

NATIONAL RESEARCH UNIVERSITY HIGHER SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

St. Petersburg School of Social Sciences and Area Studies

BA Programme in Political Science and World Politics

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**Academic Council of the
BA Programme in Political
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SYLLABUS

Final State Exam

Field of study: 41.03.04 “Political Science”
BA level

Academic Supervisor

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Abstract: The current syllabus describes the main procedures, related to the State Exam of the Field of Study for the students of the BA Programme in Political Science and World Politics (field of study: 41.03.04 “Political Science”), describes the content of the exam, as well as the criteria of evaluation of the state examination questions. The State Exam is the integral and obligatory part of the Final State Certification or the bachelor's degree student in the field of study “Political Science”.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. State Exam Subject-Matter

The State Exam (field of study: 41.03.04 “Political Science”) covers the contents of the following disciplines pertaining to the Professional Programme Part (the Major):

1. History of Political Thought;
2. Contemporary Russian Politics;
3. World Politics and International Relations;
4. Comparative Politics;
5. Policy Analysis;
6. Qualitative Methods in Political Research;
7. Quantitative Methods of Political Research.

1.2. State Exam Format

The State Exam comes in the form of a written test. It may be conducted as a paper-based exam or can be in a form of a digital test, conducted in a computer classroom. The test lasts for 160 minutes. The test consists of 10 open-ended questions, divided into four blocks. Each block is devoted to one or several disciplines. All questions within Blocks 1-3 are based on one text per block. Questions in Block 4 can be based on two different graphs or tables. The structure of the test is indicated in the table below.

Block number	Disciplines	Number of questions	Materials for analysis
1	History of Political Thought	2	An excerpt from a classic text on politics
2	Contemporary Russian Politics, World Politics and International Relations, Comparative Politics, Policy Analysis	4	An excerpt from an academic or a journalistic text
3	Qualitative Methods in Political Research	2	An excerpt from a qualitative study, an excerpt from an interview transcript, an interview guide
4	Quantitative Methods of Political Research	2	A descriptive statistics table, a plot, a regression or statistical test output

Block 1. History of Political Thought (2 questions)

Students are to read an excerpt from a classic text on politics and to answer the questions. The questions can require:

- to attribute this text to a particular thinker and/or a philosophical tradition,
- to put into a broader context of political thought (e.g., name an opposing tradition and its representatives),
- to define the notions mentioned in the text and illustrate them with examples.

Block 2. Contemporary Russian Politics, World Politics and International Relations, Comparative Politics, Policy Analysis (4 questions)

Students are to read an excerpt from an academic or a journalistic article and to answer the questions. The questions will pertain to two out of four disciplines that are subject to testing in this block. Any combination of disciplines is possible. The questions can require:

- to interpret the events and processes described in the text through the lens of theoretical approaches and concepts studied within a particular discipline,
- to define the notions mentioned in the text and illustrate them with examples,
- to attribute the text to a theoretical tradition/theory and discuss further implications of this theory,
- to interpret the events and processes described in the text through the lens of contemporary Russian political history and put them into a broader context of Russian political development.

Block 3. Qualitative Methods in Political Research (2 questions)

Students are to read an excerpt from a qualitative research paper, an interview guide or an interview transcript. The questions can require:

- to identify the method described in the text and to put it into a broader methodological context (e.g., to explain what this method is suitable for or what other versions of this method exist),
- to explain what kind of a research, question the interview can be suitable to answer,
- to analyze the interview transcript (e.g., to identify the main themes in informant's answers),
- to find and correct ethical and/or methodological mistakes committed by a researcher.

Block 4. Quantitative Methods of Political Research (2 questions)

Students are to answer the questions based on the analysis of a plot, a regression or a statistical test output. The questions can require:

- to interpret a table with descriptive statistics,
- to interpret a plot (e.g., what kind of a plot it is, what it is needed for, what is represented by the axes, what the relationship between the variables is, the existence of what problem with our statistical model can we infer from this plot),
- to interpret a regression/a statistical test output (e.g., what conclusions about the relationship between the variables we can draw, assess the quality of the model).

Sample questions:

- 1) Interpret the events and processes described in the text in the light of the theories of the policy process and related concepts. Name at least three concepts, provide their definitions, and illustrate with the examples from the text.
- 2) The text mentions that the governor was appointed by the President of Russia. When were the governors in Russia appointed by the President (indicate the period)? Describe the appointment procedure. What event was referred to by the federal center to justify the decision to abolish elections?
- 3) This plot is used as one of the stages of diagnostics for the model's technical problems. What is the problem one can assume taking with plot? Are there any signs that this problem might be present in the respective model?

