

**Public Policy and Public Administration Examination  
Fall 2008**

Student ID# \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:**

You have 48 hours to prepare your answers to these examination questions. Budget your time carefully, including time to think and organize, as well as rest, while preparing and writing the answers. Focus on preparing coherent, well-organized essays that not only demonstrate your mastery of the literature, but also indicate how that literature expands our collective knowledge. Answers should range from five to eight (5-8) double-spaced pages per question; please do not write more than ten (10) pages on any individual question.

Number your pages consecutively for the entire examination.

Cite sources throughout your examination using a standard format and provide a bibliography that covers all materials used in preparing your answers.

Clearly label each answer with the number of the question you are answering.

Please put your Student ID number at the top of each page of your examination. **Do not** write your name anywhere on the examination.

**MA Minors:** please answer one question from each of three sections of your choice, a total of 3 (three) answers.

**MA Majors:** please answer a total of four questions, one question must be chosen from each of the sections.

## **Part I. Theoretical Approaches**

1. Many observers of the contemporary political scene lament the lack of public participation in policymaking. What are the most important avenues for citizen input in democratic policymaking? How effective are these avenues? Is there cause for concern about the current level of citizen participation in policymaking? Why or why not?
2. Do ideas play an important role in the process of policy formation? Should they play a role? If yes, how and why do ideas enter the policy process? If you think ideas play little or no role in the policy process, explain why that is. Whether or not you think ideas do play a role, be sure you also indicate whether you think they should play a role. Illustrate your argument with reference to a particular policy.
3. Some scholars argue that analyzing the policy process as involving a set of distinct stages or aspects provides valuable insight into the political dynamics of policy development (Lasswell, 1951; Kingdon, 1984; Peters, 1999). Does the policy stages model help to clarify our thinking about policy issues or does it obscure understanding of those issues? Explain.

## **Part II. Policy Research**

1. Do the research problems in public policy differ from those in the rest of the field of political science? Why or why not? What implications does your answer have for the conduct of policy research?
2. In his introductory policy textbook, Thomas Dye (1998) contends that “It is important to distinguish policy analysis from policy advocacy. *Explaining* the causes and consequences of various policies is not equivalent to *prescribing* what policies governments ought to pursue”(p.8, emphasis in original). Do you agree with this distinction between policy analysis and policy advocacy? Why or why not?
3. Does a comparative approach to political research offer any particular insights for policy scholars? If so, why, and if not, why not? What, if any, disadvantages might there be to pursuing a comparative approach? Be sure to explain what is meant by “a comparative approach” in your answer.
4. John Dryzek claims that “Social scientists are well placed, should they so choose, to contribute to the discursive democratization of politics” (Dryzek, 1990, 153). Do you agree that social science in general, and policy analysis in particular, can contribute to political democratization? Why or why not? (Be sure to talk both about social science in general and policy analysis in particular).

### **Part III. Substantive Policies**

1. Gosta Esping-Andersen's *Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* provides a typology of liberal, social democratic and conservative/corporatist welfare states based on political factors and the character of social provision in each type of regime. His work has provided a dominant paradigm for comparative work on social policy, but it has also elicited considerable criticism, especially from feminists. What are the key contributions and weaknesses of Esping-Andersen's approach? Why has it been so influential? What in your view are some of the most telling criticisms of Esping-Andersen's work, and what makes them powerful? Be sure you attend to at least one of his feminist critics here, including his/her recommendations for a different approach to thinking about social citizenship that focuses on the gendered character of the labor market and of unpaid work in the home. How valuable are such approaches to "gendering the welfare state" as an approach to thinking about social welfare policies or states? How on balance do you assess the debate between Esping-Andersen and his critics? What has it taught us?

2. Many scholars argue that institutional analysis is the most fruitful approach to the study of public policy. What is institutional analysis? What, according to these scholars, is the analytic benefit of focusing on institutions? Are you convinced by their arguments? Why or why not? Illustrate your argument by discussing a specific policy area of your choice. Be sure to use the example to show the analytic benefit or disadvantage of focusing on institutions.

