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Examiners' Report

June 2010

GCE Government and Politics 6GP03 3B

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June 2010

Publications Code UA024032

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Introduction

The general standard of responses to this paper were broadly in line with previous examination sessions. A significant discriminator in relation to essay responses was the success or otherwise of candidates in meeting the new expectations about synopticity. In most cases, candidates were aware that synopticity required that they show an awareness of two or more sides of an argument, usually related to tensions between sub-traditions within an ideology, or between an ideology and opposing ideologies. In other cases, however, candidate performance was damaged by a tendency to adopt a purely analytical, or worse, a purely descriptive, approach to the question set. Candidates will do well to remember that all essay questions are now an invitation for them to engage in a debate or argument. Candidates who do this effectively will tend to gain higher marks for AO2, synopticity and, in all probability, AO3 as well.

Question 1

Weaker responses to this question tended to say relatively little about the link between socialism and social class, usually simply stating that socialism is generally orientated around the interests of the working class. Responses often then became generalised and meandering. Good responses showed a reliable understanding of what 'class politics' would consist of; in other words, of how class analysis has been used by socialists to develop political understanding. There were some very good responses that tackled this by reference largely to Marxism, pointing out that Marxists have tended to see classes as the principal agents of historical change and that class conflict has been viewed as the motor of history. In the best cases, candidates showed how Marxist-style class analysis was grounded in the ideas of historical materialism. Other candidates, quite appropriately, took a broader approach, examining how and why socialism has been linked to the attempt to reduce or overthrow class divisions. Candidates who spent time discussing the declining link between socialism and class politics drifted away from the issues outlined in the question, and therefore gained little reward.

Question 2

This was a popular question, answered well by the majority of candidates who attempted it. There were some highly impressive answers to this question. At the top end, candidates were able to acknowledge not merely a number of justifications for private property from within the conservative tradition, but also differences between traditional conservative and neoliberal justifications. In these cases, merit-based individualist justifications for private property were contrasted with organic ideas about property being a source of stability and property ownership entailing duties and responsibilities. In weaker cases, candidates merely provided a purely descriptive account of one or two conservative justifications, without explaining these arguments in an analytical sense. In some cases, their understanding of these arguments was rudimentary and not a little confused.

Conservatives believe that private property creates a sense of security for individuals who possess it. It allows people to feel as though they have somewhere to go if ever in ~~trav~~ trouble. A place to feel safe at all times. This reason is the reason why burglary is such a great offence to conservatives. ~~When~~ Once your home has been intruded upon, one often feels as though they have lost all their security. Private property is also justified by the conservative ideology because they believe that it offers a sense of an ~~persons~~ individual's personality. Within the property owned a reflection of how the individual's

is becomes an important factor. ~~With~~ Once common ownership is emitted into society all personal aspects of it diminishes. Conservatives believe that ones that own their own property will respect ~~others~~ the property and possessions of others because they themselves know what it is like to own something so valuable.

This therefore decreases crime rate, especially in terms of burglary, which is ~~planned~~ planned upon by ~~the~~ conservatives.

~~Private~~ According to conservatives private property also offers protection, in a sense that it shields the individual from danger. Along with this private property shows a sense of independence and being able to control exercise authority within their property.

Private property is justified by the conservatives as being important for many reasons and see it as a way to personalise society and also preserve order.

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Examiner Comments

Here is an example of a candidate merely providing a purely descriptive account.

Question 3

The vast majority of candidates assumed that this question was about the liberal idea of limited government. Many, therefore, simply provided an account of the various ways in which liberals believe that government power can be constrained. The best candidates, nevertheless, recognised that this was a two part question. In the first part, they explained why liberals are particularly concerned about the issue of concentrated power, often using the second half of the Acton quote - 'absolute power corrupts absolutely'. There was a major distinction between candidates who merely stated this argument and those who fully explained it. In the second part of the answer, strong responses focused clearly on the issue of institutional fragmentation, often pointing out that it not merely reduced the power of any particular politician, group of politicians or institution, but that it also established a framework of checks and balances, meaning that power is a check on power. Those who also used democracy as a source of fragmentation gained credit, because the question was about the fragmentation of political power and not merely government power. Some candidates, nevertheless, gained limited credit when they focused mainly on reforms such as a codified constitution and a bill of rights, which do not achieve fragmentation in a clear sense.

