International Relations Preliminary Exam
Spring 2002

Instructions: Students must answer three (3) of the following questions.

Advice to the student: Choose questions that enable you to demonstrate a broad knowledge of international relations. Examinations should demonstrate knowledge of the history and development of the field. Relevant real world examples should be integrated and important recent published literature should be cited.

A good exam is characterized by coherent and forceful arguments based on existing work and evidence in the field. A weak exam is one where the argument is made in isolation from the literature and/or where no argument is made. Almost all the questions are designed to allow you to take a position on an issue. Do so, and don’t simply produce an annotated bibliography. In other words, use the questions to who that you both know the material and can present an argument as a scholar.

We anticipate that each question can be answered in approximately 3000 words. Please double-space your answer, provide reasonable margins, and number the pages.

Questions:

1. Explain the primary issues of international law raised by the war in Afghanistan.

2. In recent years, a new wave of scholarship has advocated “interpretivist” or “post-positivist” methods in international relations. Discussing a few key works in this area, elaborate the case for these methods. What is gained and what is lost in the use of such methods?

3. To what extent does current mediation theory enable us to systematically evaluate and analyze mediation efforts in international politics? What is needed to construct better theories of mediation than exist at present?

4. Some scholars have suggested that in the 21st century widespread environmental degradation, global health concerns, and economic well-being should be understood as aspects of "security" that have consequences as far-reaching as those entailed by the traditional concept of this term. To the extent that security is defined in this way, how do we need to modify our analytical approaches to security studies?

5. The North-South dialogue and demands by Third world countries for a New International Economic Order that characterized international debates in the 1970s and 1980s are generally considered to have failed. Discuss the competing explanations for this failure.

6. It is now more than 30 years since the publication of Allison’s Essence of Decision. What progress has been made in the bureaucratic approach to foreign policy analysis in that time?
7. Discuss the relative merits of using time series versus cross-sectional techniques in studying international behavior. Be sure to use specific examples of studies in the literature to illustrate your point.

8. Choose two issues in international relations where there have been multiple statistical studies. One issue should be characterized by consistent empirical results (i.e. studies that have reached generally the same conclusions), the other by inconsistent empirical results. After reviewing the literatures on each issue, discuss the reasons that might account for the success of the statistical approach in one area and its failure in the other.

9. Perhaps the most important intellectual divide in the international relations field is between those who believe that political behavior consistently reflects rational choices and those who do not. The former argue that the best way to understand the behavior of actors is to discover their interests. The latter stress ways in which emotions, cognitive biases, organizational process, and cultural orientations influence or even determine behavior. Assess the relative explanatory power of these two approaches by evaluating the research of two scholars whose work, in your opinion, exemplifies the best of each approach.