

AU GOVT Comprehensive Field Exam in Comparative Politics – April 2017

Directions: You have 72 hours to answer THREE (3) of the following questions: one question from Part I, one question from Part II, and one question from Part III. Your answers will be judged for their responsiveness to the specific question, their skilled and ample citation of the relevant literature, and their clarity of organization. Any arguments you advance should be defended against plausible counter-arguments. The material used in your answer to any question should not substantially overlap with the material used in other questions. Take time to organize your answer. You may consult other sources, but we expect you to compose the answer yourself (and needless to say you should cite all other sources in text and in a bibliographic entry). Your entire exam should not be longer than 25 double spaced pages in Calibri, Arial, or Times New Roman font, with one inch margins. Please number the pages.

PART I

- 1) How 'durable' is authoritarianism? As governments succeed in limiting civil society in many parts of the globe, should we understand authoritarianism from a structural viewpoint, an institutional one, or an ideological perspective, among others?
- 2) As Holston argues, democratization in the 20th century did not result in egalitarian citizenship. "Moreover, if cities have historically been the locus of citizenship's development, global urbanization creates especially volatile conditions, as cities become crowded with marginalized citizens and non-citizens who contest their exclusions. In these contexts, citizenship is unsettled and unsettling." Comment and link to other debates about democratization, citizenship, globalization, and urbanization.

PART II

- 1) Please explain what you consider to be the most useful approaches to understanding the persistence of political inequality, its consequences for the potential strength of democratic governance, and the effectiveness of strategies aimed at diminishing differences in political resources and power. What would you identify as the most noteworthy differences in the ways that political inequality is manifested -- for example, along lines of gender, income, race or religion -- in the Middle East in contrast with other regions of the developing world?
- 2) Gender equality in various political institutions is still an elusive goal. Examine some of the primary reforms in institutional design across the globe to address gender inequality. How do theories of comparative politics and various methodological approaches help scholars and movement activists address these questions? What are the limitations of some of these approaches? What new approaches may be needed?

PART III

- 1) Scales and other precise forms of "measuring" democracy have proliferated over the last 20 years, with a range of strengths and weaknesses, both in general and with specific reference to each one.

Using at least three of these measures (Freedom House, VDEM, Polity, or others), discuss their strengths and weaknesses and consider them in particular reference to the MENA region. Do these indicators explain the lack of democratization in that region of the world, or are other indicators needed? If other indicators are needed in addition to or instead of measures of democratization in order to better assess variance in levels of regime liberalization, please explain what those would be, and with particular reference to cases as well as indicators.

- 2) What are the principal *political* factors that impede successful economic development in the Middle East, and to what extent do these vary across sub-sets of countries in the region? To what extent are positive trajectories of development achieved by some democratic and authoritarian political systems elsewhere in the Global South indicative of potential pathways to economic success in the Middle East? What accounts for the possibility that lessons from other regions may or may not travel well to the Middle East?