1.3. State Exam Assessment Criteria and Grading System

Depending on how comprehensive the answer is, a student gets from 3 to 0 points per one question. The total amount of points is 30 points max.

3 points are given for a comprehensive, analytical and well-structured answer which shows an excellent overall understanding of the subject-matter, the ability to put it in a broader academic and contextual perspective, and a broad background knowledge rooted in the primary sources listed below.

2 points are given for an analytical and clearly organized answer which shows a good overall understanding of the subject-matter, the ability to highlight the key points pertaining to this subject- matter (yet, leaving some minor issues not covered), and some background knowledge rooted in the primary sources listed below.

1 point is given for a largely unstructured answer which takes a very basic approach to the subject- matter, uses broadly appropriate notions but lacks focus, and shows evidence of a piecemeal understanding of the subject-matter.

0 points are given when no answer is provided or if an answer does not show any evidence of even a piecemeal understanding of the subject-matter.

The following scaling system is used to translate the number of points obtained into the 10-point grade:

Points	Grade
29-30	10
26-28	9
24-26	8
21-23	7
18-20	6
15-17	5
12-14	4
9-11	3
6-8	2
less than 6	1

2. STATE EXAM CONTENTS

HISTORY OF POLITICAL THOUGHT

Political ideas and religion in Ancient Egypt. Political thought of Thucydides. Political ideas in Ancient China (Confucius and Laozi). Ancient India and Hindu Political thought. Political ideas of Plato. Political Ideas of Aristotle. Political Ideas of Niccolo Machiavelli. Political Ideas of Thomas Hobbes. Political Ideas of Augustine. Political Ideas of John Locke. Political Ideas of Thomas Aquinas. The Quran and Political Ideas of Islam. Charles Louis de Montesquieu: Forms of Government and Their Principles. Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the French Revolution. Thomas Jefferson, American Revolution and the Idea of Democracy. Political Ideas of Grotius and Pufendorf. Natural Law. Immanuel Kant's political thought. Political Ideas of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Early political thought of Karl Marx. Political thought of Carl Schmitt. Political Ideas of Hannah Arendt. Political Ideas of John Stuart Mill. Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and development of their political ideas in the XX century. Political Ideas of John Rawls. Feminist Political Theory and its critics. Political Thought in Russia: a Historical Overview.

CONTEMPORARY RUSSIAN POLITICS

The parliamentary and presidential elections in contemporary Russia (1991 until present). Formal and informal institutional dynamics in contemporary Russia. Party and electoral system developments. The horizontal (the President – the Government – the Parliament) and the vertical (the federal center – the regions) distribution of power. Civil society and NGOs in Russia.

WORLD POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Neorealism and Neoliberal Institutionalism: The Neo-Neo Debate. Marxist and Neo-Marxist International Relations Theories. Social Constructivism. Critical geopolitics. Feminist Theories of IR. Securitization theory.

COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Presidential and parliamentary systems. Party systems and coalitions. Federalism. Varieties of democracy. Democratic power-sharing. Authoritarian regimes and the problems of authoritarian rule. Authoritarian power-sharing and the selectorate theory. Authoritarian control. Resource curse and rentier states.

POLICY ANALYSIS

Public policy problems. Policy instruments. The Policy Cycle. Policy Transfer and Diffusion. Evidence-Based Policymaking. Punctuated Equilibrium Theory. Multiple Streams Framework. Advocacy Coalition Framework. Policy Implementation: Bureaucracy and Compliance. Qualitative and Quantitative Policy Evaluation.

QUALITATIVE METHODS IN POLITICAL RESEARCH

Qualitative (interpretivist) methodology and methods. Ethnography. Participant observation. Qualitative interview. Focus-groups. Grounded Theory. Research ethics, informed consent.

QUANTITATIVE METHODS IN POLITICAL RESEARCH

Descriptive statistics. Statistical tests: binominal, t test, Mann Whitney test, chi square. Correlation. Paired linear regression. Statistical tests: Mann Whitney test. Multiple OLS regression: principle, interpretation, design. "Technical" problems and prerequisites for OLS regression. Substantive problems of regression

models. Logistic regression. OLS regression diagnostics. Ordered Logistic Regression. Panel regression and fixed effects. Hierarchical regression models

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