

Questions for the Policy Comprehensive Exam- Fall 2020

Part I: Choose *one* of the following two questions.

1. As a field of study, policy emerged in Political Science in the 1970s. Ever since, it has been criticized as atheoretical, as too concerned with normative issues and not sufficiently empirical. In addition, there is a debate as to whether policy even belongs as a field of study in Political Science or whether its rightful place is in policy schools. Citing the relevant literature, how does policy fit within the field of Political Science or does it?
2. Policy scholars often discuss *theories* of the policy process. Yet, some scholars contend (but not all) that many of the theories fail the basic definition of what a theory entails. First, what is a theory and why is theory important to the study of public policy? Second, describe at least five different *models* of the policy process. Explain whether these models are theories and why (or why not). Also, identify the *model, theory or framework* that best examines the policy process and explain why.

Part II: Choose *two* of the following questions

3. Some people argue that “institutions are vital for shaping policy outcomes while elites and the public are less important.” Evaluate this statement in the context of legal and administrative policymaking. Are there any constraints on institutions from a policymaking perspective? If so, what are they and why are they effective?
4. During the early years of studying policymaking, what tools did scholars advance to help better understand the policymaking process and policy outputs? Which was the most effective and why? In recent years, some scholars have pushed for a better understanding from a causal perspective. Others argue that in most scenarios, this is not feasible because it is either impossible or unethical to manipulate treatments to evaluate policy outcomes. Evaluate whether the emphasis on causal methods in recent years has been successful and explain why.
5. Deborah Stone argued that policy studies should include normative considerations such as equality rather than efficiency. Critique her argument. What are the alternatives? Do you agree with Stone? If so, why? If not, why not?
6. Macro and Micro models of economics are central to the study of public policy. Explain how and why these models transformed our understanding of the policy process? What are the limitations of an economic approach to the study of policy?