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.
1. **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. Political scientists studying democracy emphasize the importance of mediating mechanisms such as political parties, interest groups, social movements, electoral institutions, and the media that link the public to formal, policy-making institutions. 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 such mediating mechanisms increase the public’s influence over policy-making elites and institutions?

3. Can norms help policymakers solve public problems? Explain the interaction between norms and policy making—how norms shape policy problems and solutions, and how policy solutions shape norms—with respect to a policy issue with which you are familiar.

4. Is identity an important part of the politics of policymaking? Explain how identities shape, and are shaped by, the politics of policymaking. Illustrate your argument with respect to the policy issue of your choice.

5. Some believe ideas and/or discursive framing play a decisive role in the policy making process. Examine this argument, explaining how and why ideas enter the policy process. What do you think of the role that ideas play, or might ideally play, in the policy process? Illustrate your argument with reference to a particular policy.

II. **Policy Research**

6. What are some different comparative approaches to studying public policy? What sorts of useful insights do such approaches offer to policy scholars? What makes comparative approaches more or less insightful? What are the advantages and the disadvantages of using comparative approaches to studying public policy?

7. 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.

8. Discuss the appropriate role of qualitative methods in policy research. Give an example where qualitative research has played an important role in our understanding of policy design or implementation, and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of this approach for policy research.

9. 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.
III: Substantive policies

10. 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 approaches such as agenda setting, entrepreneurial politics, and policy instrument use.

11. 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?

12. 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.”

13. 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 few policies dealing with work-family conflicts. What explains these differences?

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.

15. Demographers have puzzled over the reasons for substantial variation among OECD countries with respect to total fertility rates and issues related to population aging and issues related to the burdens of paying for benefits for old people. How has low fertility affected the politics of social policy making? Please draw on a couple of contrasting examples to discuss this fully and with some complexity.

16. Violence against women is a major obstacle for efforts to improve public health, democracy, child well-being and development. It is also widely affirmed to be a violation of women’s human rights. Yet government responsiveness to violence varies dramatically across the developed and developing world. Which national responses to violence are the most innovative and comprehensive? What explains their adoption?