

**DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
4 HOURS – 1 October 2021**

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. This is a closed-book exam.

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) What is at stake in differences and debates between scholarly explanations and/or approaches to International Relations that privilege interests versus ideational factors? What is your take on these distinctions?
- 2) It is increasingly asserted that International Relations theory is grounded in a set of Eurocentric fundamental assumptions that overlook or silence some important international actors, behaviours and/or processes. Do you agree? If not, explain why you disagree with this critique. If so, identify the most significant absences and exclusions in contemporary IR theory that require theoretical attention and discuss whether and how extant IR theory can be changed or expanded to fill those gaps.
- 3) International Relations theory encompasses a vast range of scholarship highlighting a wide variety of phenomena, actors and processes, working at different levels of analysis, and often drawing on and shading into work in other subfields of Political Science (e.g. Comparative Politics, Political Theory...) and/or other disciplines (e.g. Economics, Neuroscience, Law...). Is there still a distinguishable 'core' to International Relations as a scholarly field and can its boundaries be drawn? If so, what constitutes that core and/or those boundaries? If not, can we nevertheless understand International Relations as a distinct field – and should we attempt to do so?
- 4) Diplomats and pundits often refer to the "international community". Is there such a thing in contemporary world politics? How can we understand its existence – or absence – theoretically?

SECTION 2. SUBFIELD – International Organization

- 1) Why have states increasingly come to rely on informal agreements and organizations to govern international relations? What are the main advantages of informal intergovernmental organizations? What are the primary drawbacks? Is growing informality improving global governance?
- 2) Some international organizations provide substantial opportunities for private companies and industry associations to lobby, inform, and even participate in their deliberations, with the International Maritime Organization, International Telecommunications Union, and International Civil Aviation Organization being leading examples. Other international organizations are becoming more open to industry participation, with the UN Global Compact involving 12000+ companies and COP26 in Glasgow listing corporate "partners" (i.e. sponsors) on its website. Has the IR literature on international organizations grappled effectively with the growing role and influence of corporate actors in these traditionally state-centric bodies? What more could and should be done?
- 3) In his September 2021 speech to the UN General Assembly, UN Secretary-General António Guterres stated, “Humanity has shown that we are capable of great things when we work together. That is the *raison d’être* of our United Nations. But let’s be frank. Today’s multilateral system is too limited in its instruments and capacities, in relation to what is needed for effective governance of managing global public goods.” Do you agree with his contentions that 1) the *raison d’être* for the UN (and the contemporary multilateral system more broadly) is to facilitate cooperation for global public goods; and 2) that the solution for more effective global governance is to strengthen the “instruments and capacities” of contemporary international organizations? Your answer should include relevant theoretical literatures and refer to the United Nations, but it can also include discussion of other international organizations.