

POLITICAL THEORY EXAMINATION PROCESS  
(2006 REVISION)

I. FREQUENCY AND STRUCTURE OF EXAMINATIONS

Examinations will be offered twice annually, once at the beginning of the Fall term and once at the end of the Spring. Students will be asked to answer a total of three questions; each answer should be between 2000 and 3500 words in length. The first segment of the exam will correspond roughly to the history of political thought; the second, to contemporary political theory. For the third segment of the exam, students may choose one of two options:

Option (a): the third segment will center on a field of special interest defined by each student himself or herself in consultation with at least one faculty member in political theory (see section III), and as reflected in each student's personalized reading list (see section II).

Option (b): the third segment will not require the student to specify a field of special interest, but will instead ask the student to address a question that requires the integration of the history of political thought and contemporary political theory.

We anticipate that option (b) will be most useful for students for whom political theory is a second field, but both options are available to all students who take the exam.

The process of taking the exam will be as follows: All students taking the exam in a given offering will receive an identical set of questions on the first two segments of the examination, history of political thought and contemporary political theory. For the third segment of the exam, students taking option (a) will be given personalized sets of questions based on their fields of special interest; students taking option (b) *may* receive personalized sets of questions or identical questions, at the examining faculty's discretion.

The examination will take place over three days. At the start of each day students will be given the questions for that day's segment; students will be able to choose one question from two or more options. Students shall return their completed essays to the exam administrator seven hours after they received the questions. (Delivery by e-mail attachment is acceptable.) Essays should be typewritten, double-spaced, in 12 point or larger type.

Each essay will be read by at least two faculty in political theory. The faculty evaluating the examinations will be provided with copies of each student's personalized reading list. All faculty who are participating in the examination process for a given offering will evaluate the performance of each student taking the exam. Students will be

notified of the results within one month of taking the exam. “Pass” and “not pass” are the only evaluation options. In accordance with departmental policy, students who do not pass the exam the first time shall have the opportunity to retake the exam at a subsequent offering. If a student fails to pass the examination twice, his or her retention in the Ph.D. program will be under review.

## II. READING LISTS, PREPARATION, AND ADVISING

Any student who wishes to take the qualifying examination in political theory must declare his or her intention to do well in advance. For a Fall offering of the exam, the deadline is the preceding May 1; for a Spring offering of the exam, the deadline is the preceding November 1. By this date, the student must file his or her reading list with the exam administrator, signed by one faculty member in political theory (see below) with whom he or she has consulted in formulating the list. The list will be based in part on a bibliography of books and articles in the field of political theory published by the Political Science Department. Each student’s reading list must contain at least 40 works, of which 30 must be chosen from the departmental bibliography; the remaining 10 may (with approval of the advisor) be drawn from outside the departmental bibliography. Students’ reading lists must also meet certain further distribution requirements, which are explained in detail on the front page of the departmental bibliography.

A student who chooses option (a) for the third segment of the exam will also be required to include with his or her reading list two further items: a paragraph describing his or her special field of interest, and a list of those texts from the reading list that the student considers relevant to the special field of interest. The purpose of the paragraph is to ensure that the student has designed an intellectually coherent special field, neither too broad nor too narrow, and to guide the examining faculty in designing questions for the student’s third examination segment.

We encourage students to read as many titles on the departmental bibliography as possible, and are available for consultation about specialized reading. We encourage students to begin formulating proposed reading lists in consultation with faculty, both political theory faculty and others if they choose, as early in their course of graduate study as they wish. Students unsure whether they wish to take an examination in political theory are encouraged to discuss possible readings with faculty, and doing so does not commit them to taking the examination.

## III. FACULTY MEMBERS IN POLITICAL THEORY

For the purposes of this document, “faculty members in political theory” includes the following: Julie Cooper, Robert Gooding-Williams, Patchen Markell, Sankar Muthu, John McCormick, Jennifer Pitts, Nathan Tarcov.