

Department of Political Science

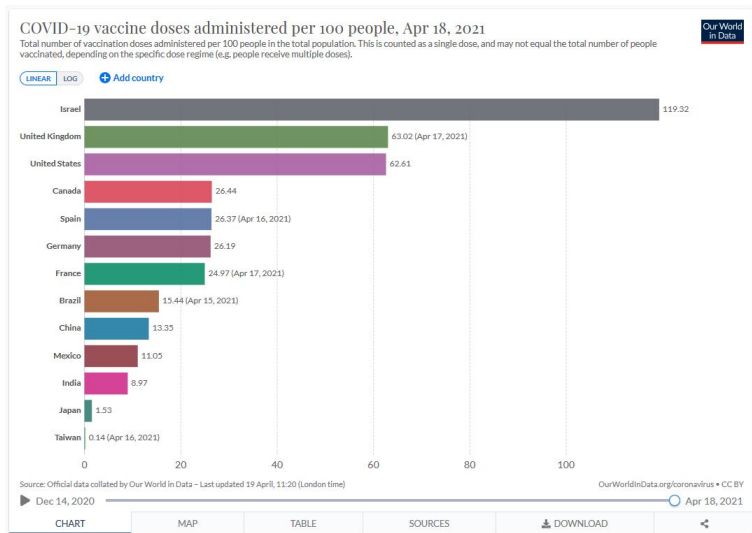
Public Policy Minor Field Comprehensive Examination

May 2021

Directions: Answer two questions, question one and one additional question from the group listed in Section 2. When answering the questions strive to provide theoretical and empirical insights from readings assigned in Politics and Public Policy, as well as other courses you completed as part of your policy sub-field.

Section 1: Answer question one.

1. The institutional structure of American government is one of the most fragmented in the world. Political scientists who study the policymaking process are interested in the distribution of power between the three branches of the federal government and the distribution of power between the federal, state, and local levels of government. Beyond this, the liberal economic institutions that exist in the U.S. place significant power to influence the well-being of the population in the hands of the private sector. Given the fragmented nature of American policymaking institutions, what are the proper roles of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, as well as federal, state, and local governments, in a public health crisis such as the current pandemic? In answering this question, consider specifically the fact that the U.S. at the moment has one of the highest vaccination rates among countries of the world. Has fragmentation enabled this outcome, or has this outcome occurred despite fragmentation?



Section 2: Answer one of the three questions listed below.

2. Describe the three most important social policy changes that have taken place in the U.S. since 1980. Changes may include alterations to existing conditions and social problems, alterations to existing welfare state programs, shifts to new policy tools, and changes in processes (such as privatization, moving functions from the public to the private sector, and devolution, transferring policymaking authority to levels of government below the national level). Explain why the three changes you selected are the most important. Do the changes reflect "permanent austerity"? Do you think the policy developments you have described amount to retrenchment, restructuring, or something else?
3. Political scientists have contributed several theoretical perspectives/frameworks to the study of public policy. In your judgment, what are the three most important such contributions (please identify and describe the contributions you judge to be important)? In answering this question, be sure to define the contours of the discipline of political science (i.e., what makes it similar to and different from other, nearby disciplines) and the standards by which political science contributions to the study of public policy are best judged. Bolster your answer with examples drawn from a policy area (or multiple areas) in which you have an interest.
4. An important concern in the making and implementing of policy is the extent to which decision makers in government organizations are representative of the individuals who they impose costs upon and deliver benefits to. Evaluate the state of research on representative bureaucracy. What are the key forms of representation considered in this research? What are the main methods used to conduct studies of representative bureaucracy? What are the primary findings regarding aspects in which bureaucracy is and is not representative of the public?