

Susan Pharr - Northeast Asian Security

Why did Japan attack Pearl Harbor?

Why study Northeast Asian security? Why focus on this group of countries?

What theories help us to understand the rise of China?

Jeff Frieden - International Relations

What approach to IR do you find most useful?

You mentioned misperception in your explanation of Pearl Harbor. You also talked about alliances in Asia. How does misperception relate to alliances?

How would you explain the persistence of NATO and the US-Japan security alliance after the end of the Cold War?

Nancy Rosenblum - Political Theory

Which philosophers you've studied might have something to say about Abu Gharib?

Democracy has a bad reputation with several philosophers you've mentioned - why? How has our concept of democracy changed?

Comments

Evidently I spent too much time/effort trying to demonstrate that I knew the IR and NE Asia security syllabi, and not enough on synthesis/analysis. They said they would have liked me to address questions more with what I thought were the most relevant explanatory variables rather than constantly trying to apply existing theory. Some questions were purposely vague to see where I would go with them. Expect to be interrupted often, because as soon as they feel you know something well, they'll go on to something else. More than anything I felt the exam was a test of how well you think on your feet, so I probably spent too much time reviewing material and paying attention to details and not enough doing practice exams with classmates and lining up talking points. The best approach to generals seems to be reviewing the literature that will be most relevant for your prospectus and courses you might teach, and developing your own angle on the theories and cases you care most about.

Campbell:

Why did the American welfare state develop late, and why is it small? Is it small or exceptional?

Why is there no socialism in the US?

Why did Social Security develop as a national program (program handled by federal) while AFDC developed primarily as a state level program (major administrative tasks handled by states)?

Republicans tried to cut Social Security in the Reagan era but couldn't enact major retrenchment. However, in '96, republicans were able to retrench welfare programs. What accounts for this difference? What about path dependence or the way this program is funded?

Why don't we have a national health insurance system in the US?

If everyone in the US voted, how would social policy change?

Krause

What is liberalism? Discuss some of the major institutional features, premises, origins, aspirations, purposes of politics associated with this theory.

Compare and contrast the conceptions of justice of Hobbes and Aristotle.

Is the sovereign in Hobbes 'special' or different from the rest of the people?

Compare and contrast conceptions of freedom in Locke and Rousseau.

Does liberalism have any particular forms of government/society associated with it?

What is the difference between liberalism and democracy. Are they the same?

What do you think about modern US policies designed to 'export' liberalism to other countries? Can you provide a critique?

Dawson

What's wrong with Macropartisanship?

Political behavior and public opinion--the reading list really quits with this literature after Zaller 1992 and Voice and Equality.

Is there nothing else to be learned? What are some of the reasons that political behavior stopped developing? Has it stopped developing? (do we capture public opinions? Does public opinion matter? Would experiments be more useful?)

What is social hierarchy? How is it useful for thinking about various aspects of American politics?

Urban politics stopped developing after 1981 (katznelson and peterson). Have there been any other significant developments in urban/local/federalism since 1981?

What would Jennifer Hochschild say about why judges and bureaucrats would be most likely to institute political change (this related to my paper)

Questions about my paper.

American--Major Field (HOWELL)

1. What does it mean to say that parties are strong or weak? How would we know strong parties if we say them?
2. Tell me about the new racism--what is so new about it? (Here, we spent a significant amount of time discussing whether the new racism was a combination of political principles and anti-black affect or if those two forces were in fact in a considerable tension.)
3. Are rational choice models useful in political science? In what context? (My answer focused on spatial models of Congress and inter-branch bargaining, which lead to the follow-up: does Cameron 2000 make any non-intuitive predictions? Later, he also asked: Cameron lays out not one but three separate models. Why does he do that, and are they all useful?)
4. Moving on to judicial decision-making (which I had gestured at in my previous response), what does it mean to say that justices are strategic?