Chosen Question Number:

Question 1 Question 2 Question 3 Question 4 Question 5

Liberals have supported the fragmentation of political power such as devolution and other checks & balances on the government because they believe it important to put in methods of 'taming' the state & limiting its power. They believe the state is a necessary evil and should be minimalistic, especially classical liberals believing in negative or opposed to positive freedom, minimal because the state is inherently evil & corrupt, not because of the people themselves but the nature of human beings when in power.

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Examiner Comments

Here is an example of a candidate who focuses on limited government.

Question 4

Questions on anarchism are always popular. However, they are not always as analytically sophisticated or as well focused as one would like. There is a general tendency for weaker candidates to provide generalised knowledge and understanding, rather than focus on the question set. In this case, weaker responses often ignored the issue of the 'possibility' of a stateless society and wrote instead about the 'desirability' of a stateless society. In such cases, they wrote, often at length, about why the state is evil and oppressive, saying relatively little about why, from an anarchist perspective, it is also unnecessary. Better responses, of course, focused clearly on this issue, and in the best cases candidates showed an awareness of optimistic assumptions that anarchists make about both human nature and certain social institutions, in the process showing an awareness that different arguments have been advanced by different kinds of anarchists. As so often in the past, some relevant but weak responses said little more than that anarchists believe that a stateless society is possible because they believe that human beings are 'naturally good'.

Anarchists believe in the possibility of a stateless society through many aspects. Their belief that the state is a concentrated evil, and calls for the dispersion of the state.



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Examiner Comments

A not very strong response focusing on the 'desirability' of a stateless society.

Question 5

There were many good, and some excellent, responses to this question. The very best responses showed an awareness of Hegelian dialectical thinking, reflected in the idea that Marx believed that capitalism, together with all earlier class societies, was doomed to collapse because of its internal contradictions. In less impressive cases, candidates largely described the processes through which Marx believed that capitalism would collapse - proletarian revolution, the establishment of a dictatorship of the proletariat, the 'withering away' of the state, and so on - without showing an awareness of the underlying inevitability of this process. Candidates who were able to explain the fundamental flaws of the capitalist system, linked to its tendency towards oppression and exploitation, therefore did better. Some made very good use of the idea of surplus value, although the extent to which this notion and its implications were soundly understood varied considerably. Very few responses were unable to offer at least a satisfactory answer to this question.

Marx believed that capitalism would collapse because it embodies its own antithesis. In addition Marx believed that it was a natural process that a new paradigm would emerge. Marx and Friedrich Engels developed what ~~is~~ they described as the laws of history, ~~historical~~ identified as historical materialism. The first stages of society began with primitive communism, a classless, stateless society however a new dialect formed, ~~bringing~~ ^{bringing} about ancient history, however this society had a hierarchical structure, masters and slaves. Due to the inevitable conflict a new ~~para~~ paradigm emerged, an aristocratic society where there ~~were~~ ~~and~~ was the ~~aristocrat~~ aristocrats and serfs. However, due to ~~the~~ a rising middle class, capitalism emerged. Marx argued capitalism is the source of class oppression. ~~Thus~~ ~~so~~ Marx argued crime, gender inequality, racism all stems from the bourgeoisie oppressing the proletariat. Marx argued that once the

proletariat reach a stage of class conscious
consciousness, then there will be a revolution
and the state, property and capitalism's
institutions will wither away. Then, a new
paradigm the next and last stage of history
will emerge, communism - a stateless,
classless society where people will have
only what they need according to their
willingness to work.

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Examiner Comments

A largely descriptive account of the processes through which Marx believed that capitalism would collapse.

