Chapter One Short Answer (Answers Below)

1. One focus of this book is analysis through the process of comparison. Good comparisons require objects of analysis that have both similarities and differences. Explain why, using examples drawn from the chapter.

2. The “state” has several meanings in the context of political discussion. Select two, and compare and contrast their meaning and relevance to politics.

3. Power and coercion have a long association with the state, but coercion is not a perfect tool. Discuss some of its strengths and weaknesses.

4. Discuss the difference between intra-, inter-, and trans-national forms of activity. How do they relate to globalization and the changes facing modern states?

5. One relationship important to modern politics is that between the state and civil society. Define this relationship, and explain its dynamics.

Answers

1. Answers should be based on the chapter’s discussion of analytical versus categorical differences. Some things are so different that comparison between them serves primarily to highlight the fact of difference. Other things have similarities, but enough difference that comparing them can show the impact of their differences on the things they hold in common. More advanced answers will likely point out that what constitutes one form of difference or another varies from case to case, and that the ability to distinguish between them and defend the criteria used in the particular case is a necessary skill.
2. Answers should be based on the discussion box on page 12, which distinguishes between varying uses of the word state, including the anthropological state: characterized as a social formation with centralized leadership and the ability to coerce; the governing state: the permanent structure of power by which the population of a particular territory is governed; the civil state: that aspect of public activity distinct from civil society and governed by the state; and the federal state: the sub-national or regional component of government in some federal systems.
3. Answers should note that while the state is distinguished from earlier forms of social organization by its centralized capacity for coercion, the use of that power is typically expensive and inefficient. Answers will likely engage the chapter’s discussion of command, consent, and coercion, and may also distinguish between authoritarian/totalitarian forms of government and those which depend more on popular sovereignty and legal-juridical forms of authority for legitimacy. In addition, some discussion of the sources of power (such as those articulated by Weber) and limits on state power (such as federal, institutional, political, cultural, etc.) may also be appropriate.
4. Answers should indicate an understanding of forms of activity organized within, between, and beyond the organizational context of the state. The discussion of globalization should demonstrate an understanding that a transnational phenomena, like globalization, has differing implications across all three levels. For example, the economic impact of globalization could change the intranational power dynamics of regional government, lead to the creation of trade treaties at the international level, or the organization of economic sectors (such the North American auto sector) at the transnational level.
5. Answers should indicate an understanding of civil society as that realm of activity that is outside the control of the state, but potentially subject to it. Critically, students should demonstrate an understanding of civil society as a deliberate product of the restraint of state authority. Students may contrast civil society with totalitarian regimes, in which there is no aspect of life that the state does not deliberately seek to control. Subordinate discussion may touch on the role civil society plays in mimicking pre-state social connections in a post-state society; the debate about the role played by institutions in civil society (notably family and the church); the relationship between civil society and freedom or civil society and democracy; the joint role played by the state and civil society in creating and maintaining the market; and the impact of social change on the boundary between the state and civil society.