**Government 50.08: Psychology & International Politics**

**Professor Kathleen Powers**

**Midterm #2 Memo**

Dear Political Psychologists,

**Logistics**

The second midterm will be held during the scheduled final exam period on **June 3 from 11:30am-1:20pm. The midterm will be completed online through Canvas**. If you strongly prefer to handwrite your exam, please **email me by Wednesday, May 29 at 11:59pm.**

The exam will be available on Canvas (in the “Quizzes” section) from 11:30am to 1:20pm. This is the same length as our standard class meetings, and you will have that full period to complete it, but **only the scheduled time period**. i.e. If you log on at 11:35, you will have sacrificed 5 minutes of your writing time.

You may take the exam from the comfort of your home, in our classroom, the library, or wherever else you are comfortable, able to concentrate, and have a reliable internet connection**. It is your responsibility** to ensure that you are on a reliable internet connection and have a well-functioning computer. If you have questions about this, you should email me as soon as possible.

As noted in class, you may consult your notes, but you **may not collaborate with other students**. Collaboration or outside help is strictly prohibited, and considered a violation of the Dartmouth Honor Principle. You will be asked to reaffirm your commitment to this honor principle at the beginning of the exam. If you need accommodations for this exam, you should be sure to contact me no later than Monday, May 27.

I will do my best to attend to emails during the exam period, but if you experience any uncertainty about how to compose an answer to a question, you can never go wrong by answering in a way that makes active, transparent use of what you learned in this course.

**Structure and Style**

The exam will comprise a series of open-ended questions designed to a) test your mastery of the concepts and theories that we have covered in the class, b) enable you to demonstrate that you are meeting the learning objectives laid out on the syllabus and class slides. This entails identifying and explaining key ideas, assumptions, and points of contention. It also entails generating examples that demonstrate your understanding and applying concepts to novel examples.

The exam will comprise a mix of “1 point” and a small number of longer, “3 point” questions. The questions are meant to be straightforward if you have kept up with reading assignments, attended class, and thought about the material.

The exam designed to test your mastery of the material; it is not a test of writing skills.[[1]](#footnote-1) Your best bet is to respond in the simplest, most straightforward manner that you can. Do not waste time crafting the most eloquent response possible (for either the 1 point or longer questions). Abbreviations, acronyms (as long as they are common enough for me to understand, like NATO, WMD, etc.) – these are all fair game. Bullet points and lists are also fine. While poor writing can obscure good ideas, no points will be deducted or awarded for writing skills/grammatical errors alone. Partial credit is awarded when it is merited.

Questions worth one point will require brief responses. These questions will all be open-ended,[[2]](#footnote-2) but answerable in less than 2 sentences. For some, you will be able to answer with one word (akin to “fill in the blank”), while others may take a few words or 2 sentences. You should not feel compelled to write more than what is required to demonstrate that you know the material.

**In short: This exam will be structured very similarly to your first midterm.**

**Substance and Preparation**

Everything covered in readings, lecture, and discussion material is “fair game”, from the day after the first midterm (April 30) to the final class session (May 28). I will not ask detailed questions about reading material covered in the first half of the course, but you can expect reference to “big picture” ideas that we’ve talked about throughout (e.g., what do emotions tell us about rationality in international politics?).

My goal is to include at least one question related to each assigned reading and learning objective listed on lecture slides, so that it offers a truly comprehensive opportunity to demonstrate what you’ve learned.

I attempt to ask questions about reading material that concern key arguments and salient pieces of evidence/major examples – not the minutiae (e.g., I might ask “How do Kertzer, Rathbun, and Paradis differentiate between procedural and instrumental rationality?” But not “Explain the DNVP’s position on Alsace-Lorraine in 1925.”).

I advise you to consider the following questions as you review reading material:

1. What is the authors’ main research question?

2. What is the primary argument – the theoretical mechanism that the author believes would generate a particular outcome?

3. How do they test their theory?

4. What are the key results?

5. How do these conclusions relate to or inform theories from other authors that we read in class?

6. If there are any new concepts introduced in the piece, how do the authors define and measure them?

7. Can you think of novel ways to apply the author’s theory, or additional examples of new concepts?

Test yourself by summarizing a reading assignment in 2-5 sentences (question, theory, evidence). For material covered in class, I recommend that you make use of the learning objectives contained on each set of powerpoint slides. Outline what you know about in response to each, *generate new examples of concepts*, and consider how various concepts and theories might inform each other.

As with the first midterm, I do not pretend to estimate in advance what proportion of correct responses constitutes an ‘A’ or ‘B.’ Tentative cut points for letter grades will depend on the standard deviation/natural clustering, rather than an arbitrary standard, and your final grades will be curved so that the course median is a B+ (in keeping with the Government department standard laid out in the syllabus).

**Real talk: Study like this were a closed-book exam.**

I aim to design the exam so that a student who has prepared, and who can confidently respond to questions based on that preparation, can complete it well within that 1hr 50 minute time period. A student who is less prepared, and who must make more frequent reference to notes/re-read material, may feel constrained by the time. Thus, I strongly encourage you to **prepare as if this were a closed-book exam.**

You will be able to return to and edit answers as you see fit, so a good strategy is to answer all the questions that you can with confidence, and then return to any questions that you left blank. Partial credit will be awarded when it is merited.

1. There are other opportunities to develop your writing skills on the other assignments; the exam is designed to meet different learning objectives. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. It is possible, but unlikely, that there will be < 10 multiple choice questions in the “1 point” category. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)