Doctoral Examination
Policy Process and Analysis
Fall Semester, 2012

Part I. Answer either question 1 or question 2.

1. Researchers in public policy have developed models of the public policy process, including such models as punctuated equilibria, incrementalism, policy streams, policy cycles, systems models, and the advocacy coalition framework. Choose three of these models and describe and explain them. Compare and contrast the three models, discussing relative strengths and weaknesses, and similarities and differences in their uses, content, and domains of application. Cite major academic contributors and sources in your discussion.

2. Our public policy courses, and public policy studies generally, often divide into a category of economics-based policy analysis and evaluation, and a category that we often call "policy process" that is based more in political science. Discuss the differences and any similarities between these two categories, in substantive content, methods, focal topics and issues, and other important similarities and differences. Discuss the pros and cons of such a categorization, including the value of covering both in the same curriculum, but also any attendant complications in doing so. Discuss any potential or actual points of integration of the two. If you choose, you can object to this dichotomous categorization and argue that it does not really exist or that it should not exist.

Part II. Answer either question 3 or question 4.

3. Cost-benefit analysis is the most common tool in evaluating public policies. Discuss the Pareto and Kaldor-Hicks criteria for policy analysis. Explain how the two criteria differ and how they are similar. Then, relate these criteria to cost-benefit analysis. Choose a policy evaluation that uses cost-benefit analysis from the literature and assess their application of these criteria.

4. When economists discuss what something is worth, they are typically concerned with market prices or opportunity costs. Yet in many cases, markets do not exist or are inadequately competitive to reveal a true "market price." For example, what is the price of a quality primary public school education? Describe two approaches that a researcher/analyst could use to assess the value of a non-market good of your choice. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each approach using examples from the literature and/or supporting evidence.

Part III. Answer either question 5 or question 6.

5. Many policies induce a trade-off between equity and efficiency. Describe a specific policy/program that suffers from this trade-off and describe one way that this policy could avoid this trade-off. As a counter example, describe one policy/program that has the potential to increase both efficiency and equity. In your answer, discuss why we expect a trade-off and what policy characteristics are more likely to involve a trade-off between equity and efficiency. Use citations to support your arguments.

6. Choose a specific excise tax to consider. Describe efficiency rationales for and/or against the proposed tax. Discuss what types of information you require as a policy analyst to evaluate the impact of the tax in terms of consumer tax incidence, consumer welfare, change in consumer consumption, tax revenue, and distributional impacts on specific groups of consumers. Describe the analytical challenges involved in empirically estimating the impacts of the proposed tax. Discuss the methods and results of two research studies that address these challenges in different ways.