Public Policy Prelim   Fall 2014

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. As a subfield, public policy has significantly evolved. Identify two areas of public policy research that have generated the most promising research. Critically discuss the findings from the literature. Next, discuss an aspect of the policy literature that has been underdeveloped, and explain why this particular area has been ignored.

2. A cynic might be inclined to suggest that the shape and content of American public policy is a function of the actions of elite policy entrepreneurs. In what ways is this too simplistic of an explanation? What is a good alternative that acknowledges a role for elites?

3. The ACF has several key components and assumptions for understanding policy change and learning. Are all of these components and assumptions necessary? Can the ACF be improved if we modify any of its components or assumptions?

Part II: Stages of the Policy Process

4. Dramatic events almost seem to be a precondition for significant policy change. Yet, existing empirical tests of theories of policy seem to downplay the role of the problem and/or dramatic events that highlight the problem. What is the theory and what is the evidence?

5. Offer three research hypotheses about public policy implementation and make a case (for each) that these are theoretically important and cutting edge hypotheses. In the process of making your case, be sure to show how they relate to existing theory and empirical work.

6. 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.

**Part III: Policy Specialty**

7. Explain how two different scholars might approach the same topic. One scholar employs an advocacy coalition framework in an attempt to understand national security policy in the U.S. and another scholar employs the policy typology 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?

8. (a) Describe the evolution of U.S. national security policy since 1945. To what extent does it exhibit continuity (i.e., only incremental change)? To what extent does it reflect significant or dramatic change? (b) How useful is punctuated equilibrium theory in explaining U.S. national security policy’s pattern of policy evolution?

9. Does the concept of a “military-industrial complex” still adequately describe the role of interest groups in the making and implementation of national security policy?