Public Policy and Public Administration Examination
Fall, 2004

Student ID # ____________________

Directions:

You have 72 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 essays, where appropriate, using standard format and provide a bibliography that includes all the 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. Please also indicate whether you are writing an M.A. or a Ph.D. exam, and whether it is a major or a minor exam.

- **MA Minors**: please answer one question from each of the sections, a total of three (3) answers.
- **MA Majors**: please answer a total of four (4) questions, at least one question must be chosen and answered from each of the sections.
- **Ph.D. Minors**: please answer a total of four (4) questions, at least one question must be chosen and answered from each of the sections.
- **Ph.D. Majors**: please answer a total of five (5) questions, at least one question must be chosen and answered from each of the sections.

Part I: Theoretical Approaches

1. There has recently been increasing interest and attention in “civil society” as a vital part of democratic policymaking. (e.g. Putnam, 2000; Young, 2000). How is civil society thought to “deepen democracy” and improve policymaking? Is civil society as important for democratic policymaking as this increased attention would suggest? Why, or why not? Support your argument with examples drawn from the policy issue of your choice.

2. Deborah Stone criticizes contemporary policy studies for pursuing a “rationality project.” Do you agree with this critique? Fully explain your view on this point.

3. Why do we create, teach, and use policy theories? How do such theories help us as policy scholars? Is there a place for atheoretical policy analysis? Support your answer with specific examples of at least the policy theories and domains of your choosing.

Part II. Policy Research

1. In his overview of the fields of Comparative Public Policy and Public Administration, Lawrence Graham argues that the most significant analytic contributions from these fields of study have been in the area of institutional analysis. Do you agree with this assessment? Why or why not?

2. Imagine you are giving advice to a new student who is interested in writing a “policy-relevant” thesis on the following topic: “Is the War on Drugs a failure?” What would you tell this student to do to create a legitimate, testable research question for her Ph.D. thesis? What new questions might she answer? What methods might she use and why? What advise would you give her about her desire to make the research “policy-relevant”? Be sure to address the ethical issues that might arise for her in this project in your recommendations.

3. Discuss the issue of bias in policy research. What sources and types of bias does a policy researcher face? What steps should a careful researcher take regarding these threats? If “policy analysis is political argument, and vice versa,” as Deborah Stone claims, then what does this mean for the policy researcher struggling with issues of bias?
Part III. Substantive Policies

1. In an historical study of policies on race in South Africa, Brazil and the United States, Anthony Marx argues that processes of identity formation are crucial to understanding the relationship between social movement protest and public policy formation. Explain Marx's argument and apply it to contemporary social policy development in the United States. Does Marx's focus on identity provide insight into the politics of policymaking in the United States?

2. What significant specific contributions to democracy in practice have been made by environmental policy development since 1960? How, if at all, have any of these developments been inspired or informed by policy theories or democracy theories? How ought these practical policy innovations influence the future course of theorizing about democracy, policy, and environmental politics?

3. Many claim that US family policy is unique among the OECD states because of the virtual absence of a coherent and identifiable set of policies. Is it true that current US policies to address poverty, child care, financial support for families, parental leave, divorce and the like do not amount to a coherent family policy? Why or why not? (You will need to review the relevant policies, evaluate the claim that they do not constitute a coherent family policy, and explain the reasons for their distinctive character.)

4. Select one of the following policy areas (anti-drug policy, anti-poverty, domestic violence, environmental, family, housing, or science), and examine the state of the research in this area. Identify the strengths and weaknesses of existing research in this area. Account for these strengths and weaknesses in the literature. What research agenda(s) would contribute most to advancing our understanding in this policy area?
Public Policy and Public Administration Examination  
Spring 2004

Student ID#

Directions:

You have 72 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.

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

**Ph.D. Majors:** please answer a total of five questions, at least 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 avenues for citizen input in democratic policymaking? How effective are each of these avenues? Compare them: which are most effective, and which are the least effective? Is there cause for concern about the current level of citizen participation in policymaking? Why or why not?

