AU GOVT Comprehensive Field Exam in Comparative Politics – October 2016

Directions: You have 72 hours to answer THREE (3) of the following questions: <u>one</u> question from Part I, <u>one</u> question from Part II, and <u>one</u> 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) "Thin models of rationality are insufficient to explain individual behavior, including voting or participation in social movements." Evaluate this claim, exploring both rationalist and other approaches to participation.

2) Constructivist scholars argue that identities are not fixed but change over time in both form and salience. To what extent does this approach help us understand how identity shapes politics? Secondly, what does the literature see as the most important factors shaping identity, and under what conditions are these drivers of identity change most likely to operate?

3) Please discuss political obstacles to developing countries seeking to "catch up" with more advanced economies and forge more prosperous and equitable societies. What do you consider to be the strengths and weaknesses of alternative conceptual frameworks for addressing this challenge, and how might they apply differently across regions and countries in the Global South.

PART II

1) How does social movement theory help us understand political transformation as well as its failure? You may use a regional area or a particular historical period to help focus your answer.

2) Is there a difference we can readily assess between military-authoritarian regimes and single party-authoritarian regimes in terms of what groups they respond to and levels of institutionalization? Or are they both just subsets of "authoritarian regimes" and difficult to categorize beyond that broad label? Please reference multiple cases in your answer.

3) While Britain is exiting from the EU, scholars tell us that regionalism and archipelagos of mega-cities may be the future of the globe. In the twenty-first century, boundaries between local, domestic, national, regional, and international are increasingly challenged. What does

a globalized, fluid, hyper-connected globe and market, where crises in one area rapidly affect another, mean for the more traditional focus in comparative politics on the domestic arena of nations? What new theoretical and methodological approaches are particularly useful to understand this phenomenon?

PART III

1) Theories of rentier politics have become discussed more broadly in comparative politics as impediments to democratization proliferate in many regions of the world. Rentier politics is only one idea which explains the slow pace of democratization in many parts of the world, and its regression in others. Greg Gause and Sean Yom, among others, have argued that it is the monarchs that survived intact after the Arab Spring and even helped save each other. How have the particular arrangements between resource flows, legitimacy, coercive and political institutions in the Middle East and other parts of the globe, coalesced to allow some regimes to survive the threat of the Arab Spring or other claims for greater political participation and power sharing?

2) "Democracy has faced structural obstacles in the Middle East. The Arab Spring held some promise, but has largely failed to live up to this promise." Reply with several examples.