STV1300 Introduction to Comparative politics

School Exam

Summer 2025

Guidelines

Answer **4** out of 6 of the short-answer questions and **1** out of 2 of the long-answer questions. When answering the questions, you should define all the relevant concepts.

You may write your response in English, Norwegian, or another Scandinavian language.

Responses to the four short-answer questions will count for 40% of the overall grade (so, 10% of the grade each). Responses to the long-answer question will count for 60% of the overall grade.

The recommended time allocation is on average 25 minutes for each short-answer question and 2 hours 20 minutes for the long-answer question. In total the exam lasts for four hours.

Answer 4 out of 6 of the following short-answer questions:

1. Is democracy or autocracy the most common regime type today? Please justify your answer.
2. Why do some countries have more parties in parliament than other countries?
3. How does the chain of accountability work in a parliamentary democracy?
4. Under what conditions are minority governments more likely to form?
5. Discuss what a civil war is, and how it differs from other types of conflict.
6. What is the difference between a presidential and a semi-presidential democracy and under what circumstances does a semi-presidential democracy look most like a presidential democracy?

Answer 1 out of 2 of the following long-answer questions:

1. Democracies are richer than autocracies. Why?
2. Discuss why some campaigns pushing for democracy are more likely to succeed compared to others, both in the short and the long term.

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Answer 4 out of 6 of the following short-answer questions:

1. Is democracy or autocracy the most common regime type today? Please justify your answer.

Answer: A good answer first defines democracy according to a common definition, such as Dahl's minimalist view on democracy. Here there are two dimensions, namely contestation which captures the extent to which citizens are free to organize themselves into competing blocs to press for the policies and outcomes they desire, and inclusion which has to do with who gets to participate in the democratic process. Next, they should clarify which measure they use, such as V-Dem, Democracy-Dictatorship, or Freedom house (all discussed in CGG chapter 5). Then they should argue whether there are most autocracies or democracies according to their chosen measure; they do not need to use exact numbers. Moreover, a good answer will discuss trends and argue that there has been a stagnation or even decline in the share of democracies (see Skaaning 2020 and CGG chapter 5).

2. Why do some countries have more parties in parliament than other countries?

Answer: This is discussed in CGG (p. 551-563) and Eneyedi and Bértoa (2020). They discuss two explanations. First, the mechanical effect of Duverger's law, where single-member districts/first-past the post foster a two-party system, while proportional electoral systems foster a multiparty system. Second, they discuss social cleavages. Cleavages are historically determined social or cultural lines which divide citizens into different groups. The more there are, the more parties. Cleavages can be along divisions such as class, ethnicity or language. A good answer discusses both explanations. Students can also discuss other explanations such as electoral thresholds, how easy it is to start a new party and be eligible to run, or funding for political parties.

3. How does the chain of accountability work in a parliamentary democracy?

Answer: This is discussed in lecture 4 and 5 and chapter 11 of CGG. The chain of accountability states that voters delegate authority to representatives, who then delegate authority to the government (a prime minister & cabinet), who then controls the state (e.g. ministries and civil servants). A good answer presents the chain and argues how the mechanisms of accountability and delegation works. Excellent answers discuss issues associated with delegation of authority such as agency loss. Students can also discuss how it differs from the chain of accountability in presidential democracies.

4. Under what conditions are minority governments more likely to form?

Answer: This is discussed in lecture 4 & 6 and in CGG chapter 11 and Thürk et al. 2021. A minority government is one in which the party or parties in the cabinet don't explicitly command a majority of legislative seats themselves. We discuss different explanations and conditions under which they are more likely to form. These are:

1. If parties are purely or almost purely policy-seeking they may support a government without being a part of it.
2. In countries where nongovernmental parties have a strong say over policy without being in government.

3. They are less likely in countries with positive parliamentarism (e.g. a formal investiture vote) because it is harder to vote for something you are not a part of (and vice versa more likely with negative parliamentarism)
4. They are more likely if the opposition is ideologically divided because it is harder for them to agree on an alternative.
5. They are more likely under strong bicameralism
6. They are more likely if a president holds strong veto powers
7. The more institutional veto points there are in a system, the less likely a minority government is to form because it has to pass more hurdles

Students should not discuss all conditions. Yet, a good answer should mention positive v. negative parliamentarism, and an excellent answer the role of polarization.