3. Discuss some of the ways that the public shapes policy decisions regarding complex issues of environmental policy. What role, in your view, should the public play in such environmental policy issues?

**Public Policy and Public Administration Examination**  
Spring 2008

Directions:

Submit a cover page with your responses that lists the following: ID number, type of exam completed (e.g. MA major, MA minor), and examination area. Indicate the semester the examination is taken, and **DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME ANYWHERE ON THE EXAMINATION.**

You have 48 hours to prepare your answers to these questions. Budget your time carefully, including time to think and organize, as well as rest, while preparing and writing the answers. Focus on preparing coherent, well-organized essays that not only demonstrate your mastery of the literature, but also indicate how that literature expands our collective knowledge. Be sure to answer the question or questions that are asked of you. Answers should range from five to eight (5-8) double-spaced pages per question; please do not write more than ten (10) pages on any individual questions. Number your pages consecutively for the entire examination.

Clearly label each answer with the number of the question you are answering.

Cite sources throughout your examination using a standard format and provide a bibliography that covers all materials used in preparing your answers.

**MA Minors:** Please answer one question from each of the three sections, for a total of three (3) answers.

**MA Majors:** Please answer a total of four (4) questions, at least one question must be answered from each of the three sections.

## **I. Theoretical Approaches**

1. Drawing on at least three examples, evaluate work that puts historical institutionalism and path dependency front and center in explanations of policymaking, welfare states, and policy outcomes: what kinds of questions does it answer? What kinds of explanatory factors does it emphasize? What are its particular strengths and weaknesses as an approach to studying policy formation? (You may need to contrast historical institutionalist approaches to other theoretical or analytic work on policymaking to get at this). As you answer these questions, pay attention to differences in approaches rather than assuming that there is a single overarching “path dependency” approach.
2. Some criticize policy theories for being better at explaining policy stability than policy change. Evaluate this claim.
3. Paul Sabatier continues to claim in 2007 that “we need better policy theories.” Given this claim, describe three important areas in need of improvement in public policy theorizing today. How serious is this need for new theories in your view?

## **II. Policy Research**

1. Some social groups are disadvantaged across multiple dimensions, social, economic and/or political. In such cases, many have argued, democratic governments ought to undertake some action to address the condition of such marginalized or oppressed social groups. Do you agree or disagree? Can government alleviate group disadvantage? Support your argument with specific examples of policies of concern to at least one disadvantaged group.
2. Skocpol (1992, 38) contends that any approach to explaining the origins and development of social provision “will certainly have to bring gender--as identity, agency and relationships--fully into the analysis.” Does employing gender analysis improve our understanding of social policy? Why or why not? Support your thesis with specific examples from a social policy domain of your choosing.
3. It is commonplace to refer to the underrepresentation of women, ethnic or racial minorities, or other disadvantaged groups in democratic politics, and to suggest that better representation would improve policy outcomes of importance to these disadvantaged groups. How might we improve the representation of disadvantaged groups, and what impact (if any) do you expect such measures would have on policy outcomes? What problems or complications are most difficult to deal with in thinking about improving substantive representation for marginalized groups?
4. While we are familiar with comparative approaches to policy research, we often beg central questions about the point of such studies, and how best to go about doing comparative work. Describe the sorts of insight or understanding policy scholars hope to gain when they do comparative work, and lay out several goals, if you think that there are various things we learn from doing comparative studies. How would you design a

comparative study of a particular policy area? How does one justify taking a comparative approach? What rationale should one use for choosing a set of countries or cases to compare?

