**Department of Political Science**

**Public Policy Minor Field Comprehensive Examination**

**May 2018**

***Directions: Answer two questions, one from each group listed below.***

***Group 1: Answer one of the two questions listed below.***

1. Political scientists who study public policy are interested in "policy feedback" (the ways in which policy affects politics). Policy feedback is thought to lead to “path dependency” which creates possibilities and limitations for reform. Discuss path dependency in policymaking and explain how and why the development of policies may in turn create a series of political opportunities and constraints. Using a substantive example you are familiar with, explain how policy decisions made in the past have shaped and influenced policymaking today. Given your analysis of path dependency in this case, explain how this literature could guide policymakers to craft policies that are likely to be sustained.

2. Political science has contributed a number of theoretical perspectives/frameworks to the study of public policy.  In your judgment, what are the three most important such contributions?  In answering this question, be sure to define, generally speaking, the contours of the discipline of political science (i.e., what makes it similar to and different from nearby disciplines), the scope of the field of public policy, and the standards by which political science contributions to the study of public policy are best judged.  Within this general framework, select three important political science theories/frameworks that have been applied in the field of public policy, and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of these theories/frameworks in advancing understanding of policymaking institutions, processes, and outcomes.

***Group 2: Answer one of the two questions listed below.***

3. Critique this statement: The Trump administration has enjoyed great success using regulation as an instrument of policymaking.  In assessing this possibility, be sure to use theoretical and empirical insights of readings from Politics and Public Policy and Executive Branch Politics to consider the broad procedural and institutional context within which regulation occurs. In addition, ground your response in the facts of what the Trump administration has and has not accomplished thus far in the area of regulation.  (Note that “success using regulation as an instrument of policymaking” does not necessarily only mean the creation of new regulations.  It can also mean the repeal of existing regulations, and other uses of the regulatory process.  So be sure to define your standards of evaluation carefully.)

4. Policy in the U.S. is developed and implemented within a system of federal relations. An enduring question about American public policy is why state-level policy varies within this federal system. Identify and explain what past research has found to be important variables to explain inter-state policy variation. Identify what you think are the most compelling explanations and explain why you find these claims to be convincing. Then, select a policy you are familiar with and explain how this policy area illustrates the policy determinants you have identified as compelling explanations.