

Public Policy and Public Administration Examination
Spring 2011

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. Is the policy process primarily incremental or non-incremental in nature? In defending your answer, be sure to illustrate it with at least three examples.
2. Historical institutionalism is an important school of thought in public policy and political science more generally. Outline and evaluate the major contributions of this approach to the study of public policy. Say whether you think historical institutionalism is an approach that you would advocate or adopt for the study of policymaking. Illustrate your argument with reference to a particular policy area.
3. From the “orange revolution” to the current wave of protest sweeping across the Middle East, political scientists increasingly must reckon with sources of political change originating in civil society. Are civil society influences given sufficient attention in the study of policymaking? Support your argument with examples drawn from the policy issue of your choice.
4. 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.
5. Is cost-benefit analysis a promising way to deal with problems of environmental risk and risk mitigation? Why or why not? Ensure that you provide examples in your answer.

II. Policy Research

1. 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.
2. Some scholars see policy arguments as inescapably normative or value-laden. Are there special ethical challenges that confront policy scholars? Be sure to say whether you think policy scholars are inescapably normative and whether you think policy science differs from the rest of political science in this respect. What implications follow from your position for how we should do policy analysis?
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?

4. 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.

5. What distinctive analytic advantages or insights does a comparative approach offer for policy research? What are some important disadvantages? When might a comparative approach be particularly useful for a policy scholar?

III. Substantive Policy

1. Some argue that improved descriptive representation in the policy-making process (i.e. an expanded physical presence of women and minorities) will improve the policymaking process in many ways. Explain and assess these arguments in relation to the policy area of your choice.

2. In arguing for a “New Politics” of the welfare state, Pierson argues that the “new politics of the welfare state is ... quite different than the old” and that the old explanations of welfare state expansion are in some ways inadequate for understanding these “new politics” of welfare state retrenchment. What are these old theories that Pierson criticizes, and is he right that they are inadequate for understanding retrenchment? How have other scholars (for example, Huber and Stephens or Korpi and Palme) responded to these claims? Are the “new” approaches he suggests as new and helpful as he claims?

3. Different states provide for the social welfare of their citizens with different mixes of reliance on the state, family, and market. Compare the United States with at least one other “liberal” welfare state and at least one social democratic or continental/Christian Democratic one, attending to how the US relies on a particular combination of state, families and markets in providing for social welfare, and contrasting its approach with those taken in the other countries you choose. Explain the similarities and differences you detect in the course of this comparison. (Note: You may compare the US to more than two other countries if you wish, but you must compare it to at least two other welfare states as specified above).

4. What is the difference between “market failure” and “political failure”? Give an example of each, and discuss which is a more serious problem for society and how we might remedy it. Illustrate your argument with reference to any area of environmental policy.

5. Planners hope that alternative sources of energy - wind power, nuclear power, and solar, among them - will make some dent in predictions of global warming. But these technologies have also been stymied by Not In My Back Yard (NIMBY) reactions from local residents. Please discuss the siting of new energy production facilities with reference to approaches such as agenda setting, entrepreneurial politics, and policy instrument use.