International Relations Prelim Exam
Fall 2001

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. Two decades have passed since the publication of Waltz’s Theory of International Politics. That work is still frequently cited, though rarely with approval. What good reason is there for this work to retain its central position in the field? What would be lost and gained by ignoring it?

2. Current debates about the costs and benefits of further trade liberalization are underpinned by theoretical arguments that have been debated by scholars for decades, if not centuries. Case the debate over liberalization in terms of IR theory. What can we learn from IR theory that is relevant to current policy debates on this issue?

3. What do we know about the conditions that make mediation success or failure more likely? What theoretical, normative, and methodological issues arise when scholars attempt to define mediation “success”?

4. What role do case studies play in the development of theory in International Relations? What are the advantages and the pitfalls of using case studies to examine international phenomena?

5. In recent years the United States has refused to ratify a number of international treaties including the Kyoto Convention, the International Criminal Court, the Land Mines Convention, and the Rights of the child. What impact does the United States' refusal to ratify these treaties have on the status and development of international law? Be explicit regarding the theoretical basis for your argument.

6. What would a constructivist approach to foreign policy analysis look like and how would it relate to the dominant approaches in past and
present research on foreign policy?

7. “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 research.

8. Events in recent years such as the interventions in Somalia and Kosovo have led to increased perceptions that military force is increasingly being used to address distinctly humanitarian goals. If such a change is occurring, how must we modify our understanding of international politics? To what extent do such activities undermine interest-based theories of international politics such as neoliberalism and neorealism?

9. What, if anything, does a focus on leaders’ beliefs and perceptions add to our understanding of foreign policy?