COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICS
EASTER 2015

Answer one question from each of your three concentrations. You should write two essays on Friday and one essay on Saturday.

Type the full text of the question at the beginning of each essay. You should email your exam answers in separate files (.doc or .pdf format) named by your surname, concentration, and question number (e.g., Smith_national_3) to Dr. Andrea Hatcher at ahatcher@sewanee.edu by 6 pm each day. On Friday, Dr. Dragojevic will collect the exams; on Saturday, you may deposit your exam in the dropbox at the ATC desk.

Your answers are expected to integrate learning across multiple courses. Each essay should present an identifiable thesis statement; define terms, concepts, and theories; and apply the work of specific authors.

Remember: According to your pledge to uphold the Honor Code, you are bound not to share the contents of this exam with anyone, and your work here is to be completed without assistance.

NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND POLICIES

1. What is the role of formal institutions such as legislatures, judiciaries, elections, and sub-national governments in partly democratic and authoritarian states? How do these institutions promote accountability, representation, and political norms? What limitations do they face? What policy suggestions would you make to improve such institutions?

2. Political institutions are designed; they develop; and, at times, they decay. Choose two national-level institutions (e.g., legislative, executive, judicial) and assess their origins and evolution in light of the functions that each must perform and the goals of the actors that fill them. Invoke theories and examples as appropriate.

3. Only recently have scholars begun to pay much attention to informal institutions in national political systems. What are informal institutions and what is their relation to formal institutions? How do they influence political processes and socioeconomic development? Use examples of two informal institutions in two different countries to illustrate your argument.

GLOBAL INSTITUTIONS AND POLICIES

1. Using examples from at least two issue areas (such as global health, environment, or human rights), explain the factors that shape international policy-making. In your analysis, be sure to pay attention to factors at different levels of analysis—inter-state (international), state (domestic), societal, and individual. Additionally, utilize liberalism,
realism, and constructivist theories to explain why some issues rise to the global policy-making agendas, while others do not.

2. How do International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) and the international community shape outcomes related to two of these issue areas—gender equality, civilian protection, and international security? Discuss at least one positive and one negative case as you analyze the relationship between global and local conditions, factors, and processes. In your answer, draw from relevant interdisciplinary scholarship and develop your own thesis.

3. Describe the different roles played by Inter-Governmental Organizations (IGOs) in global politics. How do IR theories explain the establishment of IGOs? How do IGOs engage with states and nonstate actors? What factors contribute to (or hinder) their effectiveness in achieving their purposes and goals? In your answer, use examples from at least three different IGOs.

DEVELOPMENT AND POLITICAL ECONOMY

1. For many, economic liberalism offers the greatest hope for improving the lot of the world’s poor. Construct an essay in which you discuss what you see as the relationship between global economic liberalism and economic inequality. Be sure to contend for your own view of the most promising path to reducing inequality.

2. What is the influence of economic policies on gender relations? In some cases, the economic development contributed to a greater level of gender equality, while in others, the situation remained the same or worsened. In other words, under what conditions does economic development promote gender equality? Compare at least two different cases in your answer.

3. What is the relationship between global-level processes (e.g., colonialism, neoliberalism, globalization, or the rise of global terrorism) and local-level political and socioeconomic development? Do scholars and policymakers place too much or not enough emphasis on global factors in the development process? In your essay, use examples from two of the following regions—Africa, Latin America, former Soviet states, and Asia. Make sure to refer to major scholarship and to define all concepts.

LAW AND JUSTICE

1. Civil liberties and rights are among the great values of democracy. Justify that claim and explain how liberties and rights are protected by political institutions and processes.
2. Discuss both formal and informal processes of achieving justice in post-conflict societies, such as trials in local and national courts, truth and reconciliation commissions, civil society initiatives of collecting survivors’ accounts or data on the missing persons, and trials in international courts. What processes, or combination of processes, are the most optimal in helping societies achieve long-term peace, or prevent the recurrence of political violence? Please compare two cases, state why you selected these cases, and build on existing scholarship as you develop your argument.

3. Inequalities between groups (e.g. racial, gender, class, religious) persist both across and within nations. Some seek to address inequity through formal legal or institutional means, while others advocate for alternative methods to bring about greater equality. Identify and discuss two cases in which inequalities are addressed either through formal legal or institutional means, or by some other alternative method (e.g. sociocultural change).