Urban and Local Politics--Focus Field (PETERSON)

1. People have said that the states are laboratories of democracy. But are they laboratories of research--what can research on subnational units tell us about American politics in general?
2. There are two very different views as to whether political fragmentation is good or bad. Where do you come down?
3. Doesn't your paper about Wal-Mart suffer from a significant endogeneity problem?

Theory--Minor Field (KRAUSE)

1. Assess the liberal-communitarian debate. Who are the key players, what are the chief issues, etc.
2. Let's connect that debate now to Locke and Rousseau. Tell me first about Rousseau's critique of bourgeois society.
3. What is the role of reason in Rousseau?
4. What is freedom for Rousseau--how does that differ from Locke?
5. How does Rousseau's description of politics differ from Locke's?
6. What is justice for Aristotle?
7. Compare Aristotle's common good and Rousseau's general will.

Minor Field: Theory (Muirhead)

Why study political philosophy?

How are the ancients and moderns different?

If a non-theorist were required to read just one thing from the syllabi, what would it be?

(There were follow-up questions, but no specific questions—e.g., “Describe Locke’s theory of property.” Russ was content to let me speak in generalities. I love Russ...)

Major Field: International Relations (Moravscik)

What are the meta-theoretical distinctions in international relations?

I’m going to hold you to your admissions essay. Why is constructivism important and how do ideas fit into international relations?

(Although I brought up Keohane and Goldstein, and Haas, Moravscik was intent on Wendt.)

For Wendt:

Where do states get their identities?

What is anarchy?

How many different types of states are there?

What are Wendt’s examples for a Kantian state and a revisionist state?

If free trade is mutually beneficial, why don’t states trade? (He harped on this for a long time.)

Why do different parts of the world have different rates of war? For example, why are Latin America and the Middle East much more war-prone than Europe?

Focus Field: Methodology (Quinn)

What is statistical inference?

How do you evaluate the power of one statistical specification over another?

How do you test substantive theories?

Name the one result from formal theory which you find most interesting.

ANCIENT THEORY (Sharon Krause)

Sharon Krause: Talk about Plato on justice.

SK: Talk about the sophists as the "third great school" of philosophy coming out of ancient Greece (in addition to Plato and Aristotle).

SK: Do you read the middle books of The Republic as ironic, or did Plato mean them as a sincere proposal?

SK: Talk about Augustine and his relevance for political theorists.

Nancy Rosenblum: What do feminists think of Plato?

MODERN THEORY (Nancy Rosenbloom)

Nancy Rosenblum: What would theorists have to say about US torture in Abu Ghraib? (I discussed Hobbes.) Another? (Machiavelli.) Another? (Kant.) Another? (Locke... I was running out of ideas.)

NR: Someday you'll have to teach 1061. Who would you start with (I said Machiavelli), who would you end with (I said Foucault but she had me talk about Nietzsche), and why?

AMERICAN POLITICS (Barry Burden)

Barry Burden: Talk about courts. What's wrong with Rosenberg's argument (in the Hollow Hope)? Shouldn't nothing happening for ten years after Brown v. Board be enough to prove that there's no strong causal power in the Court?

Rosenblum jumped in with some questions about courts. I don't remember them; point being, if you get Rosenblum, be prepared for her to jump in with questions at any point in the exam. Also, her asking a student to apply theory to current events is not really surprising.

BB: Give me a specific example of how parties organize in government, from Aldrich (Why Parties).

Comparative Politics (Jorge Dominguez)

JD: Tell me two or three topics or subject areas that you would be comfortable talking about.

Me: I would like to talk about political participation or parties or ethnic politics and nationalism.

JD: Ok, why don't we start with political parties. What are some of main debates in the literature?

Me: Well, the theoretical work can be classified into two categories – sociological and rational choice/game theoretical. The former focuses on social cleavages and it starts with Lipset and Rokkan. [Here I briefly described their argument – the two revolutions, the “freezing” bit.]

JD: What causes this “freezing”?

Me: [Aha, I knew the answer!] Extension of franchise.

JD: Ok, is this convincing....

