Public Policy Prelim: Fall 2015

**Instructions:** Answer one question from each part of the examination for a total of three answers. Please identify the question you are answering at the beginning of each essay. You are limited to 3000 words for answering each question.

Strong answers make coherent and forceful arguments, are grounded in scholarly literature, and make use of relevant examples. They show an understanding of current research and issues. Weak answers often fail to make an argument or do so without reference to relevant literature. Exams are graded as a whole; repeating arguments in response to different questions weakens the overall exam.

The exam is due back by 5 pm the next day, but an extra 24 hours is allowed for the completed bibliography. Good luck!

**Part I: General Public Policy Questions**

1. Questions of representation are crucial to the study of democratic politics. However, there have been very few efforts to study representation relative to the bureaucracy. Discuss the literature that exists on this subject. What are the various dimensions of bureaucratic representation? How is representation important to the political control of bureaucracy? How might the literature on bureaucratic representation be extended?

2. Theories of public policy often have different expectations about which variables matter most to the process. Some public policy theories place preeminence on the role of institutions while other theories focus on the role of social behavior. Contrast an institutionally focused theory to one that emphasizes social behavior. Explain how these two theories differ and where they overlap. Evaluate the strength of the research that has been generated by each theory. Which theory has more potential for developing future public policy research and advancing knowledge of the policy process?

3. A cynic might be inclined to suggest that the shape and content of American public policy is pretty much a function of the actions of elite policy entrepreneurs. In what ways is this too simplistic of an explanation of why we have the public policies that we have? Outline at least two distinctive theories that both (a) acknowledge a role for policy entrepreneurs in policy development but (b) depict other forces or factors that condition the influence of policy entrepreneurs.
Part II: Stages of the Policy Process

1. A key focus of public policy research is the assessment of the impacts of public policy. In other words, we often wish to understand if policies have had their intended effect. Describe recent literature in this area, including the empirical evidence regarding intended and unintended consequences of public policy.

2. Much of the theoretical and empirical scholarship in public policy has focused on the agenda setting stage. Identify another stage of the policy process that you think is equally important but often overlooked. Develop your argument around the research that has been conducted in this area, the importance of this research, and the potential of this research to advance knowledge in the field of public policy.

3. Dramatic events almost seem to be a precondition for significant policy change. Yet, existing empirical tests of theories of policy adoption appear to provide little concrete evidence. Should we revise our theories or is there enough empirical evidence concerning the role of dramatic events?

Part III: Policy Specialty

1. What clear evidence is there that there is such a thing as reproductive policy/social welfare policy?

2. Explain how two different scholars might approach the same topic. One scholar employs an advocacy coalition framework in an attempt to understand reproductive/social welfare policy and another scholar employs the morality politics framework for the same task. Making use of existing literature as well as your perceptions, answer the following questions: 1) would these two scholars, directed by different frameworks, ask different kinds of research questions? 2) Would they make use of different methods? 3) Would they arrive at different or similar conclusions?

3. Why have subnational governments in some countries been more active in the reproductive policy/social welfare policy arena? How has subnational activity influenced reproductive/social welfare policy? (Or to take this in a different direction: has subnational activity made a difference to the nature of the problem?)