5. Discuss what a civil war is, and why it differs from other types of conflict.

Answer: This is discussed in depth in lecture 10 and the four articles assigned to lecture 4. It is argued that there are three criteria, namely 1) civil wars take place within a state (as opposed to between states), 2) there are organized actors (such as the state and non-state actors), and 3) there is combat violence. We can also discuss other elements such as the goal of the actors (secession v. government control), the intensity of the violence, and the involvement of international actors. They differ from (interstate) wars because civil wars do not take place between states but within states, and from riots, protests, and terrorism because there is combat violence. A good answer clearly defines civil wars and discuss how they differ from other types of conflict.

6. What is the difference between a presidential and a semi-presidential democracy and under what circumstances does a semi-presidential democracy look most like a presidential democracy?

Answer: This is discussed in chapter 11 of CGG, and discussed in quite some depth in lecture 4. Presidential and semi-presidential democracies both have an elected head of government (almost always called a president). However, in semi-presidential democracies the head of government is responsible to the legislature, while this is not

the case in presidential democracies (although the president can be impeached). Semi-presidential democracies can be divided into a president-parliamentary systems where the government is both responsible to the legislature and the president (such as France) and premier-presidential systems where the government is responsible to the legislature but not the president (such as Ireland). A good answer shows that they know the main difference between the two types of systems. An excellent answer also discusses the nuances between different types of semi-presidential systems and argue that president-parliamentary systems are more like a presidential system, including the role of cohabitation.

Answer 1 out of 2 of the following long-answer questions:

1. Democracies are richer than autocracies. Why?

Answer: This is a complex question, and it is something researchers keep discussing. We touch on this in several lectures, including lecture 2, 3, and 11. Relevant readings are CGG ch. 6, 7 & 15, and Knutsen 6 & 7. An excellent answer should show understanding of the complicated causal chain and argue that the causal relationship could go both ways, so development causes democracy and that democracy causes development. In addition, they should discuss that other factors, such as culture, which could explain both why countries are richer and more democratic (confounders). A partial but still good answer only focus on one of the directions, and discuss either;

   a. Why development causes democracy. Here, we have talked about the modernization theory in some depth, see lecture 3, credible commitment problems (North & Weingast), and the stabilization story/surivival story
   b. Why democracy causes development. Here, we have discussed why democracy fosters rule of law, which gives stable property rights which increases investment, and fosters growth. We also discussed other explanations such as accountability, the possibility to throw out the bad leaders, that citizens can voice frustrations peacefully, and that leaders may be more likely to leave power voluntarily.

2. Discuss why some campaigns pushing for democracy are more likely to succeed compared to others, both in the short and the long term.

Answer: The answer to this question is mainly based on lecture 9 and the readings from this lecture. Moreover, the insights from lecture 3 on regime change and democratization is also relevant, and the students can also touch on material from lecture 10 on civil wars and 11 on the stability of different types of democratic systems.

Campaigns for democracy can take many different forms; protests, revolutions, rebellions. A good answer would define what success means based on the definitions of regime change and democratization discussed in lecture 3. Success can be short term, e.g. the country experiences democratization, but also more long-term meaning that democracy is long-lasting. The students can discuss a wealth of different reasons that make democratization more likely. They are mostly from lecture 10, but there are also relevant insights from lecture 2, 3, and 11. Some main points are;

- Most revolutions fail and they are historically rare.
- Non-violent revolutions are more likely to succeed.
- They are more likely to succeed when the elite agree with the masses
- They are more likely to succeed when more people join in. Students can also discuss the role of collective action theory, preference falsification, and tipping models.

These are more short-term explanations, and some students can also focus on more long-term explanations such as:

- They can discuss the survival story based on Przeworski et al.
- They can discuss the resource course
- Cultural explanations for democracy
- They can discuss the reasons for why civil war breaks out based on lecture 11.

The students get extra points if they can use practical examples and cases to exemplify their arguments. East Germany 1989, Tianamen Square, and the Prague Spring are all discussed in CGG.

This is a complex question, and it can be tricky because it touches on many different aspects, and the short- and long-term reasons may differ. Good answers show knowledge of the course materials and provide reasons both in the short and the long term. Excellent

answers are based on a conceptual understanding of democracy and explains why different actors – the elite, the masses, the leader - have interests in both creating and sustaining democratic institutions.