

**FOR STUDENTS GRADUATING IN MAY AND DECEMBER 2024
INSTRUCTIONS FOR SENIOR COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION
POLITICS DEPARTMENT
UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS**

DATES FOR STUDENTS GRADUATING IN MAY 2024

- **Wednesday, January 17, 2024.** By this date, make sure you have registered for Senior Comps.
- **Monday, January 29.** Deadline for students to email their choice of texts (for Part II) to poldept@udallas.edu. Students may change their mind (by email) up to February 12.
- **Saturday, February 17, 9:00 am to 1:00 pm.** Part I (in-class written examination).
- **Saturday, February 24, 9:00 am to 12:00 pm.** Part II (in-class written examination).
- **April 2024 (DATE TBD):** Retake date for those who fail any part of the Senior comps.

DATES FOR STUDENTS GRADUATING IN DECEMBER 2024

- **September 15, 2024:** Deadline for notifying the Politics Department, poldept@udallas.edu, that a student will graduate in December and needs to take comprehensive examinations.
- **NOVEMBER 2024 (DATE TBD):** Part I and Part II of senior comprehensive examinations

DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

The Senior Comprehensive Examination is administered in two parts.

Part I is a four-hour, closed-book, in-class written examination, usually given on a Saturday morning in two 2-hour segments. The department will supply blue books for the exam.

Part I-a (political philosophy): Students have two hours to write on one of the three questions listed below. Students must be prepared to write on all three questions. The question will be selected shortly before the examination by the Politics Department.

Part I-b (American politics): Students have two hours to write on one of the American politics questions below. Students choose which question to write on. Students are not permitted to write on questions for which they have not had the relevant Politics course. Part I-b must be completed and handed in during the second two-hour portion of the in-class examination.

Part II is a three-hour, in-class written examination, usually given on the Saturday morning one week after the administration of Part I. The question will be on an author in political philosophy chosen by the student from the list below. Students should select and study their author's text with care before the examination. Students are not permitted to select a text which they have not studied for at least 3 weeks in a Politics course.

For Part II, students may bring the text as annotated by the student, but may not bring any other notes. The department will supply blue books for the exam.

For both Parts I and II: Answers should have a clear thesis and appropriate supporting evidence, quoted or paraphrased from the authors being explained. For Part I-a, students are asked to focus on a particular topic (e.g., liberty, the best regime, etc.) as treated by two or three authors, from at least two different courses in the Politics curriculum. The question is meant to test whether students are capable of comparing and contrasting these thinkers on this topic. More generally, the Comprehensive Examination is intended to test whether students can recall material learned in different courses and discuss that material in a coherent way.

GRADING POLICY

Each student's Comprehensive Examination is graded jointly by at least two faculty members. Students earn one of three grades on the examination: Pass, High Pass with Nomination for Distinction, or Fail. "Pass" is for essays of C- to A- quality. "High Pass" is for solid A-quality work. Students who earn High Pass with Nomination for Distinction will be passed with Distinction upon the successful completion of a half-hour oral examination with two members of the Politics faculty.

Between 2006 and 2023, an average of between 3 and 4 students per year failed part or all of the Comprehensive Examination. This was almost always because the students had not devoted enough time to prepare adequately.

Students who fail any part of the exam will be given a chance to retake the part of the exam that they have failed. Students who retake Part I-a will once again be required to prepare all 3 questions, with the faculty selecting one question just prior to the exam.

The retake of Part I-b and Part II will involve the same questions as provided in the initial attempt.

Students who fail any part of the retake will be ineligible for graduation until the following semester,

when they will be allowed to take the entire Comprehensive Examination again.

viewed these arrangements? What reforms, if any, have they urged to address them? Do you think the process through which law is made today is more or less democratic than the Founders' intended? Why?

5. **Lincoln.** In what ways did Lincoln pursue a policy of gradual or accelerated emancipation—and to what extent were such policies consistent with the American Founding? Give evidence on both sides and your own assessment. Quote or paraphrase liberally from Lincoln's major speeches and from at least one of his opponents, such as Stephen Douglas or John Calhoun.

6. **20th Century.** Describe the philosophical transformation lying behind the construction of the administrative state. Who were the professors who were intimately involved with the organization of the Progressive Party of 1912? Why did these professors characterize their politics as a "social politics"? How did their conception of the State differ, on the one hand, from the principles "held by the men of 1776"? How, on the other hand, did it differ from the views of the "extreme socialists"? Finally, why did these professors frequently liken the overall task of public policy to gardening?

7. American Foreign Policy

Compare and contrast one or more of the following presidents (Woodrow Wilson, George W. Bush, Barack Obama, and Donald Trump) with the Founders as to the following points

- (a) The purpose (or purposes) of foreign policy;
- (b) The policies and other means for pursuing this purpose; and
- (c) The moral limits on such means.

Your answer should utilize relevant official documents from the founding as well as the speeches and writings of the pertinent policy maker(s).

8. American Political Thought

Have successive generations of Americans thought the same way about what justice requires of us in relation to race? Choosing one American from each of the following categories, and drawing on specific writings in support of your response, explain the views of:

- 1) Thomas Jefferson or Abraham Lincoln
- 2) John C. Calhoun, Stephen Douglas, or Alexander Stephens
- 3) John W. Burgess, Martin Luther King, or Stokely Carmichael

9. Public Policy

Discuss a reasonable public policy response to an issue of contemporary, political concern. Frankly discuss what you know and what you don't know, and give suggestions for further research or study; briefly describe a variety of plausible policy responses, whether you support them or not; and provide a final policy recommendation outlining a reasonable, productive course of action that is simultaneously rooted in strong ethical reasoning and principles of good government.

TEXTS FOR PART II

The second part of the examination will consist of an essay written on a question that addresses a specific text. The text is to be chosen by the student from the list below, but the question will be written by a Politics professor. Editions to be used are those assigned in Politics classes.

Other texts are possible with the approval of the chairman.

Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, selections assigned in Politics classes.

Plato,

Aristotle, *Politics*, selections assigned in Politics classes.

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, selections assigned in Politics classes.

Cicero, *De Officiis*, selections assigned in Politics classes.

Plutarch, *Parallel Lives*, selections assigned in Political Regimes.

St. Augustine, *The City of God*, selections assigned in Political Regimes.

St. Thomas Aquinas, "Treatise on Law."

Thomas More, *Utopia*.

Hobbes, *Leviathan*, selections assigned in Enlightenment.

Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, selections assigned in Enlightenment.

Rousseau, selections assigned in Enlightenment.

Hamilton, Madison, *The Federalist Papers*, selections assigned in Enlightenment.