

## **Comparative Politics Field Exam – Spring 2021- Bacchus, Barnes (chair), Thyne**

**Directions: Choose one question from each section below. Answer 3 questions total.**

### **Section I: Choose one question from this section (either answer Question 1 or Question 2)**

**Question1:** Much of the work on institutions in Comparative Politics is characterized as employing “Rational Choice.” What is Rational Choice and why do you think so much institutionalist work is characterized in this way? What are the strengths and limitations of a Rational Choice approach where the comparative study of political institutions is concerned? What do you consider to be the most fruitful research in comparative politics (institutions or otherwise) that does not rely on Rational Choice? In your answer be sure to provide concrete examples of research from the literature.

**Question2:** Corruption and Clientelism are two very popular concepts in Comparative Politics but what has empirical research actually taught us about either of these phenomena and their consequences for development, democracy, and democratic representation? Why is corruption bad for development and democracy, and how can it be reduced? What is clientelism? What are the consequences of clientelism for democratic representation? In what ways are corruption and clientelism related? In what ways are they distinct from one another? What are the methodological challenges associated with studying these phenomena and what do you see as the most promising way to advance our knowledge on these topics?

### **Section II: Choose one question from this section (either answer Question 3 or Question 4)**

**Question 3:** If we survey all transitions to democracy since the beginning of the third wave in 1974, few of these new regimes blossomed into fairly high-level democracies. Scores broke down either through coups or executive takeovers. Many others stagnated, in most cases with gaping democratic deficiencies. Why do you think the overall record of the third wave is not more positive than this? In addition to giving examples from attempted democratic transitions throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, be sure to bring this discussion up to date by reflecting on how the research on democratic transitions can inform our understanding of the Arab Spring. For example, what would research on democratic transitions say about the successes/failures we have observed across the region in the past 10 years since protests first began in Tunisia and spread across the region? Your answer should engage with the theoretical and empirical literature on democratization.

**Question 4:** Myanmar experienced a coup earlier this month that replaced a democratically elected government with military rule. Burmese citizens continue to protest the coup. What advice would you give these protesters as they attempt to encourage the military to return to the barracks and return to civilian rule? More generally, what do we know about the influence of protests on democracy and/or regime change? What types of protests are most or least successful? Based on what we know about Myanmar and the literature on regime changes, what should we expect to see in terms of democracy or authoritarianism in Myanmar one year from now?

**Section III: Choose one question from this section (either answer Question 5 or Question 6)**

**Question 5:** What are the strengths and limitations of multi-method research in comparative politics? Has the "multi-method turn" contributed to progress in the field? Has it helped to address the apparent methodological divide between qualitative and quantitative approaches? Why or why not? In your answer, take a position, make an argument, and draw on at least two substantive areas of research in comparative politics to illustrate your claims and arguments.

**Question 6:** Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Political Behavior is a methodological approach to comparative politics, not a theoretical one. In constructing your answer address the following points. 1) what are the origins of the behavioral approach to political science? 2) What are the key characteristics of work that we might call "behavior" in CP? 3) Does political behavior as a subfield adhere to a specific set of assumptions or premises that inform the theories associated with the approach? 4) Are the theories associated with Political Behavior largely psychological? Institutional? Structural? Or are they equally likely to be informed by any of these traditions? 5) What are the most important contributions of Political Behavior to our knowledge of Comparative Politics? In addressing all 5 of these points be sure to provide relevant examples from the literature.