Me: It leaves out the mechanisms and tells us very little about politicians and parties and the incentives they face.

JD: So who has made this type of argument.

Me: Well, Przeworski and Sprague come to mind [followed by a brief summary of their argument.]

JD: What are some of the other problems?

Me: It cannot explain changes over time?

JD: Right. So pick a country other than India [which was my focus field].

Me: Ok, how about the United States. [Not sure why I did that since I don't know the first thing about American politics]

JD: What would be some formative events or revolutions that would determine the cleavages here?

Me: [I am going out on a limb here] Perhaps the civil war, the Great Depression and the New Deal.

JD: So what kind of cleavages would those create?

Me: [Drawing a total blank, I started making stuff up at this point.] Well, if we consider the New Deal and the welfare state, we can draw on the work of Skocpol and Pierson to think about the types of coalitions that form. [No idea what I was talking about. Even brought Esping-Anderson in at one point. Thankfully JD interrupted soon].

JD: Ok, so lets go back a bit. What is the rational choice approach?

Me: Well, this literature tries to explain why parties form and the number of parties etc. Aldrich for example argues that politicians form parties to solve different types of coordination problems.

JD: And what are these coordination problems?

Me: There are three types of coordination problems [followed by a description of the three.]

JD: Ok, and who among these authors really looks at the number of the parties?

Me: Cox?

JD: What is he talking about?

Me: Cox starts with Duverger's law, which he argues holds at the electoral district level in a SMSP system, and tries to explain why two parties emerge at the national level.

JD: and why do they emerge?

Me: well, he is again looking at policy areas or decisions that require coordination between politicians [followed by a valiant but inadequate attempt to describe Cox's rather complicated formulation]

JD: ok, so in the remaining time, let's talk about ethnic politics. What are the debates?

Me: Primordial versus modern/plural. Materialist/strategic versus socio-psychological. [Here is used examples like Bates and Horowitz to illustrate the differences.]

JD: So what does Horowitz tell us about ethnic parties? How can we put this together with the political party literature?

Me: Direction voting instead of spatial voting may be operate here, in which case parties are likely to take more extreme positions than the voters.

JD: And what would Horowitz predict would happen when ethnic parties move to the center like in the Downsian model?

Me: voters on the tails may start supporting other more extreme parties.

JD: well, I would love to continue discussing this but I am afraid my times up!

Political Theory (Harvey Mansfield)

HM: Since I don't remember what we had discussed when we meet last week, tell me again who were some of the authors you would like to talk about today.

Me: Plato among the Ancients and either Machiavelli, Hobbes or Marx among the moderns.

HM: Ok. So I was walking down in Harvard Square the other day and I came across this mural with the following quote: "Indication of harm, not proof of ham, is our call to action". The source is some environmental group, which is not very relevant for our discussion today. What are your thoughts on it?

Me: It would resonate with Hobbes. It is the fear of harm or violent death rather than actual proof that concerns him and drives men to leave the state of nature and enter into a social contract. There isn't much one can do after one has been harmed or better yet killed.

HM: Yes, that is true. And what about Machiavelli? What would he say?

Me: He too would agree. A skilled or virtuous prince would not wait for proof but rather act in the most appropriate manner given the situation. [Some more exchanges along these lines followed including a very brief discussion of Plato.]

HM: What are some of the problems with the social contract?

Me: Marx's critique of it is that it only allows for political emancipation and not human emancipation. [here I gave a summary of what Marx said in the The Jewish Question. We also discussed Rousseau for a bit.]

HM: Ok, lets consider international relations. Do we need moral justification to invade other countries?

Me: Machiavelli would say no. For others like Locke it would depend on whether there is prior contract and a power to enforce it. [Here we actually discussed US foreign policy for a bit and the war in Iraq!]

HM: Ok, shall we talk about Nietzsche?

Me: well, I would prefer not to since I don't know much about him.

HM: Fine. So pick another German philosopher since we have to discuss more on that and we have already talked about Marx.

