Public Policy and Public Administration Examination

Spring 2014

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. **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

A. 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.

B. Discuss the relative leverage that rational choice, punctuated equilibrium, and multiple streams theoretical frameworks have in helping us understand the policy process. Compare and contrast them taking note as you do as to how and in what ways they may complement one another and how and in what ways they are mutually exclusive as explanations of policymaking. Keep in mind also that there are a variety of versions of each of these frameworks.

C. The role of policy analysis is to let evidence speak louder than convictions. Discuss, however, both the strengths and limits of policy analysis and the durability of convictions. The role of policy analysis is to let evidence speak louder than convictions. Discuss, however, both the strengths and limits of policy analysis and the durability of convictions.

D. An endemic problem in democracies is how a society handles common pool resource (CPR) problems. One perspective is Garrett Hardin’s. He suggests that without government interference and top-down coercion, commons will be depleted. Do you agree with Hardin's approach? Explain your conclusion. Please use at least two empirical examples and three sources in responding.

E. Social capital has been invoked as a panacea for a variety of policy challenges including economic growth and disaster recovery. Support or deny the argument that social capital has served as a critical element in at least one policy realm.

F. Some scholars and practitioners criticize policy theories for being better at explaining policy stability than explaining policy change. Evaluate this claim with regard to leading theories of the policy process. Draw on examples of policy stability or change to illustrate your discussion.

G. Has feminist scholarship contributed to the development of better theories of policymaking? If so, how? If not, Why not? Illustrate your argument with reference to the policy area of your choice.

II. Policy Research

A. Policy researchers often focus on how political factors affect policy choice, and alternatively, they sometimes attend to how policies shape politics. How do these two causal relationships work, and what challenges do they present for doing policy research? Support your argument with pertinent examples from the policy literature.

B. What impact do governing institutions have on policy process and implementation? Use three examples in your answer, and pay particular attention to one or more stage of the policy process. Explain how institutions relate to the stage(s) of the process in the examples you select. Are there alternative (non-institutional) explanations for the result?

C. From the “orange revolution” to the successive waves of protest currently 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.

D. Discuss the appropriate role of the public in the creation and implementation of public policy in a specific policy area, such as environmental or social policy. Be sure to consider both the advantages and disadvantages of a greater degree of public involvement in such policy making. Discuss the appropriate role of the public in the creation and implementation of public policy in a specific policy area, such as environmental or social policy. Be sure to consider both the advantages and disadvantages of a greater degree of public involvement in such policy making.

III: Substantive policies

A. What are at least two prominent ethical critiques of market-based environmental policies? In your view do these critiques significantly limit the usefulness of such policies?

B. With respect to the recent literature on the welfare state, many scholars explicitly or implicitly react to the “convergence thesis,” which holds that in the face of globalization and domestic fiscal crises since the late 1970s, pressures for welfare state reform will eliminate the diversity of welfare states seen in the “Golden Age” and result instead in convergence around neo-liberal approaches. (a) Assess the evidence supporting this thesis. (b) What theoretical perspectives have scholars developed as alternatives to convergence? (c) How do scholars argue that different approaches to politics, states, firms, labor markets, protest, and so on have sustained diverse approaches to providing welfare needs?

C. Scientific information plays an important role informing environmental policy. Some believe scientists have been too silent in expressing their opinions about policy alternatives, particularly with respect to climate change, while others argue that scientists have overstepped their role and engaged in too much policy debate. Discuss the pros and cons of an ‘activist’ scientific community engaged in the climate change policy debates, particularly as they relate to Pielke’s “The Honest Broker” and Nordhaus and Schellenberger’s “The Death of Environmentalism.”

D. 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.

E. What accounts for the mix of state and market in the provision of work-family reconciliation policies in three contrasting countries? Both describe the policies, and explain why the states you discuss have adopted the approaches they have.