Public Policy and Public Administration Examination
Spring 2009

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.
I. Theoretical Approaches

1. Some criticize policy theories for being better at explaining policy stability than policy change. Evaluate this claim with reference to at least three leading theories of the policy process.

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. Political scientists studying democracy emphasize the importance of mediating mechanisms (political parties, interest groups, social movements) that link the public to the institutions that govern them, providing them some degree of influence over policy outcomes (among other things). How effective are these various mechanisms for linking citizens to the democratic policymaking process? Compare these linking mechanisms and provide examples of how and to what degree they provide citizens with the opportunity to influence public policy. Does the public have sufficient power over elite actors and institutions that affect policymaking? Should the public have more or less influence? Why or why not?

II. Policy Research

4. Some argue that struggle over ideas is most fundamental to political phenomena, while others emphasize the overriding importance of interests. How could we explore this question empirically? How could we find out which broad class of explanations (those relying on ideas, or those relying on interests) offers the most insight into the policy process?

5. Different approaches to comparing social policies and welfare states focus on different sets of countries and different policy issues. What difference does the particular country-comparison (or sets of countries compared) make for the theoretical conclusions one might draw from the study? What about the particular policy-issue area addressed? Do the most common comparisons actually provide the basis for exploring the most important questions about social policy? Discuss with reference to three or more studies, being sure to comment on research design, which questions or issues are illuminated (or not) by particular comparisons, and the “what to include” (what countries, what issues or explanatory factors) problem.

6. 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?
III. Substantive Policy

8. 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.

9. 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?

10. 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).

11. 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.

12. 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 agenda setting, entrepreneurial politics, and policy instrument use.

13. In Breakthrough: From the Death of Environmentalism to the Politics of Possibility, Ted Nordhaus and Michael Shellenberger argue that environmentalism of the 20th Century, one dominated by the ‘politics of limits’ is poorly suited and even counterproductive to deal with the complex, multi-scalar problems of today, such as climate change. Moreover, they claim that environmentalism as we came to know it in the last century is dead, and that it is time to reject the old politics of interest group environmentalism and emphasis on regulatory mechanisms to save the environment. The
authors argue that we must unleash human potential and possibility, expand our dreams, and explore and implement new approaches to economic development. While their arguments have been met with intense criticism, the authors raise important ideas about how we as a society can approach environmental problem-solving, who can and should be involved in creating solutions, and who can and should set the relevant political and environmental agendas. Provide a critical assessment of Nordhaus and Shellenberger’s arguments in Breakthrough. Explain the implications of this critique for environmental policy in the 21st Century.