2. Which leading policy theory most accurately describes public policy changes in the twentieth century: Incrementalism, the Garbage Can, Punctuated Equilibrium model, or the Advocacy Coalition framework? Support your thesis with specific examples from a policy domain of your choosing, and be sure to demonstrate your mastery of at least three of the four theories in your answer.

3. Some policy scholars argue that attending to social relations between groups (for example, groups based on gender, race, ethnicity and/or class) is critical for understanding policymaking. Does analysis of the social context within which policy making occurs enrich our understanding of policymaking? What, if any, are the limits of such “society-centric” approaches? Support your thesis with specific examples from a policy domain of your choosing.

4. The “New Institutionalism” has emphasized the importance of institutional analysis in the study of public policy. What, according to scholars supporting this view, is the analytic benefit of focusing on institutions? Are you convinced by their arguments? Why or why not?

Part II. Policy Research

1. What is distinctive about doing policy research in political science? Are there distinctive ethical obligations to which a policy researcher must attend? Should policy researchers be optimistic about the actual “policy-relevance” and impact of their studies, based on prior history? What should be the appropriate role of the academic researcher in the policy process, and what steps can we take as researchers to best play that role?

2. Stone (1997, 375) argues that “policy analysis is political argument, and vice versa.” Do you agree or disagree with this claim? Why? What are the consequences for policy scholarship if this view of policy research is accepted and if it is rejected?

3. Does a comparative approach to political research offer any particular insights for policy scholars? Why or why not? What, if any, disadvantages might there be to pursuing a comparative approach? Be sure to explain what you mean by “a comparative approach.”

4. Ingram and Schneider (1993, 334) argue that the concept of the social construction of target populations is important because “it helps explain why some groups are advantaged more than others independently of traditional notions of political power and [it helps to explain] how policy designs alter or reinforce such advantages.” Explain and evaluate their argument that social construction of target populations is a manifestation (and source) of political power that significantly affects policy development. What are the implications of your assessment for the conduct of policy research? Are policy researchers involved in the social construction of target populations?
Part III. Substantive Policies

1. Modern environmental policy has witnessed a growing trend toward "devolution" of authority to local and private actors. Discuss this trend. What are some examples of these new forms of decentralized local and private involvement in environmental policy? What are the strengths and weaknesses of these new forms of environmental governance? What is your overall evaluation of the success or failure of this change to date? Be sure to use specific policy examples to support your answer.

2. Write an essay on the treatment of risk in environmental policy. What are some ways environmental policies deal with environmental risks? How do public and expert assessments of those risks vary? How do policy makers currently deal with those differences? How should they deal with them? Be sure to cite specific examples and concepts regarding environmental risk in your answer.

3. "Environmental quality is a luxury good. Rich nations tend to have far better environmental conditions than poor ones. Therefore, encouraging economic growth in the U.S. and other countries is the best environmental policy governments can adopt." Write an essay discussing the strengths and weaknesses of this claim. Do you agree with this policy recommendation in the final analysis? Be sure to make a clear argument and utilize specific examples from scholarship and practice of environmental policy to support your answer.

4. Are American approaches to social policy distinctive? If so, what is distinctive about them? If not, what commonalities are there with other countries? What accounts for this distinctiveness or commonality? In accounting for the character of American social policy, be sure to reckon with the various explanations for variation in social policy, and to offer your own views about what best explains the trajectory of U.S. social policy. Note that whether you focus on similarities or distinctiveness, you will have to place U.S. social policy in a comparative, cross-national context.

5. Various scholars of social policy have delineated groups of nations (families of nations, worlds of welfare capitalism, etc.) in terms of their approach to social policy. Do such typologies of states further our understanding of welfare state development? Why or why not? Support your thesis with specific examples from a social policy domain of your choosing.

6. 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." Do you agree that employing gender analysis improves our understanding of social policy? Why or why not? Support your thesis with specific examples from a social policy domain of your choosing.