DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION: COMPARATIVE POLITICS

4 HOURS

25 April 2018

Comparative Parties and Political Institutions

You must answer a total of two (2) questions for this examination. You have four (4) hours to do so. You must answer one (1) question from the core section and one (1) question from the subfield section. In your answers to any of the questions below, please be sure to present an argument and to refer to relevant readings and empirical examples.

SECTION 1. CORE QUESTIONS

1. What explains the origins of dictatorship and democracy? Compare and contrast the answers and approaches of Moore and Acemoglu and Robinson. What are the strengths and weaknesses of those two works in addressing this question?
2. Adam Przeworski and Henry Teune write that “the goal of social science is to explain social phenomena.” Clifford Geertz has advocated a more interpretive approach, in which the aim is to decipher the meaning of behavior and institutions to the actors involved. Using this contrast as your point of departure, assess the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches to comparative politics with reference to several significant works in the field that address a common topic of research.

SECTION 2. SUBFIELD – COMPARATIVE PARTIES AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

1. Discuss the application of the spatial model to the study of political institutions. Explain the underlying assumptions of the spatial model, how the model has been used and adapted, and the insights political scientists have gained from applying the spatial model to political institutions.
2. Representation and accountability are two central normative values of representative democracy.  What does the comparative politics literature tell us about the success (or failure) of representative democracies in providing citizens with representation and accountability via elections, parties, and legislatures?