

**DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE  
UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA  
COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS  
6 HOURS – 19 May 2020**

You must answer a total of two (2) questions for this examination. You have four (6) hours to do so. You must answer one (1) question from the core section and one (1) question from the subfield section. This is an open-book, open notes exam. However, you are expected to write your answers from scratch, without drawing on any previously prepared (e.g., practice) answers that you or anyone else may have written.

In your answers to any of the questions below, please be sure to present an argument in direct response to the question and to refer to relevant readings and empirical examples. Your answers should demonstrate breadth and depth of knowledge of the relevant literature and familiarity with the main perspectives and debates in each area. You should choose and construct your answers to avoid repetition with respect to content and literature, including with your Qualifying Paper.

**SECTION 1. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY - CORE QUESTIONS**

- 1) A core concept that has been the subject of extensive debate in International Relations Theory is sovereignty. If you were commissioned to edit a major volume on international relations and sovereignty, and were to write the introductory chapter, what would be the core elements, and what kind of argument would you fashion in terms of the conceptualization, theorization and/or research regarding sovereignty?
- 2) Instructors creating syllabi or reading lists for graduate courses in International Relations Theory have to decide how much space and time to devote to ‘classic’ texts of the field and how to choose from the wealth of new scholarship that is currently being produced. How would you approach these dilemmas? Illustrate your answer with reference to at least two texts that you believe are ‘classic’ in the discipline, and at least two recent texts that you might consider including into a graduate-level International Relations Theory course syllabus.
- 3) On the one hand, a realist insistence on the primacy of military power has proven to be a massive blind spot in preparing for the current major crisis in the world instigated by the global pandemic. On the other hand, countless scholars have been emphasizing the need to focus on threats to human security including disease (among numerous others) for decades. Yet the current level of cooperation in dealing with the crisis has fallen drastically short of what such scholars might expect of states in situations when cooperation would serve functional mutual interests. Still other theoretical perspectives have emphasized looming crises of various kinds. You are teaching an introductory course in global politics - walk the students through three broad theoretical approaches that you think they ought to be familiar with, pointing out their weaknesses and value in understanding how we got to where we are today.
- 4) How useful is the assumption of rational egoism in theorising contemporary international relations? Discuss with reference to relevant literatures. Consider at least two types of international actors who may or may not usefully be theorised as rational egoists, and be explicit about what makes an assumption useful (or not useful) in International Relations theory.

## **SECTION 2. SUBFIELD – International Relations and the Question of Change**

- 1) How well does the discipline of International Relations think about change? What distinguishes successful conceptualisations of change from less successful ones? Which contributions to the literature (if any) stand out to you as providing a particularly good analysis of change?
- 2) Has the issue of technological change been taken seriously enough by the discipline of International Relations? Which contributions to the literature are most helpful to us in thinking about the role of technological change, and the pace of technological change, in international politics today?
- 3) We are often told that we live in an era of “unprecedented change”. Is this true? Discuss, drawing on relevant literatures.