INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Fall 2003

Preliminary Exam

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 recently 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 show 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 answers, provide reasonable margins, and number the pages.

1. Are rationalist and constructivist approaches fundamentally incompatible, or are there possible complementarities? Discuss.

2. To what extent has the world move “beyond sovereignty”? Are other affiliations of greater significance or does state sovereignty remain a defining characteristic of the international system? Support your answer with theoretical and empirical evidence.

3. Which international legal principles or questions has the international dealt with the most consistently over the last few years? Explain whether and how recent events have further developed or retarded the international community’s understanding of these principles/issues.

4. Reflecting changes in the international system, the past decade has seen a flurry of articles and books on the process and results of international mediation. Many of these works are fascinating but atheoretical and based on a single case study while much of the cross-national research appears to be either obvious or contradictory. What do we actually know about the factors that are associated with successful mediation? What key questions remain unanswered? How might ONE of these critical questions be studied?

5. The Bretton Woods Institutions (WTO, IMF, World Bank) have in the past decade become the objects of mass protests as well as internal criticism from the principal member states and staff. What are some of the proposals for reforming these institutions? What is the likelihood that these reform proposals will be adopted and successful?
6. The field of International Relations seems to be increasingly fragmented. What are the sources of this fragmentation? Is there any remaining “core” of the field of international relations, and, if so, of what does it consist?

7. Scholars of international relations have been giving increasing attention to the role of norms in international behavior. What are the most significant contributions to this literature? What problems does the study of norms involve?

8. How do international institutions help to mitigate conflict and facilitate coordination and cooperation in international trade and finance? Why do economic nationalist dismiss the possibility of such international cooperation? If states arguably are primarily motivated by relative gains and prone to conflict due to the perpetual security dilemma, why do we see such a prominent role for international financial institutions and trade agreements in today’s global economy?

9. King, Keohane and Verba have argued that the same considerations of research design used in quantitative research also should be applied in qualitative research. Do you agree or disagree with this as it pertains to research on international behavior? Focus your answer on three or four ways where international relations research might be seen as an exception to this rule, and then explain why it is or is not.

10. Global events since September 11, 2001 have caused scholars and policymakers to try and understand the possible shape of the coming international security order. Some have argued that the U.S.’s unipolar moment might become institutionalized, others suggests that there might now develop an alliance to fight terrorism, and still others imaging a period of fluidity and flux that provides yet another opportunity for the United Nations to become more deeply involved in “threats to international peace and security.” In this essay you are to demonstrate how two different theoretical approaches offer different visions of the likely global security order. Be very clear about the theoretical claims of each approach and how those claims lead to predictions regarding the future of international security order.

11. From the perspective of theories of international behavior, to what extent was international conflict during the 20th century typical; to what extent was it atypical? Consider both sides of the question; and be specific as to which theories, authors, and characteristics of conflict you are considering.