

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
PH.D. COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION IN POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY
FEBRUARY 1-5, 2021

You are required to answer THREE (3) QUESTIONS (ONE QUESTION FROM EACH OF PARTS A, B & C). Each answer should be 10-12 pages (12-point font, double-spaced and standard margins) in length. The complete exam should not total more than 36 pages in length (12-point font, double-spaced and standard margins) not including references. THE COMMITTEE WILL NOT READ PAST THE 36TH PAGE.

Part A

1. "The United States provides an environment for state policy, party politics, and social movements that is unique. Consequently, theory and explanation for American political sociology do not travel well to other societies." Comment critically on this statement, using examples from the international political sociology literature to back up your claims.
2. Bearing in mind the book's overall concerns and thrust, re-write Chapter VI of *The Development of the Modern State ("State and Society Under Liberalism and After")* by Gianfranco Poggi. In doing so attend to cross-national differences by attending to the trajectory of state formation for one country outside of Western Europe.

Part B

3. Do politics and policies empower marginalized groups? Much of the political sociology literature – whether focused on public preferences, social movement mobilization, and advocacy – has largely put forth a “demand-side” explanation for how positive social change comes about; for how disenfranchised groups gain access to the political process and presumably challenge status quo politics and policy. In your response, challenge this one-sided explanation by describing a more “supply-side” process well-documented by some sociologists and by many political scientists. In your answer, and using concrete and well-documented examples accessible to a general audience, discuss how institutions and policies can give voice to members of historically disadvantaged groups, what this means for social change, and what this means for mobilization and the creation of new political constituencies.
4. Have recent examples of mobilization and collective action – from BLM to Resistance to climate change activism and so on – challenged extant social movement frameworks, perspectives, and theories? The social movements area in sociology has largely been informed by three big perspectives: an organizational one via (but not exclusively) resource mobilization, a political process model and a more micro perspective often focused on framing but also with strong ties to rational choice models. Have recent examples of political action defied these understandings (how and why or why not)? In your explanation be sure to specifically address each of these theories in relation to recent examples of your choosing and then make sure to elaborate on what these cases tell us about the status of the social movements field moving forward.

Part C

5. Scholars studying social/political cleavages debate whether “class” is dead or alive in analyzing voting behaviour in the 21st century. Discuss both the theoretical underpinnings of this debate and its implications for the analysis of current partisan politics. How does this debate relate to the changing values in post-industrial societies and identity politics informed by intersectionality approaches?

6. Institutions are an important concept and theoretical approach in studies of the welfare state, party politics, and social movements. Discuss how political sociologists employ institutions as an explanatory condition in these three subfields and critically assess the strengths and limitations of an institutional argument. How do institutionalists address the question of “structure and agency”?