

## Comparative Politics Written Comprehensive Examination

As of 2024

### Format of the exam:

The written comprehensive exam is a five-hour closed book exam composed of **2 thematic questions** and **1 regional question**. Students choose their two themes and one region of focus in advance. Students have a choice of two prompts for each question.

### Themes:

1. Institutions and institutional change
2. States and state formation
3. Constitutionalism (constitutional design, presidential vs parliamentary systems, federalism)
4. Law and order (judiciaries, policing, surveillance, militaries and civil-military relations)
5. Political parties and elections
6. Political culture and civil society
7. Contentious politics, social movements, and political violence
8. Democracies, democratization, and democratic backsliding
9. Authoritarian and hybrid regimes
10. Nations, nationalism, and memory
11. Identity (e.g., ethnicity, gender, sexuality, race, religion)
12. Comparative political economy

### Regions:

1. Europe and the European Union
2. Eurasia (Russia, Belarus, Caucasus, Central Asia)
3. Sub-Saharan Africa
4. Middle East and North Africa
5. Latin America
6. Southeast Asia
7. South Asia
8. East Asia (China, Japan, South Korea)
9. Anglo-American democracies (Canada, US, UK, Australia, New Zealand)

### Theme Reading Lists:

The reading lists for each theme are comprised of (1) the readings listed under the theme on the POLI 628 syllabus (both required and recommended) and (2) relevant recent journal articles and books as described below. These lists are meant for student guidance, they are not intended to be exhaustive.

1) POLI 628 required readings: 5-6 articles or chapters, both classic and recent, chosen by the instructor.

2) POLI 628 recommended readings: a list of 20-25 recommended core/classic readings for each theme.

3) Journals and books: Faculty experts will choose up to three key journals for each theme. Students are required to be familiar with the latest relevant articles in these journals *plus* the latest relevant articles in *Comparative Political Studies*, *Comparative Politics*, *World Politics*, and the *Annual Review of Political Science*, as well as the latest relevant books as identified in the book review section of *Perspectives on Politics*. In every case, “latest” refers to publications from the previous five calendar years (so for 2024 exams, publications dated 2019-2023). If students have questions about whether a reading is relevant to a theme, they should consult the identified faculty experts in the theme.

3) In addition, if there is a POLI graduate course offered that focuses on one of the student’s selected themes, the student is encouraged to take it and to integrate those readings into their exam preparation.

**Regional Reading Lists:**

For regions with dedicated graduate courses, the reading list will be comprised of all of the readings on the relevant syllabus (both required and recommended readings) *plus* the latest relevant articles in *Comparative Political Studies*, *Comparative Politics*, and *World Politics*; the latest relevant articles in up to three key regional journals identified by faculty experts on the region; and the latest relevant books as identified in the book review section of *Perspectives on Politics*. Relevant here means any article/book that is on the region or for which a country in the region is a major case study, *regardless of theme*. These reading lists are meant for student guidance, they are not intended to be exhaustive. If the relevant graduate course is offered during the student's regular coursework years (PhD1-3), the student should take that course. Students should not expect faculty to lead directed readings for regularly offered courses.

For regions without dedicated graduate courses, the student should work with the Comparative coordinator, their supervisor, and the regional faculty experts to construct a dedicated reading list that includes classics in the field *plus* the latest relevant articles in *Comparative Political Studies*, *Comparative Politics*, and *World Politics*; the latest relevant articles in up to three key regional journals identified in consultation with the field coordinator and supervisor; and the latest relevant books as identified in the book review section of *Perspectives on Politics*. Once initially created, it can become the starting point for subsequent lists on the region. If possible, the student should arrange to do a directed reading with a faculty member or a graduate-level course in another Montreal university on the region. Students are discouraged from choosing a region without a dedicated graduate course unless it is expected to be a central focus of their dissertation research.

**Exam Procedure:**

1. The field coordinator creates and maintains the list of faculty experts for each theme and region.
2. Students choose their themes and region at least six months before taking the exam and indicate them on the comprehensive exam questionnaire.
3. All experts on the identified themes and regions not on leave/sabbatical propose questions to the field coordinator, who prepares the exam in consultation with those experts.
4. The field coordinator chooses three available experts on each theme and region to grade each answer. Note that this means there will be different grading teams for each question. When there are more than three experts available, the supervisor will be excluded. When there are fewer than three, the field coordinator will add other faculty to the committee as necessary.
5. If two or more examiners fail a student on a question, that question is failed. Students must pass all three questions to pass the exam. If a student fails only one question on the examination, the examination committee can request by majority vote either that the student re-write that question only within six weeks or repeat the entire exam in the next sitting. If more than one question is failed, the student must repeat the entire exam in the next sitting.

*As of the May 2024 exam sitting, currently enrolled PhD students who have yet to pass the comparative comprehensive exam can choose either the old format or the new format. Students entering the PhD program in Fall 2024 onwards are required to take the exam in this new format.*