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. Discuss the role of issue framing in the policy process. How important are issue frames for determining policy change or stability?

2. Discuss the role of social capital in the process of policy adoption and implementation. Be sure to attend to different forms of social capital and specific examples in your answer.

3. Some people argue that a dynamic process like public-policymaking requires a theoretical account focused on action, while others argue that institutions, norms and other structural features of the polity are more important for understanding policy stability and change. Would you characterize policy-making as more determined by actors, by structures, or both? Why? Illustrate your argument with the policy issue area of your choice.

4. Drawing on several 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.

II. Policy Research

1. Some social groups are what social theorists would call "oppressed" or "marginalized," that is, disadvantaged across social, economic and/or political spheres. 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? How would we go about investigating this question empirically? How would we identify or measure the phenomenon of "oppression" or "marginalization"? Support your argument with specific examples of policies of concern to at least one disadvantaged group.

2. Some scholars have argued that differences among women render obsolete the idea of doing gender analysis that does not take differences among women into account. Do you agree? What are the implications of your answer for policy research? Illustrate your answer with reference to the policy issue of your choice.
3. Ought we to aim for a scientific approach to policy research? What would it mean to do so?

4. Discuss the relative advantages and disadvantages of small-N research designs for public policy scholarship. Be sure to define what you mean by “small-N” 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 policies

1. It has been noted in regard to public goods policies that all governments have difficulty getting their citizens to accept sacrifices—though, to be sure, some have more difficulty than others. Considering such policies, e.g., energy, environmental protection, climate change -- how do governments ever make progress? Can they do so only by being unresponsive to their citizens? Please cite particular areas or programs and locations to the extent possible.

2. Around the world, local communities have often rejected attempts to construct new facilities, whether old folks homes or nuclear power plants. What theories can explain either the ways that projects are sited or the kinds of policy instruments used in handling contestation? Please cite at least three sources in your answer.

3. Environmental problems characterized by coupled human-environmental systems are complex and difficult to solve. Western science plays a major role in informing environmental policies aimed at solving such problems. Nevertheless, one can find numerous examples (climate policy comes to mind) in which science is either ignored, discounted, or politicized, and rather than inform policy, scientific information may actually increase political conflict. Discuss the challenges of integrating scientific information into environmental policy and risks of politicizing science.

4. What is social policy? Provide an example of a social policy issue-area, and explain how it varies across two or more national contexts. Why do we see the differences or similarities you discern? Be sure to situate your example in the broader literature that seeks to explain social policy variation.
5. Different states approach providing for social welfare with different mixes of reliance on the state, family, and market. Compare the United States with one other “liberal” welfare state and at least one social democratic or continental-conservative one, attending to how the US goes about providing for social welfare, and contrasting its approach with those taken in the other countries you choose. Why is there a strong push in the US to use tax expenditures and purchase of services or goods in the market, as compared with reliance on public spending or family-based approaches elsewhere? What are the historical, structural or political constraints on the US taking a more public-spending oriented approach to social policy?

6. Many scholars of poverty and economic inequality have suggested that the US has higher levels of poverty and inequality than other advanced industrialized states. Do you agree? 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?