



THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
5828 S. UNIVERSITY AVENUE
CHICAGO • ILLINOIS 60637

Qualifying Exam in Comparative Politics

March 2006

1. Frequency and Structure of Examinations

The Comparative Politics Qualifying Exam will be offered on the basis of an individual agreement between the student and the two faculty advisors he/she has selected to administer the exam. Students will be asked to answer a total of two questions: each answer should be between 15 and 25 pages in length including footnotes but not bibliography, diagrams, or tables.

The exam will have two parts corresponding to the topic areas the student and her selected advisors have agreed upon in advance. The exam will take place over two days. At the start of each day, the student will be given the questions for that day's segments (generally via email); students will answer one question from two or more options. Completed answers should be returned to the exam administrator eight hours later. (Answers sent as email attachments are generally the norm.) Essays should be type-written, double-spaced, in 12 point font. While students are free to consult any written source, the text of the exam should be original. Although some copying or cutting and pasting of material that has been previously prepared will be permitted, standard rules of plagiarism apply.

Each answer will be read by the two faculty members in comparative politics who were selected by the student in advance. Students may receive "pass", "not pass" or (rarely) "high pass" on the exam. In accordance with departmental policy, students who do not pass the exam in their first attempt may retake the exam at a subsequent date. If a student fails to pass the entire exam in two attempts, their retention in the Ph.D. program will be under review.

II. Preparation and Reading Lists

Students who wish to take the Comparative qualifying exam must choose two faculty advisors who will help the student select the two themes for the exam. Themes should speak to abiding concerns in comparative politics (broadly understood). In the past, students have selected topics such as "nations and nationalisms," "democratization," "ethnic violence and civil wars," "political parties," and "identity-formation in comparative perspective," to name a few.

Students determine the reading lists and the examine date in consultation with the two advisors selected. The comparative politics exam is flexible in this way.

The faculty will help the student devise two different reading lists reflecting the two themes the student intends to explore. Each reading list should have approximately 25 book-length items for a total of 50 book-length items, and both faculty members must approve the lists. Each list should include works that are representative of the topic under consideration. In addition to the faculty's concern with a student's knowledge of specific texts, the exam should display the student's development of a comprehensive sense of the topic under consideration, including the sub-discipline's key questions, contending theoretical approaches, and diverse methodological approaches. In this light, none of the exam questions are likely to have single "correct" answers.

We encourage students to collaborate in preparing for the exam provided that all collaboration ceases entirely during the exam itself.

III. Faculty Members in Comparative Politics

All regular faculty members in the Political Science Department who list courses under the comparative politics subfield are eligible to supervise the exam in comparative politics. A list of eligible faculty is available in Kathy Anderson's office.