

October 24-25, 2018

Political Sociology Ph.D. Candidacy Examination

Please choose four of the following six questions, and answer two during the first day of this examination, and two the second day. Once you have decided which questions to answer, we recommend that you first write an outline of how you will answer all four of them. This will help you avoid a common problem, namely, that you spend more time and effort in answering the first questions you address while leaving truncated answers for subsequent ones. Moreover, do write for your intended audience. This means that you do not need to make an effort to explain everything regarding what various authors on your reading list have said, but that you can, instead, go straight to the point regarding what you think about what they have said. Finally, we understand that you are supposed to answer the questions without looking at your notes or the texts in your reading list—even in the overnight hours between one day and the next.

Questions:

1) Can you present in broad strokes how different paradigmatic traditions (Marxist, Weberian, and pluralist) in Political Sociology have viewed state society relations? And after you do so, can you clarify what various authors (your choice among them) have meant with the development of the notion of "state autonomy"? And then, can you relate this notion back to the aforementioned grand paradigmatic traditions? For instance, is the notion of "state autonomy" consistent with a pluralist tradition? Does it fit best with a Weberian view? Or is it a means to move Marxism beyond the idea that the state is the "executive committee of the bourgeoisie." But if it does so, how Marxist does such a conception remain? Moreover, can this discussion even take place unless one also considers what kind of political regime is associated with the state? Elaborate.

2) In your quite extensive reading list you have a number of works that refer to "state society relations" (lets call them A). You then have more specific readings that relate to "bureaucracy and public policy" (and we will call them B). The question is how do these two bodies of literature relate. In other words, do the B readings simply specify what you find as more general statements in the A ones, or are there sources in the B set that—if correct—imply that there is something wrong with readings in the A group. Hence, can you discuss some examples of these possible congruencies as well as incongruencies. And in so doing, can you indicate whether the readings that are congruent all fall within the same general paradigmatic framework (like Marxist or Weberian), and those that are incongruent correspond to different ones—or is this not the case? Moreover, if this is not the case, what do you find more useful? General statements regarding state/society relations, or much more specific works that address how state bureaucracies function in relation to civil society forces, groups, or even individuals.

- 3) Various theorists (Weber, Gramsci, Tilly, Finer, Ertman, etc.) have attempted to explain the rise and consolidation of the early modern state in Europe. After discussing what you think are the most important viewpoints on this question, can you frame the question in the context of state building in nineteenth century Latin America or in twentieth century African and Asian post-colonial settings. What is similar or different about such processes in these other contexts. Are there any conclusions derived from them that illuminate the processes that occurred in Europe?
- 4) Are there any systematic differences between how political sociologists and political scientists approach the study of political phenomena? Please elaborate and give specific examples drawing from the literature.
- 5) Which are, in your view, the most significant trends and controversies in studies of the way state bureaucracies deal with ordinary citizens and particularly the poor. And thinking about Brazil, are there any specific characteristics to such relations that do not occur in other contexts?
- 6) Please identify three works written between 1960 and 2000 that have made an enduring contribution to Political Sociology, and one very well known work that you think did not do so despite its notoriety. Justify your selection of these studies, specifying how they fit in the larger field.