International Relations Preliminary Examination
September 1999

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.

1. In his 1981 book, War and Change in World Politics, Robert Gilpin wrote the following:

"In recent years theorists of international relations have tended to stress the moderating and stabilizing influences of contemporary developments on the behavior of states, especially the increasing economic interdependence among nations and the destructiveness of modern weapons. These important developments have encouraged many individuals to believe that peaceful evolution has replaced military conflict as the principal means of adjusting relations among nation-states in the contemporary world.

In the present study we take a very different stance, a stance based on the assumption that the fundamental nature of international relations has not changed over the millennia. International relations continue to be a recurring struggle for wealth and power among independent actors in a state of anarchy. The classic history of Thucydides is as meaningful a guide to the behavior of states today as when it was written in the fifth century B.C."

Where do you come down on this debate? What evidence do you draw on? What is the most compelling argument in opposition to your position?

2. Distinguish between good and bad theory in international relations. Why is the difference significant? Cite at least two examples of each and explain why you have classified them in this way.

3. Some scholars have argued that issues such as 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 use of this term. To what extent
do we need to develop new analytical tools to understand security in this way?

4. Using the empirical literature on the causes of war, identify a hypothesis that has been generally well-supported by empirical studies, a hypothesis that has been thoroughly studied but generally not supported, and a hypothesis where the evidence is still ambiguous. In each case, identify what you regard as the key studies on the hypothesis, and evaluate both their strengths and weaknesses.

5. What do various political economists mean by the term "hegemony? How does one measure hegemony? What, if anything, is new in the articles about "hegemonic stability" that have been published in the past two decades? Is hegemonic stability more than a special case of international cooperation?

6. How can we account for the emergence in recent years for regional trading blocs, such as the EU, NAFTA, and APEC? Discuss two competing explanations, and assess their strengths and weaknesses.

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

8. What are the major theoretical approaches used by those who adopt a psychological lens for the study of foreign policy decision making? Do you find one approach more compelling than the others? Why? Overall, what have we learned about international relations from the psychological study of foreign policy?

9. What is the conventional wisdom on the determinants of small and Third World states’ foreign policy? Who has challenged this wisdom and how?