Me: Ok, how about Hegel? [That was the only name that came to my head. Unfortunately that is all I know about Hegel – that he was German!]

HM: what does Hegel mean by world history?

Me: For Hegel History as a march of reason. [Pretty much repeated all I could remember about Hegel from the summary I had read like the three types of history, the state being the culmination etc.]

HM: What does the "world" bit imply?

Me: that there is only one History for the world; that all countries are on the same path rather than there being multiple different routes for different peoples.

HM: Do you know what Hegel said about India?

Me: No! [HELP!!!]

HM: You should read that bit. It might be of interest to you. Ok, we can stop here.

American Politics (Barry C. Burden)

We began with a discussion of the basic Downsian model of party strategies on a unidimensional issue space. We continued with whether the model is a reasonable description of American parties, and whether they have in fact converged over time. This led to an extended conversation on parties as policymakers in government, and as coordinators of politicians through campaigns. We covered whether parties are and are not salient in government, and how the parties' stances on race have changed over time.

Parties in government have grown stronger since the 1970s, but this has not been associated with stronger parties in the electorate. How do we reconcile this?

Finally, we discussed the changing agenda of media and politicians.

Social Policy (Andrea L. Campbell)

The American welfare state has often been called "late" and "small". Why is this, and how accurate are these assessments? After addressing these points, a conversation on comparative models and Esping-Anderson's typology ensued.

Social security and TANF are differently designed. Social Security is national and universal; TANF is state-administered and means-tested. What are historical reasons for these differences, and what are the effects of these differences?

We then discussed work requirements and the notions of deserving poor through the history of the American welfare state, from the legacy of the English Poor Laws to the 1996 welfare reform.

We more broadly discussed universalism, and the notion of helping the poor without talking about them. Clinton's attempts to do so with the EITC and national health care. What prevents universalism from being successful?

This led to a conversation on visibility and participation via the home mortgage interest deduction.

In federal interstate welfare policy, is there a race to the bottom? Why or why not?

Political Theory (Harvey C. Mansfield)

Reflect on "the indication of harm, not proof of harm itself, is the call to action." We discussed anticipation in Machiavelli and Hobbes.

Is the Hobbessian social contract a good way to understand politics? What are the disadvantages of such an understanding?

What is the relationship of the social contract to the necessity of keeping promises? Plato, Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Rousseau all came up.

This led to a conversation on procedural justice, the general will, and education in Rousseau.

I had Iain Johnston for my focus (identity and institutions), Beth Simmons for the general (IR), and Glyn Morgan for theory.

I started with my focus, and moved on to the general field and political theory subsequently.

Identity and Institutions (Iain Johnston)

- Is constructivism a theory or an approach?
→ I said it was an approach comparable to rational choice approach rather than a theory.
- What are the differences between constructivist approach and rational choice approach?
→ This question pushed me to discussion of ontology and epistemology, and a theory of action i.e. logic of consequentialism vs logic of appropriateness.

We spent the rest of the time discussing about how to think about identity and how to operationalize, which few would be interested. I tried to bring the institution into our discussions, and it was all fine.

International Relations (Beth Simmons)

Beth started with questions about Realism. In fact, most of her questions were about Realism, and war and alliance. There was a brief moment when we talked a little about the democratic peace theory.

- What are the major assumptions of Realism? And how can we classify Realism?
- What are the differences between Classical Realism and Neorealism? What did Morgenthau say?
- Tell me the theories of war and alliance.
→ Here I mentioned the balance of power, hegemonic stability, domestic coalition politics, and ideational sources. We discussed domestic coalition and ideational sources in more details, especially about the measurement and evidence.
- How do we know the democratic peace exists? How do we measure it?
- What is the status of the deterrence theory in the post-cold war era?
- How do we deter non-state actors?
- How do we distinguish international war and civil war? What are the causes of each?

Theory (Glyn Morgan)

Glyn promised that his section would be “painless and easy.” To some extent, I could bullshit my way through the section, so it was not too bad. I actually would have preferred being asked “real” questions to being asked fuzzy questions. Anyway, here are the questions he asked me.

