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, analytic 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 question. 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. Some criticize policy theories for being better at explaining policy stability than policy change. Evaluate this claim with regard to leading theories of the policy process.

2. Institutionalism is one school of thought in public policy and political science more generally. What are the major contributions of this approach to the study of public policy? What limits does this perspective have for explaining public policy outcomes? Would you advocate this approach to the study of policy making? Explain why or why not you would advocate this approach, and use three examples that support your conclusions, in connection with a particular policy area.

3. Political scientists studying democracy emphasize the importance of mediating mechanisms (political parties, interest groups, social movements, the media) that link the public to formal, policy-making institutions. These links provide various actors and interests with some degree of influence over policy outcomes. What kinds of power over policy-making do these mediating mechanisms provide the public? Explain the effectiveness of these mechanisms in linking people to ”policymakers” and institutions that affect policymaking using one specific policy area or example? How could a mediating mechanism enhance or increase the public’s influence over policy-making elites and institutions?

4. Do ideas play an important role in the process of policy formation? Explain how and why ideas enter the policy process if they do? If 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.

II. Policy Research

5. Some scholars see policy arguments as inescapably normative or value-laden. Is that the case? Explain your answer. Are there special ethical challenges that confront policy scholars that do not confront other scholars? What implications follow from your position for how we should do policy analysis?

6. Discuss the ways that the public and public opinion shape policy decisions regarding complex issues of environmental policy. What role does public opinion play in the development and implementation of complex environmental policies?

7. What is “a comparative approach” to the study of public policy? Does a comparative approach to political research offer uniquely useful insights for policy scholars? Explain why it does or why it does not offer such insights. What are the advantages and the disadvantages of using this comparative approach to studying public policy?
8. Policy researchers often focus on how political factors affect policy choice. Discuss the alternative claim that researchers should pay more attention to how “policy affects politics.” How does this complex causal relationship present challenges for doing policy research? Use examples from published policy research to support your argument.

III. Substantive Policy

9. 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 inadequate for understanding this “new politics” of welfare state retrenchment. What are these old theories that Pierson criticizes? Is Pierson correct in this characterization of the welfare state retrenchment? Explain. How have other scholars (for example, Huber and Stephens or Korpi and Palme) responded to these claims?

10. What accounts for the mix of state and market in the provision of work-family reconciliation policies in three contrasting OECD countries? Describe what the policies are, and explain why the states you discuss have adopted the approaches they have.

11. Discuss the role of scientific experts in the environmental policy process. What role do scientists currently play in the policy process related to environmental issues such as climate change or environmental risk regulation? What are the criticisms of their current role? How might scientific experts play a better role in the policy process? Do you find these reform suggestions convincing? Why or why not?

12. There are significant variations among countries in relation to policies relating to women’s rights. 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). 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 factors – influences and conditions – could account for these differences? Explain how each factor might affect these differences in policies.

13. What is the difference between "market failure" and "political failure" in connection with an environmental policy of your choice? Provide an example of each kind of failure in the context of the policy you selected, and discuss which is a more serious problem for society in the context of that policy.

14. How can public policy improve or impede political representation for historically marginalized and/or excluded groups such as women or African Americans in the United States? Provide an example of how policy either improves or impedes representation (or both) of these groups and explain why it does so.