Field Exam for Comparative Politics and Human Security (2013-2014)

Students should contact the field coordinator sometime during their last semester of course work (typically 4-6 months prior to taking the comprehensive exam).

There is a required reading list, bringing together scholarly literature dealing with the various elements of state formation, nationalism, political institutions, political violence, and political economy. In addition to the readings on the list, students are responsible for the methodological readings on the P210 (Research Design and Methods) syllabus. Students can make a choice between two optional subsections (“International Aid” and “Religion and Politics”) listed at the end of the document. If they wish, students are free to suggest another optional subsection (such as “Gender and Politics” or “Political Psychology”) instead of “International Aid” and “Religion and Politics.” Any optional subsection suggested by the student needs to be approved by the faculty member who is giving the exam. All the other subsections are required reading. Keep in mind that this reading list is meant to provide a general background in the main research areas of comparative politics as well as to serve as a guideline for further research in these specific areas. Thus students are encouraged to do further reading especially in the subfields that directly relate to their dissertation topics. The reading list suggests a number of political science journals that would be useful in this respect.

The exam consists of three questions. Most of the time (but not always), students can choose between two questions for one topic. I care foremost about the students’ capacity to demonstrate knowledge of the existing literature and their capacity for critical and original analysis.

The oral exam primarily covers questions that were on the exam, and is normally used for clarification of and elaboration on answers on the written exam. However, additional questions may be asked, and the student may be asked to make connections with other fields.