- What is democracy?
- What would proponents of democracy say to an autocratic dictator who has achieved economic success?
- Is democracy comparable with multi-ethnic groups within the territory?
- What is state sovereignty? Is EU a state?
→ I said No, since to be a state, you have to have the monopoly over the use of force and sufficient control of domestic groups. We spent some time talking about the details of EU structure.
- The state of nature in Hobbes and Locke.

→ Here, I criticized Waltz for misreading Hobbes' state of nature. I told him that the state of nature was a theoretical construct to justify the type of government we should have.

Overall, the exam went well, and I actually enjoyed the discussions. No matter what I say, future 2nd-year students will still go through intellectual and psychological pressure, but I still have to say this. It was not as bad as I had thought it might be. One suggestion I received from the committee was that since I was interested in identity, I should have tried to answer some of questions in identity language, trying to use identity in creative ways. Also, I think that getting the overall picture right is far more important than getting the details right. The universal test-taking rule of thumb still applies: have an argument and support with evidence. I am done, and you are up next. Ladies and gentlemen, good luck!

American Politics (Eric Schickler)

Krehbiel has given scholars of Congress a challenge: come up with a theory explaining why parties are relevant in the legislature.

Has this challenge been met?

What would a theory answering Krehbiel look like?

Then we talked about inter-institutional stories. Particularly how the bureaucracy is influenced by various forces.

Is the bureaucracy an agent of Congress?

We also talked about how interest groups influence policy outcomes.

Theory (Richard Tuck)

What did you find most interesting?

We started with Plato.

Is the Republic a book about the ideal city or the ideal man?

We talked about why the City of Pigs was unjust.

We talked a lot about warfare in relation to Hobbes and Locke.

Where does the sovereignty reside in the US?

Public Opinion and Elections (Sunshine Hillygus)

Is the dichotomy between institutions and political behavior useful?

We talked about third parties and Duverger.

How do voters make decisions in non-partisan elections?

How would different theories of voting explain third party or non-partisan voting?

Who is influenced by political campaigns?

We talked about forecasting models.

IR (Hiscox)

Hiscox asked pretty broad questions. Like what is your opinion on systemic theories? I talked about Waltz and Wendtian constructivism, lack of microfoundations, etc. I mentioned BDM and Lalman's test of neorealism vs. expected utility. He also asked about institutions ala Keohane – do I think that is a good systemic theory. I gave the basic rat-choice schpiel about agnosticism about the level of analysis, underspecification of Keohane's theory, and importance of domestic institutions. It brought me to Democratic Peace, at which point he asked me about the theories and empirical evidence on that. We also talked about the liberal peace controversy (O'Neal and Russett vs. Barbieri), since my paper was related to the topic.

He also asked me why I think people don't study domestic politics of security issues as much as those of trade issues. For some reason I decided to bring Frieden to bear on this and said that maybe security issues separate coalitions into very broad categories, like monetary policy in an autarchy, so it can't get too politicized because of large collective action costs and small per-person benefits... Then I saved the situation by talking about Downs&Rocke re when the unitary actor assumption could hold.

Conflict (Braumoeller)

Braumoeller borrowed the "Buy, Sell, or Hold" game from NPR's Motley Fool show. I would expect it again (from Hiscox too maybe, since he liked the approach). Basically, he would say: "Buy, sell, or hold [a given theory of war]". Obviously, you need to give an answer and justify it very briefly. About 10 of them or so: Offence-Defense (bought: talked about how I think Sagan's critique is unfair, how it could be compatible with strategic choice, but should be careful about ideational components of the theory). Then, Fearon, Blainey, security communities, offensive realism, balance of power/threat/interest, liberalism... I ended up buying or holding all except for Mearsheimer and the constructivists. When Bear asked if I wanted to add anything to my "already impressively diverse portfolio", I added cognitive theories, especially when they inform formation of preferences. (Morgan later quipped on the contradictory nature of the stuff I bought, to which I replied that the world is complex....)

