Public Policy Prelim Spring, 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 5pm the next day, but an extra 24 hours is allowed for the completed bibliography.

Part I: General Public Policy Questions

1. Discuss the merits and demerits of relying on punctuated equilibrium theory to understand policymaking across issues and political systems.

2. If Sabatier and others are correct in arguing that the stages heuristic is 1) not a theory, and 2) terribly misleading, what are Sabatier and others talking about when they refer to the “policy process” and how does this shape our ability to understand policy?

3. A critical component of the scientific method is having clear and logically interrelated sets of propositions, some of them empirically falsifiable. Compare and contrast “institutional analysis and development” theory and punctuated equilibrium theory, discussing to what extent each ascribes to this critical component of the scientific method.

Part II: Stages of the Policy Process

4. Questions about representative bureaucracy are crucial to the study of democratic policymaking. 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?

5. 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 impact. Describe recent literature in this area with an eye towards understanding policy feedback in terms of intended and unintended consequences of policy and what this literature can tell us about the nature of citizenship.

6. What do you consider to be the two most important hypotheses that can be derived from the active theorizing that has already been done on the agenda setting phase of policymaking? Defend your choices. Then, outline the results of any empirical work that has a bearing on either of the two hypotheses. Are the results consistent with the hypotheses, mixed, divided? What remaining empirical work needs to be done?
Part III: Policy Specialty

7. Provide a policy typology interpretation of Health Care policymaking in the U.S. from 1945 to the present.

8. Is the diffusion of innovations theoretical framework appropriate and likely to be fruitful in attempting to understand states’ responses to the Affordable Care Act? If so, explain how that framework should be applied, laying out the specific hypotheses to be tested. If not, explain why not and suggest what theoretical framework(s) would be more useful in accounting for states’ response to the Affordable Care Act?

6. Develop a research proposal for studying the role of policy entrepreneurs in health care policy reform.