

2024-2025 SPRING PHD QUALIFICATION EXAM - QUESTIONS

COMPARATIVE POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

1) Write an essay that compares Turkey's "presidential government system" with the presidential system in the United States. In answering the question, make sure you also discuss the major characteristics as well as the advantages and disadvantages of presidential systems.

2) "Scholars have paid increasing attention to democratic backsliding, yet efforts to explain this phenomenon [still] remain inchoate." (Waldner and Lust, 2018: 93). According to the Comparative Politics literature, what is "democratic backsliding"? What are the types and modes of democratic backsliding, both in the past and as of today in the world? What are the explanatory powers of; (i) agency-based, (ii) culture-based, (iii) institutional, and (iv) structural accounts regarding the onset and continuation of democratic backsliding in the world?

Please clearly conceptualize "democratic backsliding" and assess AT LEAST three (of the four) types of explanations for its outset. Meaningfully cite and engage with at least one scholarly work for each sub-question above.

3) Populism has been a contested and widely debated concept in political science. Comparative politics scholars have applied the term to movements, leaders, policies and ideologies across different regions and time periods, often with varying definitions. Is populism a coherent and universally applicable concept, or fundamentally dependent on specific historical and regional contexts? Discuss whether populism should be understood as a transhistorical and cross-regional political phenomenon or whether its meaning shifts so significantly across cases that it risks becoming an analytically empty term. To support your argument with reference to key theoretical approaches to the concept and comparing at least two different regional and/or historical contexts (e.g., 19th century Russian, 20th century Latin American, contemporary European, Latin American or US contexts).

MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL THOUGHT

Please answer **two** of the following questions:

- 1- A precondition for transformation in Adorno's and Horkheimer's political thinking in 'self-reflection'. Explain and Discuss
- 2- What are the strengths and weaknesses of discussing political freedom in the language of rights?
- 3- What is the rule of law? Is the rule of law a normative and/or democratic principle of legitimacy? Discuss.
How can we evaluate the relationship between human rights and the rule of law. Answer by reference to the works two figures among the following: Schmitt, Ranciere, Rawls and Habermas

POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY

Please answer **two** of the following questions:

- 1) "Civic political culture" is defined as the necessary condition of a well-functioning participatory democracy in the liberal-pluralist literature which presumed Western, predominantly Anglo-American, cases as the model. A similar orientation can also be attested in the theory of deliberative democracy. In what ways do the contemporary social and political dynamics, like post-truth, neo-racist, right-wing authoritarian populism, undermine this taken-for-granted assumptions? Which new alternatives (as models of democracy) are in emergence through contemporary social movements? Discuss.
- 2) It is now widely recognized that the social and political struggles over citizenship have acquired a new intensity after the 1980s. To what extent this is related to the so-called "postmodern turn" in political sociology? Give three examples to reflect on this question by thinking about contemporary citizenship scholarship
- 3) What is meant by cultural politics? What does it have to do with political sociology? In your answer discuss and evaluate the contribution of Foucauldian theory of power and discourse in setting the scope, focus and subject matter of the field.

TURKISH POLITICS

Please answer **two** of the following questions:

Turkish Politics

1) “The frequent conflicts, divisions, and clashes across cultural fault lines (in both domestic and foreign politics) has generated a perennial Kulturkampf [cultural struggle] in Turkey.” (Kalaycıoğlu, 2023: 427). Would you agree that there is a Kulturkampf in Turkish politics, why or why not? What are the defining elements and actors of such Kulturkampf (or the lack thereof) in Turkish politics? Are these mostly institutional, structural and/or agency-related issues? Please discuss (cite at least two scholarly Works from Turkish Politics literature for each of your explanation).

2. Please discuss the position of Turkish Islamism vis-à-vis modernisation and/or capitalism with specific reference to its chief ideologues.

3. As the recent protests against the arrest of Ekrem İmamoğlu have shown, the legacy of Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) is being reevaluated in Turkish politics. Especially among young people who subscribe to what might be called "secular nationalist" or "civil/civic Atatürkism", there is a visible tendency to appropriate and even glorify Unionism. This is indeed surprising as most of the main ideological tendencies within Turkish politics, Kemalism, liberalism, Islamism and socialism, have for different reasons cast a negative image of the CUP.

Write an essay discussing why the legacy of CUP has been controversial in Turkish politics. Be sure to discuss the current Unionist "revival" as well and analyze the possible historical and contemporary factors that could explain it.