International Relations Preliminary Examination
September, 1998

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 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 answer, provide reasonable margins, and number the pages.

Questions:
1. In recent years, the industrialized democracies have frequently attempted to use economic sanctions rather than military force to cause states to change their policies. Based on whatever literatures you find relevant to this issue in international conflict, international political economy and/or foreign policy, under what circumstances (if any) is this substitution pressure for military force likely to be successful?

2. Studies of international conflict usually sample from a broad span of history -- typically the post-Napoleonic period (e.g., the Correlates of War project), and sometimes even the post medieval period (e.g., the "long cycle" studies). Implicit in such designs is the assumption that the phenomenon of "war" is sufficiently consistent over a long period of time as to make generalizations about war valid even when they span centuries. Assess the strengths and weaknesses of that proposition: you should feel free to argue that some aspects of the phenomenon are consistent across time and that others are not.

3. Despite occasional setbacks, trade liberalization remains one of the major accomplishments of the post-war international system. Present the strongest argument(s) you can in favor of the contention that international institutions have played a dominant role in bringing this about. What is the strongest argument(s) against institutionalist explanation?

4. "If states were truly rational, war would never occur." Discuss.

5. What roles do norms play in world affairs? Make sure in your essay to discuss specific norms like sovereignty, the non-use of weapons of mass destruction, reciprocity, and human rights. Also be sure to discuss the appropriate literature and empirical efforts that address this question.
6. Make the argument that international economic and security structures are the primary determinant of foreign policy. Use specific examples of research in foreign policy analysis and international relations to illustrate this argument. What are the main criticisms of this approach?

7. What is the conventional wisdom on the role of public opinion in foreign policy in the United States, other democracies, and non-democracies? How has this conventional wisdom been challenged?

8. Why is international law given so little attention in the study of international politics? Is this an oversight, or are there good reasons to ignore international law?

9. "Theoretical developments in international relations are no longer respecting established boundaries between international and comparative politics." Do you agree or disagree? In your essay refer to both older and more recent contributions.