**Ph.D. Comprehensive Examination**

***PUBLIC POLICY***

**September 2013**

**Instructions:**

Please respond to two of the following questions, one from Part I and one from Part II. You have up to five hours to complete the examination.

Keep the following in mind when constructing your essays. First, you should articulate a coherent argument in answering each question. Merely demonstrating that you have read a literature is insufficient for answering these questions satisfactorily. Second, you should view the examination as an opportunity to demonstrate your understanding of multiple literatures in the field of public policy. Because your examination will be evaluated on its overall comprehensiveness, you should select questions and formulate responses that demonstrate the breadth of your preparation. Third, rough cites to prominent works (for example, “Kingdon’s book on policy agendas”) are acceptable.

**Part I:**

1. You are taking the minor comprehensive examination for the public policy subfield. Do we need a subfield of public policy in political science? Why or why not?  What do policy scholars contribute above and beyond scholars of political behavior and institutions in American politics, comparative politics, and international relations?

2. For many decades, there have been debates regarding the extent to which rationality can and/or should be brought into government decision making. Construct an essay in which you lay out the major schools of thought regarding rationality in public policy. What are the similarities and differences in these schools of thought, both in terms of their orientations toward rationality and their conclusions regarding the relevance of rationality in public decision making? In the end, how promising are these respective accounts of rationality in providing a basis for reforming the policymaking process?

**Part II:**

1. Some leading theories of policymaking, notably the garbage can model, the policy streams model, and the advocacy coalition framework, have been criticized for explaining too much, and therefore not explaining anything. Put differently, some critics claim that the implications of such policymaking theories are not testable. Construct an essay in which you summarize and critically evaluate these theories. To what extent do you think that critics are accurate in their assessments?

2. Lawmakers, journalists, and political pundits have argued that bureaucrats wield too much authority in the making of public policy. Construct an essay in which you first outline and then critically evaluate this argument, being sure to address the following questions from the perspective of policy-oriented research in political science. What are the origins of bureaucratic discretion? Under what conditions do bureaucrats enjoy substantial autonomy in policymaking? Who are the outside actors that typically do and do not participate in bureaucratic policymaking? How successful are these various actors in influencing bureaucratic decision-making? What are the instruments that officials in the legislative, executive, and judicial branches utilize to influence the structure and process of bureaucratic decision making? How effective are these instruments in managing authority delegated to the bureaucracy?

3. In recent years, the importance of networks in policymaking has increased substantially. For example, it is now the case that the vast majority of public programs require the involvement of multiple federal agencies, private sector entities, and/or nonprofit organizations during implementation. Construct an essay in which you address the following questions regarding networks. What are the key characteristics of networks? How are networks similar to and different from other forms of making policy (e.g., markets and hierarchies)? In what specific ways have networks been utilized in policymaking? What are the strengths and weaknesses of various theories about networks? In what ways have researchers applied concepts of network theories in empirical research? How successful have these empirical applications been in producing novel insight into policymaking?