Comprehensive Examination in
POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY

PART I

Please answer one of two questions in each section.

Elite/Mass Dynamics

1. In his *Public Opinion* (1922), Walter Lippmann wrote that "Each of us lives and works on a small part of the earth's surface, moves in a small circle, and of these acquaintances knows only a few intimately. Of any public event that has wide effects we see at best only a phase and an aspect... Inevitably our opinions cover a bigger space, a longer reach of time, a greater number of things, than we can directly observe. They have, therefore, to be pieced together out of what others have reported and what we can imagine." (p.59) In the standard "cascade model" of public opinion formation, the "others" on whom public opinion depends are social, political, and media elites, as well as local opinion leaders. But surely the vaunted "information revolution" has changed all this. The question is, in what direction? Discuss.

2. Elite balkanization, mass demoralization, and political fragmentation have arguably been principal aspects of the last 25 years of political change in post-industrial societies like the United States. Describe and discuss patterns which support or contradict this thesis.

Democracy

1. The literature on democratization has expanded greatly in recent years. What long-standing theoretical issues in political sociology does this literature address? Has the recent "third wave" of democratizations produced theoretical advances, or at least new insights, as regards issues that have long been of interest to political sociologists?

2. Much recent literature has tried to categorize democratic transitions and describe the extent to which democratic regimes have become institutionalized. How can we distinguish between transitional and consolidated democracies? What are the conditions that produce the latter? In answering, compare and contrast some of the major contributions to this literature, and illustrate with several concrete cases.