

STV1300 Introduction to Comparative politics

Grading Guidelines for the School Exam, spring 2024

Students answer 4 out of 6 short-answer questions and 1 out of 2 long-answer questions. When answering the questions, students were given the instruction to *define all the relevant concepts*.

Short-answer questions are 40% of the grade (10% each). An unanswered question gets F. The total grade for the short-answer questions is an average of the four answers. Getting an F on one short-answer question does not result in F for the exam, as it can average out depending on the grade for the other responses to the short-answer questions.

Long-answer question is 60% of the grade.

The total grade is a weighted average between the grade for the short-answer questions and the grade for the long-answer question.

Short-answer questions:

Question 1. Geddes et al. (2014) distinguish between four types of autocracy. Define and describe at least two of these types.

Key reading: Geddes, Wright and Frantz (2014)

A good answer will both name and define two of the four following autocratic regime types and include some of their typical characteristics. Excellent answers will cover most of the characteristics given below each term in the following description and perhaps even go into why it is sometimes difficult to delineate between these ideal types.

Party-based/dominant-party autocracy/dictatorship: Regimes where control over policy, leadership selection and the security apparatus (alternatively: control over the formal and informal rules of selecting leaders and keeping them in power) is held by the ruling/dominant party. These regimes are known to be more stable than military and personal autocracies, e.g. because they solve commitment problems through institutionalization.

Personal dictatorship/autocracy: Regimes where control over policy, leadership selection and the security apparatus (alternatively: control over the formal and informal rules of selecting leaders and keeping them in power) is held by a narrower group centered around an individual dictator. Personalist dictatorships tend to be unstable because they rely so exclusively on the networks and alliances of one individual, thereby making commitment problems common and because succession rules are not in place (making them die by default when the leader is removed and/or dies).

Military dictatorship/autocracy: Regimes where control over policy, leadership selection and the security apparatus (alternatively: control over the formal and informal rules of selecting leaders and keeping them in power) is held by the military (or a group of military officers). These regimes, like personalist regimes, tend to be more unstable due to avoid commitment problems. They also tend to be short given that they follow coups d'état that are primarily driven by toppling an existing dictator.

Monarchic dictatorship/autocracy: Regimes where control over policy, leadership selection and the security apparatus (alternatively: control over the formal and informal rules of selecting leaders and keeping them in power) is held by a royal family. These regimes tend to be very

stable given that they have solved the succession problem: it is rarely uncertain who will follow the sitting regime leader and ruling legitimacy is hereditary.

Question 2. What is “the survival story” (otherwise known as the stabilization thesis)?

Key reading: Clark, Golder and Golder (2017)

The survival story holds that economic (and cultural) modernization is not necessarily a driver of increased democratization likelihoods, but that it makes *democracy more stable once it has emerged*. All good answers should clearly delineate between the original modernization theory (ala Lipset) and the stabilization thesis. Very good/excellent answers will also point to the shifting empirical support for both theories and underline that while the correlation, globally, between high income and democracy is high, many well-specified statistical models fail to detect a significant relationship between the two. `

Question 3. What are the key functions of parties in a democratic political system (either according to Clark et al. 2017 or according to Katz 2020)?

Key reading: Clark, Golder and Golder (2017) or Katz (2020)

Functions of parties according to Clark, Golder and Golder (2017): 1. Parties structure the political world, 2. Parties recruit and socialize the political elite. 3. Parties mobilize the masses. 4. Parties provide a link between the rulers and the ruled.

Functions of parties according to Katz (2020): 1. Coordination, 2. Contesting elections, 3. Recruitment, 4. Representation.

A good answer will mention all four functions, either from Katz or CGG, with or without some minimal elaboration. Ideally, good answers should also provide a definition of a political party as an organization that participates in elections. There are multiple definitions, some are more detailed than others, and all are accepted. What is important to mention in a definition is that a party is an organized group of people and that it participates in elections OR holds political office. Very good and excellent answers will elaborate on the functions and explain the functions of parties in a democratic political system in detail.

Question 4. Describe how parliamentary speeches have been used as an indicator of legislative responsiveness to voters (Spirling, 2016).

Key reading: Spirling (2016)

The Spirling (2016) article investigates how the Second Reform Act of 1868 in the UK affected legislative speeches through readability scores. SRA almost doubled the electorate in the UK and changed the median voter from upper class to lower class. In order to reach the new voters, Spirling (2016) argues, there was an incentive to speak more clearly (especially for the government). This is also what the paper finds: the readability of parliamentary speeches increased significantly after the reform.

A very good answer (above C) will not only describe the study, but also mention that this entails a good amount of responsiveness from the MPs, as they adapt to changes in the electorate, particularly when electoral success might be affected by it.

Question 5. What is state capacity, and which resources influence it, according to Lindvall and Teorell (2016)?

Key reading: Lindvall and Teorell (2016)

State capacity can be defined in several ways, but the essence of the definition is “an ability of the state to reach official goals”. Resources that influence it include revenue (also can be named money, state income, financial resources, or similar), human capital (also can be named people employed in the state apparatus, quality of the public administration, bureaucracy, implementation apparatus, high quality workforce, or similar), and information (“up-to-date information about the society, the territory, and the population it governs”).

A good answer will name all three resources that state capacity relies on. Very good and excellent answers will expand on how/through which mechanisms revenue, human capital and information shape state capacity. Some excellent answers may also mention that revenue/state income translates to the fiscal capacity of the state, human resources – to the administrative capacity of the state, and informational resources – to the informational capacity of the state.

