effect their choice? Or are certain allegiances more likely to determine individual vote choice than these purely instrumental considerations? Be sure to address the relevant literatures in thinking about your response.
- John Kingdon, along with many other political scientists, has argued that the structure of the American Constitution has hindered the development of an American welfare state. Explain the logic of this argument, and assess whether the recent passage of major health care legislation undermines this perspective.
- At the present time, how democratic is the American political system at the national level? Should reforms be considered to make the system more democratic? Or, might governance be enhanced by insulating the system further from the vagaries of public opinion?
- What is partisan polarization, why has it occurred, and what is its impact on American politics?

9. While Thomas Mann and Norman Ornstein claim that Congress is “even worse than it looks,” other scholars argue that, all things considered, “it’s good enough.” Explain these different views, and state which side you find most convincing.
10. Robert Dahl and other authors have criticized the U.S. Constitution, viewing it as neither very democratic nor very effective. What are the strengths and weaknesses of this critique?
11. Based on comparisons with institutional choices made *in other advanced democracies*, evaluate the American constitutional structure.
12. Consider the analysis of Congress provided by David Mayhew in *Congress: The Electoral Connection*. Explain the core of his argument, and assess whether it still provides an accurate guide to how Congress works in an era of partisan polarization.
13. What are the proposed solutions to the problem of partisan polarization, and which do you think would be most effective?

Global Politics (sample questions only)

*IR Theory Questions**

** For the IR theory section, students must have a strong understanding of the main theoretical paradigms of IR: realism/neo-realism, liberalism, constructivism, and Marxism. If you did not cover this material in your seminars or electives, you must review and/or learn this material on your own.*

1. Militarily speaking, the world has become unipolar. No conceivable power or group of powers—including the EU, Russia, and China—can balance a US military whose budget (in 2010) nearly equals that of the entire world. This situation is not only unprecedented, but it creates all sorts of questions for IR theory. Realism, in particular, has difficulty explaining the current state of affairs. Significantly, realism also did not “predict” the manner in which the Soviet Union “voluntarily” ceded military supremacy to the United States in 1989. Does this mean that realism is dead? Do other perspectives, both mainstream and alternative (e.g, liberalism, constructivism, world systems), provide a better, more theoretically consistent and coherent explanation? Why or why not? In developing your response, make sure you defend your position against plausible counter-arguments.
2. Is realism/neo-realism still relevant? That is, does this hitherto dominant paradigm of IR adequately account for the most important events of the recent past, from the collapse of the Soviet Union, to the rise of “global terrorism” (marked by the 9-11 attacks), to the pre-emptive attack by the United States against Saddam Hussein’s regime in Iraq? In responding to this question, you are required to explicitly discuss and evaluate realism/neo-realism in relation to other major theoretical schools of thought and to key theorists in IR, both mainstream (e.g., liberalism) *and* “alternative” (e.g., Marxism and social constructivism).
3. Much has been made of the election of Barack Obama. In the realm of foreign policy, in particular, it has been suggested that he would reinvent American foreign policy or at least provide a significant departure from his predecessor, George W. Bush. Of course, after 100 days (or so) in office, it is impossible to say for certain what will happen. IR theory, however, allows us to “predict,” at least in general or probabilistic terms, whether the change in administrations *will* or *could* lead to significant changes not only in U.S. foreign policy, but also in international relations more generally. With this in mind, your task is to provide a **comprehensive theoretical assessment** of the question, “Will the election of Barack Obama significantly affect international relations over the next four years?” Your response must explicitly refer to the major theoretical traditions of realism/neo-realism, liberalism-idealism, Marxism, and constructivist discusses and defends your own perspective.

4. If China were to democratize in the next decade, would this change fundamentally the nature of the relationship between China and the United States? Would a democratic China, in other words, confirm the “democratic peace thesis,” or would it confirm the neo-realist position that unit-level changes are irrelevant to system-level dynamics? Or, is there an alternative explanation? In responding to these questions, you are required to explicitly discuss and evaluate realism/neo-realism in relation to other major theoretical schools of thought and to key theorists in IR. Your response must also include reference to the relevant literature.

