Introduction:

Preliminary examinations are about demonstrating breadth; dissertations are about demonstrating specialized knowledge. Good answers to preliminary examination questions may illustrate critical points with examples from one or many countries so long as case material (regardless of how many countries it involves) buttresses theoretical arguments. Accordingly, an essay should convey that a student is: (1) well-versed in the key literature and (2) able to knowledgeably apply a case or cases of their own choosing to that literature.

You must answer one question in each section (Sections I-III). Answers for each question should be no more than 2,500 words. Please note the word count at the end of each answer. You may turn in your reference pages by 1:00 pm the day after your examination. Your reference pages are not counted in the word limit. Note: the substantive research area(s) that you select in your answers in Sections I and II should be different from the substantive area selected in Section III.

Section I: Comparative Theory (Answer one question in this section)

1. Pick a substantive area in comparative politics for which there are few, if any, political cultural based theories. How could this substantive topic benefit from the political culture approach?

2. Typologies or classifications systems are common in political science, such as those relating to type of governments, regimes, electoral systems, and so on. In many cases, these typologies have been (and continue to be) refined and/or further subdivided over the years. Pick one substantive topic area and discuss how typological refinement and development advance theory and empirical evaluation. How might it impede both theoretical development and empirical testing of theories within this topic area?

Section II: Comparative Methods (Answer one question in this section)

1. Many fields in political science have been influenced by new developments in experimental research design. For a specific substantive area of interest, can you envision an experimental research design to test a theory? Why would an experimental research design be particularly important for this substantive topic (i.e., how would this design address gaps and/or debates in the literature)? What would be the benefits of this design over other research designs? And the drawbacks?

2. Causal inference is at the heart of most social science research, and yet inferring causal effects is one of our most difficult tasks, resulting in continued methodological innovation and discussion within the field. What methodological tools do we have to infer causal effects? Compare two methods for causal inference and discuss the relative merits of each. Please make sure to draw on specific examples from comparative politics research.
Section III: Substantive and Thematic Area  
(Answer one question in this section)

1. What factors increase the likelihood that a party will incorporate ethnic group issues or concerns? What factors decrease that likelihood? Does the existence or creation of an ethnic party increase or decrease the likelihood other political parties will take up these issues?

2. Compare and contrast what we know about gender and representation among three different regions of the world. Are there some finding and trends that are more universal and applicable than others? Are some findings more regionally specific and, if so, explain why.

3. What does the evidence suggest about the likely effect of electoral rules versus electoral systems on the legislative representation of underrepresented groups in society? Which electoral rules and electoral systems are most likely to benefit, and which are most likely harm efforts to increase their representation? Which factors beyond electoral institutions might have a bigger impact on increasing the representation of underrepresented groups?

4. What are the advantages and disadvantages of studying social movements, protests, or revolutions cross-nationally? Use specific examples from the comparative politics literature on social movements, protests and/or revolutions in your answer. (You do not have to discuss all three – social movements, protests, revolutions – but can.)

5. To what extent does research published in the last decade or so change our understanding of the relationship between economic development and democratization? To what extent is recent research congruent with Seymour Martin Lipset's original statement of the thesis that economic development is conducive to democratization?