### **III. Substantive policies**

1. Discuss whether market-based/economic mechanisms and principles offer a beneficial or harmful approach to solving public policy problems regarding the environment. Are markets more or less useful in some policy making situations than in other settings? Be sure to support your answer with a specific example or two of market-based policy approaches.
2. What role should the public have in shaping policy decisions regarding complex issues of environmental science? How does this ideal role for the public compare to their actual influence over a typical environmental policy controversy today?
3. When and why do governments promote women's rights? One problem for theorizing the political process that produces government policies on women's rights is the significant variation across countries as well as the variation within countries across issues. For example, countries vary widely in the policies relating to contraception and reproduction, sometimes funding contraception directly and sometimes not at all, sometimes funding abortions and sometimes, banning it entirely. In addition, compared to other stable democracies, the United States has a relatively more developed policy response to violence against women, but a much less extensive policy dealing with work-family conflicts. What accounts for these differences?
4. Many scholars of poverty and economic inequality have suggested that the US has higher levels of poverty and inequality than other advanced industrialized states. Why is this? What role could policy play in ameliorating such poverty or inequality? Based on a comparative analysis of policies to address poverty, what do you think is the best path for government to pursue to ensure the economic well-being of its citizens?

**Public Policy and Public Administration Examination**  
Summer 2008

Student ID# \_\_\_\_\_

Directions

You have 48 hours to prepare your answers to these questions. Budget your time carefully, including time to think and organize, as well as rest, while preparing and writing the answers. Focus on preparing coherent, well-organized essays that not only demonstrate your mastery of the literature, but also indicate how that literature expands our collective knowledge. Be sure to answer the question or questions that are asked of you. Answers should range from five to eight double-spaced pages per question; please do not write more than ten (10) pages on any individual questions.

Cite sources throughout your examination using a standard format and provide a bibliography that covers all materials used in preparing your answers.

Clearly label each answer with the number of the question you are answering.

Please put your Student ID number at the top of each page of your examination. **DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME ANYWHERE ON THE EXAMINATION.**

**MA Minors:** Please answer one question from each of the three sections, for a total of three (3) answers.

**MA Majors:** Please answer a total of four (4) questions, at least one question must be answered from each of the three sections.

**Ph.D. Minors:** Please answer a total of four (4) questions, at least one question must be answered from each of the three sections.

**Ph.D. Majors:** Please answer a total of five (5) questions, at least one question must be answered from each of the three sections.

## I. Theoretical Approaches

1. Paul Sabatier continues to claim in 2007 that “we need better policy theories.” Given this claim, describe three important areas in need of improvement in public policy theorizing today. How serious is this need for new theories in your view?
2. What is the role of the public in shaping public policy making today? What should their role be?
3. Evaluate the usefulness of work rooted in historical institutionalism and path dependency: what kinds of questions does this work answer? What kinds of explanatory factors does it emphasize? What are its particular blind spots or weaknesses as an approach to studying policy formation? Do not assume that there is a single overarching “path dependency” approach or model; clearly discuss and explain particular works/arguments, and take note of differences among them.

## II. Policy Research

4. Some policy scholars have advocated giving greater attention to social structures (such as capitalism or patriarchy) in conducting policy research. Do you agree? Why or why not? Defend your position with a specific research example and be sure to define terms like “social structure” clearly in your answer.
5. In his introductory policy textbook, Thomas Dye (1998) contends “It is important to distinguish policy analysis from policy advocacy. *Explaining* the causes and consequences of various policies is not equivalent to *prescribing* what policies governments ought to pursue” (p.8 Emphasis in original). Do you agree with this distinction between policy analysis (or research) and policy advocacy? Why or why not?
6. What are the most serious pitfalls of both qualitative and quantitative approaches to policy research? How might a researcher avoid some of those pitfalls?
7. Frank Fischer (2003: 230-231) has promoted a new approach to policy research that he terms “policy epistemics.” Where traditional policy analysis studies technical solutions, he says, “policy epistemics would focus on “how people construct their policy arguments” including “the interplay between specific statements or contentions and background consenses upon which they are constructed...” Discuss this new approach to policy research, including how it is related to other post-positivist techniques like discourse analysis, and your assessment of its strengths and weaknesses.