Foundation Scholarship Examinations 2016-17

Examination Papers set by Trinity College Dublin’s Political Science Department

Guidance for Students
Introduction

As students may know, the Foundation Scholarship examinations were revised and reformed for the academic year 2015-16, with a new emphasis on “general questions” to be included in every examination.

The Foundation Scholarship examinations provided by the Political Science department for 2016-17 will be similar to those provided for 2015-16, and different from those provided in earlier years.

The examination “Political Science 1” requires students to write an essay on a topic related to one of the broad areas of political science covered in Senior Freshman modules – international relations, comparative politics, history of political thought – but addressing materials that are outside the Michaelmas Term Senior Freshman module syllabuses. An additional reading list will be provided to cover these topics. Students will therefore focus on one of these topics in advance and write one essay on that topic in a two-and-a-quarter-hour examination. The exam will contain only one essay question for each of the three topics for which reading lists have been provided. Students may, at their discretion, prepare more than one topic in advance, but they will answer only one essay question in the examination.

When writing essays for “Political Science 1”, students are expected to know relevant materials and concepts from the related Senior Freshman modules, but they must demonstrate engagement with and mastery of the materials contained on these additional reading lists. Similarly, students may choose to do additional reading, beyond the materials contained in the provided reading lists, on these political science topics, but, again, students are expected primarily and above all to demonstrate engagement with and mastery of the materials contained on these reading lists. There is no requirement to do any additional outside readings and indeed these reading lists are already extensive and demanding. If a student wishes to refer to additional readings outside these reading lists (or materials contained on module syllabuses), the student is recommended to provide a reference, indicating author, title, and year of publication if possible.

No special tutorials are to be provided by academic staff on the topics to be examined in “Political Science 1”.

Reading lists for the topics for 2016-17 are contained in this document, as well as sample questions. Students however are advised to prepare broadly for a variety of possible questions addressing this material.

Readings for these topics will be available on reserve in the library (in the case of books) or available as hard copies or electronic articles through the library (in the case of articles), please search for the title of the academic journal through the library website to find any electronic version in the first instance, although some papers/journals may only be available in hard copy.

The examination “Political Science 2” is also a two-and-a-quarter-hour examination. It requires students to write three essays, two of which will relate to materials covered in the three Senior Freshman Political Science modules, and one of which will be a
more general question about the nature of politics. There will be a total of 12 questions on the exam, three relating to each of the three Senior Freshman Political Science modules, of which students must answer two (any two of the nine), and three more general questions about the nature of politics, of which students must answer one. In total therefore students must answer three essays out of a total of twelve questions.

Specifically, students must answer three questions out of a total of twelve questions on the Political Science 2 Foundation Scholarship examination, two of which MUST be from the questions drawing on materials from the Senior Freshman modules, and one of which MUST be from the general questions.

For the questions relating to the materials in the Senior Freshman Political Science modules, a mastery of the materials taught in those lectures and contained on those syllabuses – including of course any optional or additional reading suggestions – up to the end of the Michaelmas Term, is sufficient preparation.

An sample examination for the format of “Political Science 2” is contained in this document.

As a reminder, this guidance relates only to the content and format of the Foundation Scholarship examinations provided by the Political Science Department. Many students also have questions about which papers they should choose to sit for the Foundation Scholarship examination. For those questions, please consult the regulations of your specific degree programme (BESS, PPES, Law and Politics, European Studies, Political Science and Geography, History and Political Science etc.) Some “Frequently Asked Questions” are also answered on the Political Science Department’s website.

We wish all students good luck with the Foundation Scholarship examinations.

William Phelan
TOPICS AND READINGS FOR POLITICAL SCIENCE PAPER 1

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
HISTORY OF POLITICAL THOUGHT
COMPARATIVE POLITICS
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Topic: the European Union as an External Actor
(the European Union’s foreign policy – its relationship with states and non-state actors outside the European Union, excluding the topic of EU ‘enlargement’ except as discussed in the readings below)

William Phelan

Readings:


NB this article is currently available on “EARLY VIEW” via the Journal of Common Market website. Might appear in forthcoming issue.


By way of contrast, a book on the foreign policy of the United States:


Sample question:

1. Viewed in comparative context, is the European Union a powerful external actor?
HISTORY OF POLITICAL THOUGHT

Topic: Democracy and Random Selection

Peter Stone

Readings:

Two readings on the history of random selection in politics:


Some contemporary readings on the theory of practice of random selection in politics:


This volume collects many of the leading papers on the topic.

Sample Question:

Aristotle claimed that in a democracy citizens rule and are ruled in turn. Can random selection help to achieve this goal?
COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Topic: Referendums and Direct Democracy
Gail McElroy

Readings:


**Sample Questions**

1) “Referendums enhance representative democracy”. Discuss

2) ‘The impact of campaigns is much greater in referendums than in general elections’. Discuss.
SAMPLE EXAM QUESTIONS FOR POLITICAL SCIENCE PAPER 2

Students must answer three questions in total. Students must answer two of the nine questions relating to the material covered by second year modules in Political Science, and one of the three general questions.

Section A: Answer Any Two Questions from the Following Set (Questions 1-9)

Relating to PO2640 International Relations:

1. Does Keohane’s explanation of international cooperation the same as Axelrod’s explanation of cooperation between egoists? Answer drawing on readings and IR theory.
2. Under what circumstances do domestic lobby groups matter in international politics? Answer drawing on readings and IR theory.
3. Etc.

Relating to PO2610 History of Political Thought:

4. Is there any reason for a non-Christian to take seriously the political ideas of Augustine and Aquinas?
5. Examine the relationship between the Plato’s metaphysical theory of forms and his political elitism.

Relating to PO2650 Comparative Politics:

7. “Unelected judges have no right to overrule democratically elected politicians”. Discuss with reference to at least two countries.
8. Discuss the thesis that social class is no longer the dominant cleavage in European politics.

Section B: Answer One Question from the Following Set (10-12):

General questions:

10. “Who gets what, when, and how.” (H. Lasswell). Is this an adequate definition of politics?
11. Is politics a characteristic of all human relations?
12. Etc.