DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION: COMPARATIVE POLITICS

4 HOURS

25 April 2019

Southeast Asia

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. Under what circumstances are cultural explanations for political outcomes more powerful than structural or rational-choice explanations? To what extent can these different theoretical approaches be combined to enhance their explanatory power? Discuss with reference to both scholarly works in comparative politics and empirical examples.
2. Political scientists often emphasize features in political systems that induce institutional and policy equilibrium and stability.  At the same time, we also observe political and policy arrangements undergoing major change over time.  What analytical tools can political scientists draw on to account for major changes in political life?  Explain with detailed reference to the comparative politics literature on either institutional change or policy change, as well as empirical examples.

SECTION 2. SUBFIELD – SOUTHEAST ASIA

1. What can the discipline learn about democratization from cases in Southeast Asia? Specifically, does the region challenge or refine prevalent theories in the field of comparative politics?
2. Most political parties in Southeast Asia differ considerably from their counterparts in advanced democracies (which receive the bulk of scholarly attention). What are the most notable distinctions and how do they affect the politics of the region? Do features of Southeast Asian parties urge us to rethink comparative theories of parties or party systems, and if so, how? Use at least two cases to substantiate your argument.