IR Field Questions

5. Nuclear proliferation in the “Third World” has generated a more aggressive counter-proliferation approach by the second Bush administration. It is determined to deny interested major non-nuclear states access to nuclear manufacturing, milling and engineering specifications and technologies, as well as access to plutonium and enriched uranium fuel(s), and various centrifuge machine systems in order to prevent the development of nuclear weapons. Waltz and Sagan offer different perspectives on the problem as described. What are their respective arguments and which argument do you support, why, and what are the strategic implications of your argument towards understanding how, in particular, the Iranian and North Korean issues should be solved?
6. In assessing the foreign policy process (in the U.S. or any other country), what is the relative importance or significance of the different levels of analysis: system, state, and individual. What is the relative importance of each level of analysis in explaining how foreign policies are made? Does this vary depending on the issue or policy area? Or is one level of analysis always primary? Thoroughly justify your responses and use concrete, relevant examples to support or illustrate your points.
7. After over 40 years of official development policies, developing countries as a group have entered the twenty first century more indebted than in the 1980s. Discuss reasons why international financial institutions (IFIs) such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have not been more successful in promoting economic growth in developing countries. Consider Hernando De Soto’s argument in *The Mystery of Capitalism* that challenges the economic arguments asserted by orthodox liberal and structural scholars regarding the failure of economic growth in Latin America. What does De Soto argue about the five mysteries and how this accounts for why capitalism fails developing countries? Why is capitalism unable of delivering to developing countries the same wealth it has delivered to the West? Is the failure of capitalism linked to the policies advocated by IFIs or are there other domestic considerations that shed light on the failure of capitalism in Latin America? Your response must present the arguments of each author cited to support your argument. Additionally, you must provide detailed examples that demonstrate comprehension of each scholar’s argument.

Comparative Politics Theory Questions

8. *Democracy is possible in any country.* How would scholars representing various research traditions (particularly rational choice, structural, and cultural) respond to this statement? First, provide a comprehensive response citing relevant and important studies and arguments in the literature (do *not* limit yourself only to assigned readings in POLS 550). Second, how would *you* respond to the statement? Explain and defend your position.
9. Theoretically, what lessons can be drawn from the past 20~30 years of democratization in Asia, Africa, Latin America, *and* the post-communist states? (Note: your response must include explicit reference to all four regions.) Has the recent record of democratization tended to support one general theoretical tradition (i.e., rationality, structure, and culture) more than the others? Or, is the record more mixed? Be specific, and make sure you thoroughly justify and explain your position, making reference to the relevant literature and to concrete empirical cases. Your response must be comprehensive (i.e., do not refer to only one or a couple of articles or books).
10. You have been asked by the Department of State to provide a **comprehensive** assessment of the prospects for democracy in the Middle East and China. Specifically, Department of State wants to know if the Middle Eastern countries and China are “ready” for democracy. If so, you must answer the question, “What is the best way to help ‘spread’ democracy?” If the Middle East and China are not ready, you must explain why they are not. You must answer this question in a **theoretically informed and comprehensive manner**. That is, do not just provide a personal opinion, but provide a review of the how the “best minds” in comparative politics might answer this question (in this regard, you should provide an examination of **competing perspectives**). At the same time, you *are* required to provide a personal assessment: What do *you* think and why? Your answer must make specific references to key arguments and key scholars. You must also incorporate concrete examples into your analysis in order to support your argument. *Do not* refer to only a handful of articles or books and authors, and do not refer *only* to authors assigned in the POLS 550 seminar.

Comparative Politics Field and Method Questions

11. Thinking without comparison is unthinkable. And, in the absence of comparison, so is all scientific thought and scientific research.” Discuss and defend this statement. Your answer must reflect a clear and in-depth understanding of the comparative method. Provide appropriate examples or illustrations.

12. The Dirty War in Latin America exacted a great cost on Latin America. The notion of democracy is undermined with the delayed response for justice as evident in Guatemala and Argentina. What do these countries have in common and what are some of the obstacles towards prosecuting those responsible for the disappeared? What role did grassroots movements and/or social movements played in shaping the political sphere/governments in Latin America?