Question 6. UN Peacekeeping aims to protect civilians from violence. What other positive impact might UN Peacekeeping operations have on the countries in which they are deployed? (Bove et al. 2022)

Key reading: Bove, Di Salvatore, and Elia (2022)

The article the students read describes how the UN peacekeeping mission to South Sudan deployed in 2011 both increased personal safety and the ability to report violence, but also increased consumption and psychological well-being. Thereby, UN peacekeeping can, in addition to reducing violence, also decrease the economic impact of war, improve living conditions, and ultimately have a benign longer-term effect on conflict duration/recurrence. A basic rendition of these implications is required for all good answers. Excellent answers will point to the indirect and direct effects in Bove et al’s theoretical framework: that the local spending of UNMISS personnel contributes to increased economic transactions at the same time as increased perceived personal safety also contributes to increased economic transactions and psychological well-being so that consumption in total is increased.

Answer 1 out of 2 long-answer questions:

- 1. Is democracy in decline? Explain the term “the third wave of autocratization”, critically discuss arguments for and against using this term to describe the state of the world today, and then conclude by providing a response to the main question (Skaaning 2020 and Clark et al. 2017).**

Key reading: Skaaning (2020) and Clark, Golder and Golder (2017)

The basic definition of the wave of autocratization – coined by Luhrmann and Lindberg - is the last global period, arguably ongoing, where the number of democratizing countries decreases, while the number of autocratizing countries increases. In Skaaning’s view, this definition constitutes a break with the traditional Huntingtonean view of waves in that it is not based on net changes, i.e. substantial movements in the average level of – or the numerical difference in – upturns versus downturns.

Skaaning therefore raises two main critiques (*arguments against*) of claiming that we are currently in a third wave of autocratization, namely that there is incongruence between Luhrmann and Lindberg’s understanding of regime changes as matters of degree and their operationalization of autocratization and democratization, which uses questionable criteria to identify episodes of change. The second issue concerns the definition of a wave of autocratization (as a period where the number of democratizing countries decreases, while the number of autocratizing countries increases), which has substantial repercussions for their

conclusions. Most importantly, it is the basis of one of the main findings reflected in the very title of their paper, namely, the presence of three waves of autocratization, with the last one apparently having begun already in 1994. Alternative and more conventional criteria would either lead to a later start date for such a wave or even to it being questionable whether such a wave exists at present.

Arguments for claiming that we should use the term to describe the world today include but are not limited to the fact that the focus on de facto decline and core institutional features of democracy makes good sense, that there are many large and important countries/regimes that have experienced significant downturns in democracy levels in recent years (India, USA, Russia, Brazil, China), and that since at least 2014, the world has been in the longest period of (arguably slight) democratic decline – also by global averages and across measures of democracy - since before 1980.

Good answers will point to several of the mentioned arguments for and against and provide a solid definition of the third wave of autocratization. Excellent answers will also show good independent thinking, by e.g. discussing whether we should include democratic declines in already autocratic countries (such as Russia and China) in our evidence for autocratization and/or discussing the importance of different democracy measures, thresholds and operationalizations in reaching different types of conclusions about the state of the world.

2. What are the differences between minimal winning, minority, and surplus coalitions? Critically discuss how the number of veto players / veto points can affect what type of government is formed (Thürk et. al 2021 and Clark et al. 2017).

Key reading: Thürk, Hellström and Döring (2021) and Clark, Golder and Golder (2017)

Part 1:

The terms minimal winning, minority, and surplus coalition governments refer to the parliamentary basis of governments in parliamentary systems. The students are expected to know the main differences between these.

First, minimal winning coalitions refer to coalitions formed only by the parties necessary to obtain a majority position. In other words, it is defined by either the minimal number of parties or the smallest number of seats that can form a majority government and control the smallest possible majority of seats in parliament. This type of coalition focuses on including only the essential parties needed to secure a majority in parliament, assuming that fewer parties will give more effective governments.

Second, minority cabinets are formed when the cabinet parties have less than 50% of seats in the legislature, meaning they lack a majority in the parliament. This often requires the cabinet to seek additional support from outside parties to pass legislation and make decisions.

Third, surplus cabinets, on the other hand, are formed by cabinet parties that occupy more seats in the legislature than necessary for forming a majority. As such, one or more parties are superfluous in surplus cabinets.

For this part, students should have to accurately define all three types to score B or A.

Part 2:

For the next part of the question, a good answer (above C) will first clarify what a veto player is, and a very good answer (B or A) clarify the difference between veto players and veto points.

A veto player was defined, both in the textbook and in the lecture as “[...] an individual or collective actor whose agreement is necessary for a change in the political status quo” (CGG, p. 689). A veto point, however, is the stage at which a veto player has veto powers. Consequently, there are always N veto players or more veto points in a system.

Part 3:

Regarding the impact of the number of veto players or veto points on the type of government formed, four hypotheses are discussed and tested in Türk et.al (2021). The question is pointed at one specific hypothesis in Thürk et.al (2021): The more potential institutional veto points in a political system, the less likely the formation of minority governments and the more likely the formation of surplus cabinets.

A combination of an increased number of hurdles (veto points) a government has to clear and the fact that the composition/party affiliation between different veto players might vary, can make policy-making hard. In other words, the key to answering this question in a good way (C and up) is to discuss how more veto points increase the likelihood of forming surplus governments.

A very good (A) answer might also mention the specific veto points and their effect on making surplus governments, from two related hypotheses in the Thürk et.al (2021) article. First, they discuss (and find support for) the fact that mid-terms can change the composition of bicameral systems so that the current government loses the majority in one chamber. Second, they show how including the party of a president with veto powers can absorb that veto, and thus make surplus cabinets more likely.