Question 6

Good responses to this question tackled the issue of 'extent' very clearly. They showed, on the one hand, that traditional conservatives have advanced a range of arguments in favour of tradition and continuity, often using the ideas of Burke and others about the idea of tradition as accumulated wisdom, and continuity as a source of stability and rootedness. On the other hand, they examined the ideas of the liberal New Right, emphasising that its rationalism encourages it to be guided by theories and principles, not uncommonly leading it to support radical change and ignore its implications for tradition. Generally the pro-tradition aspects of conservatism were understood better than the anti-tradition aspects, and some seemed to believe that New Right radicalism is simply proof that tradition has been abandoned, without explaining or discussing the theoretical basis for this abandonment. In weaker cases, responses were insufficiently evaluative and failed to take account of differences within conservatism over tradition. In these cases, responses amounted either to an extended examination of why conservatives support tradition or tended to drift away from the question itself, writing about conservatism in a generalised way.

In conclusion, conservatives support ~~conservatism~~ traditional values and continuity on the grounds that it reflects their religious faith and their strive for social stability. They believe that continuity would also guarantee social stability for generations to come. However over the years, conservatives have taken a very pragmatic approach to tradition by advocating 'change in order to conserve'.



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Examiner Comments

This response is largely a descriptive extended examination of why conservatives support tradition.

Question 7

Virtually all candidates who attempted this question were able to say something about the division in anarchism between individualist anarchism and collectivist anarchism. In the weakest cases, however, candidates seemed to believe that in merely describing these two traditions as fully as they could they would answer the question set. This approach enabled them to gain some credit, but better responses focused much more clearly on the relationship between individualist anarchism and liberalism, and the relationship between collectivist anarchism and socialism. Only the better candidates were able to compare and contrast the extent to which each tradition is rooted in, or departs from liberalism or socialism. A further difficulty was that when candidates did little more than outline contrasting anarchist traditions they offered little in the way of evaluation, failing therefore to answer the question set. In the best cases, however, candidates argued to a conclusion, claiming that, on balance, anarchism was closer to liberalism or to socialism. Some very impressive responses argued that anarchism is closer to socialism, on the grounds that socialists, unlike liberals, can countenance the goal of a stateless society, often using Marxist socialism as an example of this.

Individualist anarchism is ~~about the same as~~
the conclusion reached when taking
liberal individualism to its extreme. The
individual becomes sovereign with no restraints
on his or her freedom. Some thinkers have
even suggested that individuals should act
on their own conscious and disregarded any
form of morality expected by society. However
many individualist anarchists have a positive
view of the individual, believing that
sovereign individuals are ~~not~~
endowed with reason and therefore do
not require state 'regulation'. Liberals also
~~hold such views, but do not believe~~
individuals believe individuals are rational
creatures, but argue that humans are

also self-interested and therefore require regulation by a Sovereign State to ensure one's freedom does not become 'licence' to encroach on another's freedom.

Individualist anarchism is closer to liberalism than it is to socialism because of its acceptance of private property and a market based economy. Socialists, or at least Marxists believe the market is inherently exploitative and cannot be made good. Social democrats ~~also~~ accept that the market is the only way of ensuring general prosperity, but only when regulated by the government. Classical liberals ~~also~~ and neoliberals hold similar views of the market as do anarcho-capitalists. Neoliberals subscribe to market fundamentalism, which places the market above government. The justification for this is that the market is a naturally harmonious body which ~~delivers~~ delivers general prosperity, when not ~~it~~ interfered with by politicians. Anarcho-capitalists take this view to the extreme arguing the market is capable of regulating all social interaction. Modern liberals on the other hand subscribe to a view of the

Market which is closer to a social democratic view. They realise that unrestrained pursuit of profit can cause stark injustice and therefore requires state regulation, so ~~capitalists~~ ~~the~~ the worst examples of inequality can be avoided. Therefore in economic terms, economic theory of ~~the~~ anarcho-capitalists is similar to that of classical and neoliberals.

Collectivist anarchism is a conclusion reached when taking socialist collectivism to its ideological extreme. In fact, the goal of collectivist anarchists is the same as that of Marxists or communists. Marxists wish to achieve a stateless and ~~the~~ classless society as do collectivist anarchists. Marxists have different means of achieving this. They believe ~~the~~ the creation of a 'dictatorship of the proletariat' is justified and necessary to prevent a counter-revolution by the dispossessed bourgeoisie. Marxists believe that when all class antagonisms disappear, the state will 'wither away'. Collectivist anarchists on the other hand believe a revolution to be the immediate and ~~the~~ ^{final} overthrow of the state. The state cannot 'wither away', it must be

destroyed.

