

Political Science Department
Public Policy, minor field PHD comprehensive exam
Spring 2017

Directions: Please answer the question in Section 1 and one of the two listed in Section 2.

Section 1: Answer this question

1. The study of public policy is naturally multidisciplinary, with contributions from such disparate disciplines as political science, public administration, law, sociology, communication, and economics. What is it (if anything) that separates political science in terms of its contribution to our understanding of public policy, broadly speaking? In answering this question, consider political science from the perspectives of theory, research design, and empirical analysis. In addition, select three specific research areas in public policy (not policy issue areas, but areas of research), and lay out the unique contributions (if any) of political science to knowledge in these areas. In the end, what does the discipline of political science contribute to the study of public policy?

Section 2: Answer one of the two questions listed below

2. Accountability and performance are two of the central standards by which the executive branch is evaluated. Compose an essay in which you consider what we know (and don't know) about accountability and performance from social science research on the executive branch. Do we know more about accountability and performance for certain types of executive branch officials and/or organizations? In your estimation, what are the most important/insightful pieces of scholarship on accountability and performance, respectively?

3. Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson ("After the 'Master Theory': Downs, Schattschneider, and the Rebirth of Policy-Focused Analysis") have proposed that the study of American politics should be reoriented around policy-focused research. How would a policy-focus change the ways in which political science scholars conduct research (please include discussions of research questions, theoretical foundations, and methods)? Do you agree or disagree with the suggestion that policy-focused research should displace the median voter theorem as the central focus of American politics research? Why or why not?