



COMPARATIVE POLITICS (GS 161)

Final Exam Study Guide

Fall 2009

Tuesday, November 17th, 1:00-3:00pm (Moench A202)

GENERAL GUIDELINES: The final exam covers all lectures and reading (Kesselman, et al. Chapters 5, 6, 8, 13 and 12) since the first exam. Below are the potential questions exactly as they will appear on the exam. You will have a very limited choice as to which questions you have to answer, so it is strongly recommended that you work up outlines for each of these questions. You **MAY NOT** bring pre-written essays into the exam, nor are you allowed to use your laptops during the exam

You will be required to answer two questions on the exam. The study guide (and the exam) has two sections. Questions in the first section relate to the countries covered in the course. Each question is worth 50 points. You will be given two of the four questions below on the final. The second section contains questions related to the country we dropped -- Russia. If you **THOROUGHLY** read the chapter on Russia and review the Russia PPT and lectures notes (posted on the course website), you will be able to successfully answer these questions. One will appear on the final exam. The incentive for you to do so is that this question will be worth (potentially) 75 points. *Please note though that your essay will be graded just as if we had covered this material in class.* But if you are willing to put in extra work, you can earn extra points.

Hence you two options on the exam: you can either (a) answer both of the questions in the first section for a potential 100/100 points total; or (b) you can answer one questions in the first section and one in the second for a potential 125/100 points total.

As with the midterm, make sure to read the questions carefully and address all parts of the question. Your weekly tests focused on specific details about these political systems. The emphasis here is on comparative political analysis, not simply the regurgitation of previously covered material. Each requires you to compare and contrast across political systems, elaborate on the relative strengths and weaknesses of different structures, and draw reasoned conclusions based on your analysis. You are allowed, even encouraged, to work with you classmates in thinking through your answer, but you final essay should be entirely your own work.

QUESTIONS RELATED TO THE COUNTRIES COVERED IN CLASS: Only two of the questions from this section will appear on the final exam. You will be required to answer at least one or, if you choose, two of the questions from this section.

(1) One of the most often studied correlations in comparative politics is that between democracy and economic development. Examine the three developing countries (India, China, and Iran) that we have discussed in the second half of the course. What can these countries tell us about this connection? Can a country move from poverty to prosperity while maintaining the institutions of democracy? Or is a more authoritarian form of government more likely to produced economic development? Make sure to connect your arguments back to the specific countries we have examined.

(2) Identity cleavages (ethnic, religious, linguistic, etc.) cause political turmoil both within and between states. The famous Harvard Professor Samuel Huntington even predicted the 21st century would see a 'clash of civilization', with cultural divisions supplanting ideology as the main source of conflict. This would certainly seem to explain our difficult relations with Middle East states, including Iran. Yet we seem to get on well with other societies that are just as radically different from ours, especially India. Compare and contrast the United States' relationship with Iran and India. In what ways are these societies and political systems different from our own? How are they similar? Given this, to what extent can identity serve to explain the differences in our relations with these countries?

(3) India and China are pegged by most analysts to be the rising economies of the 21st century. In comparative economic terms, China has certainly done better over the last few decades. But which country is likely to succeed in the future? Examine the political, social, and economic structures of both countries. Which country is best suited to prosper in the more globalized, technologically advanced, knowledge-based 21st century economy?

(4) All of the countries we have studied (going back to the beginning of the term) are being negatively affected by the current financial crisis, a crisis spread by the pervasive links of globalization. Not only are our economies intertwined, but our cultures are intermixed, and our political systems are influenced by each other. Which country or countries do you think is best suited to adapting to globalization and managing the current crisis? Which system(s) seem to be having the most difficult time adapting? Why? Make sure to cite specific political, economic, or cultural aspects of these systems to support your answer.

RUSSIA RELATED QUESTIONS: You will be given one of these questions on the final exam. You do not have to answer it. However, if you choose to do so, it will be worth 75 rather than 50 points.

(1) Since the breakup of the Soviet Union, Russians have participated in numerous elections for national and local offices and new political parties have developed. But are holding regular elections sufficient in themselves to label Russia a "democracy"? What other traits are necessary to find in a political system to properly call it a democracy along the lines of the countries studied in the first half of the course? Examine the current political system of Russia, particularly taking into account the rule of Vladimir Putin and Dmitry Medvedev. Is Russia a democracy?

(2) Russia and China once formed the backbone of the communist world, with one-party dictatorships and command economies. Going back to the 1980s, each has followed a very different reform path, however. Explain how each transitioned from the previous communist system and describe the type of system each has today. Taking into consideration both political and economic concerns, which country chose the better path to reform? Why?