

POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY
Qualifying Exam, Spring 2018

The questions below constitute the qualifying exam for Political Sociology. To complete the exam, you must answer one question from each of the three sections below in an essay format. Each answer should be a self-contained essay approximately 8–10 pages long (i.e., 2,000–2,500 words). Although you must cite to referenced work in each essay, one comprehensive bibliography for all three questions will be sufficient. You may consult materials from the reading list you've been provided, as well as any other scholarly sources you've read during the exam period.

This qualifying exam is to be completed in two weeks. The evaluation of the exam will take two weeks. You will be notified of your performance by email. Make sure that the office has your up-to-date contact information. Please use the identifying student number that you have been assigned at the top of your exam. The exams are graded confidentially and numbers only will be used to identify the author of the exam. See Graduate Handbook for any further details.

A. Choose one of the following:

1. What is an injustice frame, and how do social movements use them to transform people's personal problems into collective grievances?
2. Select three authors, each representing a different perspective on modern state formation, and summarize their primary arguments about the processes that led to the rise of modern states. Do these three authors offer competing explanations of the same thing or complementary explanations for different parts of a larger story? To what extent are their accounts compatible, if at all?

B. Choose one of the following:

1. Much social movement theorizing over the past 25 years has focused on the political process model. Discuss the evolution of the political process model and the advantages the model claims over its predecessors. Then discuss some of the critiques of the model and suggested replacements or modifications. Where do you see social movement theory going from this point?
2. Theories and empirical work in political sociology address, either explicitly or implicitly, the problem of individual agency. Using examples from the reading list, rank the theories discussed from "most agentic" (emphasizing the capacity of individual actors to modify situations to their benefit) to "least agentic" (emphasizing the constraints that structural characteristics place on individual political actors). In your mind where does current theorizing in political sociology lie and why?

C. Choose one of the following:

1. Some scholars have argued that democracy promotes equality, while others oppose a necessary link between the two. Discuss, both theoretically and at the empirical level, the relationship between democracy and equality by critically engaging with arguments of authors who have contributed to the debate.

2. Communication is at the heart of any form of collective including the social movements. The spread of the new communication technology, Internet, the new social media, etc, over the past decade is said to have significantly altered the nature of social movements. How plausible is this claim? Show the changes that have occurred and discuss their implications. Has the new communication system weakened or strengthened social movements? Assess and discuss critically by giving examples.