

Spring 2020: Comparative Politics Field Exam

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The following exam has three sections. You are expected to select one question from each section to answer—for a total of three answers. Each of your three answers should be labeled according to the number of the section and letter of the question you select to answer. **Note: You can only answer ONE question from each section.**

Section 1: Comparative Methods: Answer one of the following two questions

- A. The Latin American region is a central focus of many canonical studies of democratization and economic development. What is the value of an empirical study that focuses on region? What are its advantages over broader cross-national studies? What are its advantages over studies that focus on a single country? What are the limits of the utility of regional studies? In discussing the advantages and limits of regional studies be sure to cite examples from the literature as evidence of your argument.
- B. For a scholar whose research goal is causal inference, experimental methods are considered ideal. For many scholars of comparative politics, however, experiments are not feasible. In such situations are scholars better off employing quantitative or qualitative methodologies for purposes of causal inference? In answering this question be sure to 1) explain what we mean by causal inference, 2) explain why experiments are not always feasible and 3) define and provide specific examples of quantitative and qualitative methodologies and 4) explain how they either facilitate or limit causal inference and 5) provide examples from the comparative politics literature to support your argument.

Section 2: Comparative Institutions: Answer one of the following two questions

- A. Accountability is one of the keys to obtain desirable political outcomes in democratic systems. Identify three features of domestic institutions that facilitate or restrain the ability the citizens to keep their representatives accountable. Clearly explain how each institution may improve or weaken accountability. Discuss how empirical evidence supports the relationship between each institution, accountability, and related political outcomes (for example, corruption).
- B. Electoral rules influence ideological congruence and political representation. Discuss the theoretical framework that examines (i) the relationship between electoral rules and ideological congruence, and (ii) the relationship between electoral rules, descriptive representation, and substantive representation. Discuss the findings of empirical literature that answer the following questions: What are the effects of electoral rules on ideological congruence? What are the effects of electoral rules on descriptive representation? Does descriptive representation always lead to substantive representation? Identify one of the challenges of studying the effect of electoral rules on these political outcomes. How did existing studies tackle these challenges?

Section 3: Comparative Behavior: Answer one of the following two questions

- A. Is public opinion important for democracy? Why? If so, what values and attitudes are particularly important for maintaining a strong democracy? What are some of the theoretical mechanisms that link political values and attitudes to democratic stability? Does the empirical evidence show a link between citizens' values and attitudes and democratic stability? How robust is this evidence?
- B. What explains differences in citizens' political participation *across* and *within* countries? (Make sure to discuss the main theoretical approaches to understand political participation in comparative politics). What factors are more likely to influence political participation in developing countries vis-à-vis developed nations? What can democratic governments do to promote political participation?