US Politics, Institutions, and Policy Exam (USPIP)

Beginning Spring, 2004, the comprehensive written exam for the USPIP field will be designed as follows. Students will be required to answer three questions of their choice from the following sections (which are offered along with brief explanations). In each section, there will be at least two, and perhaps more, questions:

I. General
This includes topics that reach across several fields, especially theory and methodology. Questions in the general section may ask about processes and issues that are not limited to any particular subfield, such as political reform or social capital.

II. National Institutions.
This section will include questions about Congress, the presidency and the executive branch, and/or the federal court system. There is no guarantee that there will be questions offered about each particular branch of the government.

III. Political Behavior and Elections
This section is concerned about individual and collective issues raised by the study of public opinion, elections, and campaigns, along with their relationship to the governmental process. Issues related to institutions and governmental procedures may be raised in these questions so far as they concern the ways in which individuals participate in politics.

IV. Political Parties and Organized Interests
This section draws its content from studies of voluntary political organizations and their relationship to the political system. It may include questions about the major and minor parties as well as any of the many different sorts of organized interests.

V. Subnational
This section deals with research on state and local politics and intergovernmental relations. It may also include questions about special districts, such as school and water districts or other metropolitan organizations.

The directions for the exam will begin with the following statement:

Directions: You must choose three of these sections and write on one question from each. You are expected to support your arguments with adequate citations to appropriate literature, but you are reminded to respond to the questions that are asked. Please be aware that your exam is evaluated both on the quality of the individual answers as well as on its overall quality. Use of the same material to answer several different questions is one sign of weakness in that regard and it may result in a failure in the overall evaluation even though each individual question is considered to be satisfactory. Please limit your answers to approximately 2500 words per question, not including bibliography.

We reserve the right to add fields at times of our choosing. In particular, depending on the interests of the faculty, we could add sections on Public Law or Judicial Politics.