

Please answer one question from each of the two sections. You have four hours to complete the exam.

I. Approaches to Political Theory

1. The discipline of political theory works between what is and what ought to be. Theories that are fully immersed in what exists lack the capacity to criticize, and to move toward realities we ought to prefer. Theories that are entirely normative tend to become disconnected from realities, and thus lose their capacities to guide and justify actions that might make collectivities better. How should political theory navigate these requirements? Discuss at least three approaches or schools of thought.
2. In "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," Quentin Skinner critiques Leo Strauss's method of treating canonical texts in political theory as a "self-sufficient object of inquiry." What is Skinner's objection to Strauss's methodology, and is it a fair one? Should political theorists treat texts as "self-sufficient objects of inquiry"? You are welcome to bring theorists beyond Skinner and Strauss into this debate to explain your stance.
3. Is political theory necessarily a critical activity? Discuss your answer with respect to at least three thinkers and what this might mean to each.

II. Thinker: Edward Said

1. One of the main criticisms of Said's early work is that his account of representational power is too pervasive – that is, it leaves little room for agency of those subject to colonial powers of representation. Discuss whether this is true of his work as a whole.
2. Democratic theory increasingly attuned to the many ways in which empowerments and inclusions can be undermined by culture, hegemony, territorial membership, and other features of context. Explain why Said's thought is essential to understanding unjustified (undemocratic) exclusions. Include in your answer, where possible, not only his critical thinking, but his reconstructive thinking—that is, thinking that should guide the development of democratic theory.
3. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said writes: "To think about distant places, to colonize them, to populate or depopulate them: all of this occurs on, about, or because of land. The actual geographical possession of land is what empire in the final analysis is all about" (78). Discuss Said's contribution to a political theory of power, land and territory.