Theory (Morgan)

Morgan started off by asking why IR people should study theory. He proceeded by attacking my rat-choice bias. Specifically, what if preferences are endogenous to capabilities? I answered that I think states' preferences may indeed be endogenous to capabilities, but at a lower level of aggregation we can always ground preferences in some exogenous theory. He wasn't satisfied, but we had to move on. He also commented on the Democratic Peace, and how it's not really a Kantian concept. I said that modern constitutional democracies are essentially Kant's republics. He asked about the normative justification of Democracy (a popular question by theorists this year) and then about whether and to what extent we should allow group rights. I talked about how I agree with Barry's cultural imperialism within a liberal society, but wouldn't extend it to the whole world. We argued about that for a while and that was it.

Ancient & Modern Theory (Morgan and Rosenblum) – These are lumped together.

Typology of regimes in Aristotle

What do you think of Plato's definition of justice in the Republic?

In Plato's Euryphro, Euryphro suggests things are pious because they please the gods and Socrates suggests that they please the gods because they are pious. What do you make of that paradox?

Why read the Ancients? What can we learn from them?

Augustine is called a realist. Tell me more about it.

In what ways can Rawls be called a Kantian?

If you had to teach a course in modern political theory, with what authors would you start, with what authors would you end?

Who is your favorite thinker of democracy?

What traditions of thought stemmed from Machiavelli?

There was also a question of contemporary philosophies of history but I don't remember exactly how it was formulated.

American (Schickler)

Schickler began by asking a question on the role of parties in Congress. I responded with standard stuff on Cox/McCubbins vs. Mayhew and Krehbiel. He then pushed me on party polarization, and asked if we had re-entered a period of Strong Party Government. We talked about this for some time, and I moved the conversation to discussion of *Issue Evolution*.

The next major question was about inter-institutional relationships. We talked about Congressional control of the bureaucracy (Weingast and Moran) and then I brought up Moe. We talked about Moe's objection to some of the rational choice work in this area. We ended with some questions on possible research designs to study interest group influence on the bureaucracy.

Theory (Krause)

Krause was an excellent theory examiner. I would highly recommend her. When we met earlier that week, I expressed an interest in discussing the liberalism/communitarianism debates; she also allowed me to pick about four theorists to focus on in the exam--mine were Plato, Hobbes, Rousseau, and Marx. She stuck to the script in the exam. We started off with a discussion of liberalism and communitarianism--explain the two sides, major disagreements, etc. I talked about deliberative democracy and Habermas for a bit, too. Then we moved to the theorists themselves. The questions were pretty standard, but here are some examples:

What is the "noble lie" in the Republic?

Is there a noble lie in Rousseau?

Does Marx allow for any individual agency?

American Political Development (Skocpol)

The questions will be pretty irrelevant to any non-APD people, but Colin would be happy to discuss them with anyone who's interested.

International Relations (Frieden)

I met Jeff a few days before the exam and he more or less asked me the questions we discussed beforehand. I think he really likes to ask the first question.

Tell me one important thing you've learned in the past two years.

Tell me about the Strategic Choice approach (and criticisms of it).

What is your understanding of globalization?

I don't understand constructivism. Can you give me an explanation?

International Organizations (Martin)

I also met Lisa a few days before the exam and she gave me a good sense of the type of questions to expect.

What areas in the study of IOs are promising?

Give me one strong line of criticism of the rational choice approach to IOs.

Discussion of my paper on IOs (Frieden joined in on this too)

Theory (Mehta)

I went to meet Pratap a few days before the exam too. He wanted me to give him several specific topics to discuss. I wasn't really prepared for this level of specificity, so I chose a few topics from the Concepts syllabus, including Democracy and Multiculturalism. He more or less stuck to these topics during the exam. Although authors remained unnamed, his questions were directed at specific ideas and positions contained within the readings. We also ended up discussing Rawls for a while.