Public Policy Preliminary Examination

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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. Good luck!

Part I: General Public Policy Questions

1. The key insight behind Lowi's classic typology of public policy is his claim that, in contrast with our usual thinking that the character of politics determines the character of policies it is theoretically useful to consider how the character of the policy issue determines the character of the politics surrounding it. But is there any empirical support for this policy type-contingent view of the character of politics? Using either Lowi's typology and the hypotheses that he generates about the matter or James Q. Wilson's different but equally influential typology (and the hypotheses it presents), assess whether the empirical literature provides convincing support for the typology-based hypotheses or not.

2. Under what circumstances is policy stability to be expected and under what circumstances is dramatic policy change to be expected? Write an essay that (a) identifies (at least two) relevant theoretical frameworks that provide grounds for answering this question, (b) explains the answers that would be yielded by application of those theoretical frameworks, and (c) evaluates the similarities and differences in the answers yielded by the different theoretical frameworks.

3. Some scholars argue that, whenever possible, public policy research should have three elements: a descriptive historical element, a quantitative historical element (time series analysis), and a cross-sectional quantitative element. If time and money were not an issue, propose a study that would use each of these elements. Justify why each element should be included. Be sure to note overlap or uniqueness from existing literature.

Part II: Stages of the Policy Process

1. What has formal analysis (such as cost-benefit analysis or transactions cost economics) brought to the study of policy formulation? Also, based on your response to the first part of this question, take a position as to whether policy analysts serve an "enlightenment function" in any stage of the policy
process.

2. State policy research is often focused on the adoption and diffusion of innovative policies. Explain this approach and describe its major strengths and weakness for understanding policy change. Should we be so focused on policy adoption generally or on innovative policies only?

3. Who (or what) sets the agenda? In the wake of 9/11 and the economic decline in the wake of the dot.com bust, discuss the role of events, either singly (e.g., 9/11) or in a tight combination (e.g., dot.com bust), to set the policy agenda. Discuss also how policy entrepreneurs seek to take advantage of these disturbances. In the end, who - or what - sets the agenda on big issues like economic policy and national security?

Part III: Environmental Policy

1. How closely does environmental policy in the US reflect changes in our scientific and technological understanding of the environment? State your view and supply ample literature and examples from the last 40 years.

2. What have we learned about bureaucratic politics and policy implementation from studies of the EPA?

7. Paul Sabatier and other supporters of the Advocacy Coalition Framework argue that we cannot understand the policy process unless we make use of time frames of a decade or more. This approach seems problematic for those who want to understand policymaking in relatively new issue areas. How would you approach this problem?