CONFLICT AND PEACE

1. Why are some post-conflict societies able to maintain peace, while others revert back to war? What are the roles of social, economic, political factors in facilitating lasting peace? In your answer, make sure to examine local, state (domestic), and international (interstate) factors, using ideas from liberal, realist, and constructivist theories.

2. Realists assert that the distribution of power in the international system matters for conflict and cooperation. In this essay analyze changes in power distribution from post-World War II until the present. What factors contributed to these changes? How can the distribution of power affect conflict and cooperation? How would liberals and constructivists respond to the realist perspective? In the essay, make sure to define concepts and to highlight major scholarly findings.

3. Why are civilians targeted by political actors involved in armed conflicts? Evaluate the effectiveness of attacking civilians compared to other means of obtaining redress of political grievances. Using at least three detailed case analysis, identify the conditions under which targeting civilians work, and when they fail. Make sure to define your terms and to cite important works in the field.

IDENTITY AND DIVERSITY

1. Under what conditions are social identities politicized? Scholars disagree in their perspective on how social, or collective, identities, such as ethnic, religious, or racial identities, should be defined. In your answer, include your own conceptualization of social identities in addition to a brief discussion of existing scholarship. Furthermore,
scholars disagree in their explanations of how social identities emerge, why they become
politicized to greater extent in some historical periods, and why certain cultural traits are
selected as the defining characteristics of politically relevant identities rather than some
other possible cultural traits. Present these different positions, and form your own
argument or thesis in response to these questions. You may use examples from one or
more countries to illustrate your argument.

2. Some groups (racial, ethnic, gender, religious, etc.) are better descriptively represented
than others within governing bodies (e.g. legislatures, bureaucracies, judiciaries). How
does the presence or absence of members of particular groups in government offices
affect the substantive representation received by members of these groups? Make an
argument that addresses 1) the level of descriptive representation of at least two groups
in governing bodies, 2) whether there is a connection between descriptive and
substantive representation for those two groups, and 3) whether descriptive
representation is necessary for substantive representation of these groups’ interests.

3. Identities can compete as factions in pluralistic democracies. How do individual or group
identities (religion, race, gender, etc.) affect political behaviors? Assess the normative
implications of such factions operating in political systems.

CITIZENSHIP

1. What accounts for differences in states’ immigration and citizenship policies? In your
response, please present the most prominent scholarly theories and develop your own
explanation. As you develop your own argument, select three cases/countries and
mention why you selected these cases, or why you think these cases are especially
beneficial to compare and analyze. Also, please define key concepts used throughout
the essay.

2. What is the proper place and role of democracy in managing well the relationship
between humans and the natural world? In your answer, please identify and explain the
theoretical premises of your view, support your position with concrete examples, and
identify and respond to what you see as the two most likely criticisms of your view.

3. Some consider participation in formal political activities (voting, contacting your elected
representatives, etc.) to be a requirement of good citizenship. For groups in which
participation through formal political channels may be futile, and opportunities largely
foreclosed, informal methods such as social movements or protest may be employed.
Identify and discuss the various ways in which citizens may influence political and social
outcomes through both formal and informal mechanisms, and the costs and benefits of
each approach. Considering at least two specific cases, to what do you attribute
variations in levels of success?
POLITICAL ACTION

1. What is a social movement, and how do they form? What is the relationship between social movements, political parties, and interest groups in the political process? When are social movements successful, and by what measure? Discuss explanations provided by scholars of social movements and contentious politics, and formulate your own argument in response to this question. Use examples from at least two different cases as supporting evidence for your claims.

2. Which political resistance movements are more successful, in your view, the violent or the non-violent resistance movements? Develop your own argument in response to this question, while drawing on existing scholarship. Please, use at least one example of a violent resistance movement, or an insurgency, and a non-violent one, in your discussion. Also, please remember to define all relevant concepts mentioned in your response.

3. What is the role of political values and civil society in democratic transitions? How can these factors urge or limit democratic processes? How are these factors inter-related? Use 3 examples of democratic transitions (successful or failed) to illustrate the role of these variables. In this essay, make sure to define all terms and to engage the scholarship on these two concepts.