

INAF U6164

Spring 2013 Midterm information and questions

The midterm will be held **in class on March 12**. If you cannot take the exam because of pre-scheduled travel for a SIPA project, you must bring me a note to this effect from your program director before March 8. You may then take the makeup midterm on March 25 from 4:10-6pm. The makeup time is inflexible. If you cannot make either midterm (the note from your program director should state this) then your final exam will count for 70% instead of 40%. If you cannot take the exam for unexpected reasons (e.g. serious illness), I will follow the usual Columbia University requirements and protocols.

Below are 8 sample essay questions, some with multiple parts. Your midterm will present you with three or four of these questions. You will be asked to answer two or three, longhand, in exam booklets. You will not be told which questions in advance. Hence you should study by preparing an answer to all. (Note: the makeup midterm will have a different subset of questions.)

You should study by preparing draft answers. **You should prepare your answers individually.** You may casually discuss questions and answers with your classmates, but by no means should you share your preparatory notes and answers with a classmate, nor should you ask a classmate for their notes or detailed answers. Original insights and independent work will be rewarded.

You will be allowed to bring in one handwritten 8.5 x 11 sheet of paper with notes. You will submit this 'cheat sheet' with your midterm.

Your written answers can be as long as you like. Longer is not always better, however, for a couple of reasons. One, of course, is that you have limited time in the exam. The second is that coherent and effective answers are usually concise. So avoid running on interminably.

You should write in complete sentences. We encourage you to use headings and subheadings to organize your answers. You may also sparingly use bullet points—clear, coherent ones—in your answer, the same way a policy note or memorandum would include short lists or points.

Your answers will be graded according to the following criteria:

- Answering the actual question asked
- Clear, organized and thoughtful writing
- Demonstrated knowledge of the readings, lectures and key debates
- Evidence and examples from the readings, including explicit references to authors
- Critical analysis reflecting deep, well-reasoned and logical thinking
- Concision
- Original answers, distinct from your peers

Question 1

Explain how foreign aid can affect economic growth. Use the Solow model and the Big Push models to frame your arguments. Make sure to tackle these three points briefly and clearly:

- i. Under what circumstances would aid affect capital per worker, and does this always increase growth rates?
- ii. Under what circumstances would aid affect “technology”, and does this always increase growth rates, or could growth decrease in some circumstances?
- iii. What does the existing evidence say about (i) and (ii)? Is that evidence convincing?
- iv. Based on your answers above, what kind of aid do you think ought to receive more emphasis by donor countries?

Question 2

Compare the positive and negative effects of colonialism. You may choose to focus on Africa or Latin America or both. In your answer, be sure to consider the following:

- i. In what ways did colonialism hinder long-term development in the colonies?
- ii. What is the counterargument—in what ways could colonialism have advanced development?
- iii. Are there any good arguments for why colonialism doesn't actually matter one way or the other?
- iv. How do your answers vary with different “counterfactuals”? What do you think is the most plausible counterfactual?

Question 3

Drawing on the readings and authors, compare the paths of state and institutional development in Africa, Latin America, and Europe.

- i. What common determinants and patterns of state and institutional development do you see across the three regions?
- ii. How do some of the initial conditions and determinants of state and institutional development differ, and how does this help explain outcomes?
- iii. In the next 100 years, do you see Africa reaching the level of state and institutional development of Latin America? Argue both sides. On the “yes” side, explain whether you think Africa will follow a similar path with similar determinants, or its own path with different forces shaping it?

Question 4

Suppose, in 1900, Nate Silver wanted to build a model for predicting autocracy—that is, which countries in the world would end up more or less democratic in 2000. Knowing everything you know today, what do you think would be the five most influential variables that would help Nate predict dictatorship versus democracy? These can be historical, geographic, cultural, political, economic, or something else—it is entirely up to you. They just have to be 1900 or pre-1900 measures. And you must justify your choice of these five variables and link them to the readings or lecture material.

(Note, that for each of the five factors, you should describe in general terms what concept predicts autocracy. But since we want to predict using variables, in the end you should suggest how each factor would be operationalized in a measure. This is not necessarily an existing measure, only something that (in principle) could be quantified. So “Proportion of the population that listen to jazz” and “Index of cat appreciation in the population” are both clear measures, while “Ability of the state to incentivize literacy” and “Culture of book-reading” are a bit vague.

Question 5

Jeffrey Sachs and Jared Diamond both argue that initial factor endowments have direct effects on underdevelopment today. Engerman & Sokoloff and Acemoglu, Johnson and Robinson argue that these direct geography arguments are wrong. What specifically do each claim? How do Acemoglu and Robinson argue they are false? Are there any arguments for or against geography that these authors overlook? Based on these arguments and counterarguments, to what extent do you think the direct effects of geography, climate, ecological conditions, natural resource endowment, and population density can help explain underdevelopment in many African countries?

Question 6

Consider the following statement: “Structural adjustment was foisted on poor country governments against their wishes and good sense. These governments could have charted an alternative, better reform path to without all the conditionality and without the Washington Consensus.”

- i. What are the arguments for this view?
- ii. What are arguments against?
- iii. Where do you stand? What is the counterfactual scenario you would have like to see?

Question 7

Several authors focus on the historical determinants of state strength and institutions. Some nations ended up with higher capacity states and institutions that constrain the executive and give representation to large numbers. Other nations ended up with weaker states or more autocratic, extractive institutions. Unfortunately, nations cannot change their history. What policy ideas or conclusions, if any, do you think can be drawn from the work we have seen so far?