Both Marxists and collectivist anarchists share the view that humans are not self-interested but are social creatures whose essential nature is one of caring and sympathy. Both believe that total social equality, that is the satisfaction of human needs, will strengthen bonds of cooperation amongst humans and thus encourage them to work together for the common good of the community. Both also believe freedom to be the achievement of self-realization, which can only be achieved when the correct conditions are established for human flourishing. These are the satisfaction of basic human needs, e.g. food, water, shelter etc. ~~Both~~ However some collectivist anarchists, ~~both~~ unlike communists, believe private property can be justified in certain circumstances, if it is not exploitative. Collectivist anarchists are closer to socialists than they are to liberals, because they place society above the individual, believing it is the essential nature of humans to do so.

Individualist anarchists differed with liberals

Question 8

There were some very insightful and impressive responses to this question. These tended to take one of two approaches. First, they considered links between liberalism and equality, notably support for foundational equality, formal equality and equality of opportunity, and examined these in the light of arguably more strongly egalitarian ideologies, especially socialism. Second, they examined contrasting positions within liberalism, noting how, why and to what extent classical liberals and modern liberals have agreed or disagreed over equality, usually giving special attention to the extent of disagreements over social equality. Either of these approaches was legitimate. However, although this question elicited some very good responses, it also led to much weaker responses. These, in the main, failed to focus sufficiently on the question set, and instead of examining the relationship between liberalism and the principle of equality they tended to provide generalised information about liberalism and its many beliefs. Once again, this reinforces the vital need for candidates to read and understand the question set, and to choose other questions if they conclude that they have insufficient knowledge and understanding to answer a question fully in the allotted 45 minutes.

Put a cross in the box indicating the question that you have chosen.
If you change your mind, put a line through the box
and then indicate your new question with a cross .

Chosen Question Number:

Question 6

Question 7

Question 8

As liberalism has developed, their views on equality have changed with their views on freedom. Different types of liberals have sought to provide different kinds of equality.

Classical liberals believed in negative freedom produced by having a minimalist government which provided equality of ~~choice~~ choice. Individual freedom was permitted to everyone to allow them to make the choice of doing almost anything they wanted.

Modern liberalism used a expansive government to try to provide positive freedom in the form of equality of opportunity. Health, education and other key services are provided by the government to ensure that a person from any background had the same opportunity.

Both ~~modern~~ modern liberalism and classical liberalism have given ~~equal~~ formal equality to ~~everyone~~ everyone. This means everyone is equal in their right to vote and they are all seen the same under the eyes of the law.

However, liberalism has not always provided equality. Neither classical liberalism nor modern liberalism sought to provide equality of outcome for people. Everyone ended up with different wealth and lifestyle based upon the free market.

Classical liberalism also promoted inequality by not endorsing universal suffrage to adults. Women especially were not given the vote making the standing government not a representation of the entire population. Formal equality was only provided to those who were considered able to vote ~~sensibly~~ sensibly.

In addition, classical liberals did not provide equal access to important services and welfare. The free market controlled most of the important services meaning the inequalities produced by class division forced some people to not have the ~~time~~ same choice as others.

Overall, liberalism provides a high degree of equality allowing individuals to reach their potential. ~~is~~ Modern liberalism is substantially more equal in terms of access to areas of work, services and welfare. Classical liberalism is not as equal but like modern liberalism upholds the doctrine of formal equality.



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Examiner Comments

An example of a not very strong script, largely generalised information and assertions about equality and liberalism. Little explanation, analysis or evaluation.

Grade boundaries

| Grade | Max. Mark | a* | A | B | C | D | E | N | U |
|-----------------------------|-----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|---|
| Raw mark boundary | 90 | 62 | 56 | 50 | 44 | 38 | 32 | 26 | 0 |
| Uniform mark scale boundary | 100 | 90 | 80 | 70 | 60 | 50 | 40 | 30 | 0 |

a* is only used in conversion from raw to uniform marks. It is not a published unit grade.

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Order Code UA024032 June 2010

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