Doctoral Examination

Public Administration and Management

Fall 2016

PART I. Please answer one of the following two questions:

Question 1:

Research and theory development in public administration may involve both quantitative and qualitative work. Develop an essay in which you define these two approaches to inquiry and explain how they are used. From the published literature on public administration, provide at least one example of the use of each of the two approaches (i.e., one book or article exemplifying one of the approaches and another book or article exemplifying the other). Briefly evaluate the contribution made by each example. Based on your understanding of our field, which approach (quantitative or qualitative) is most often utilized? Why is this the case? Alternatively, if you think scholars rely on both equally, why do you think that is true?

Question 2:

Discuss the concept of a paradigm in scientific research. What is a paradigm and where does the concept come from? Why is it considered an important topic? How does the scientific community determine the existence of a paradigm, and how do paradigms change? Do we have a paradigm or multiple paradigms in public administration research? Considering the research in public administration that you know about, identify two or three categories or types of research that have been published, and discuss how the concept of a paradigm applies or does not apply to these types of research.

PART II. Please answer one of the following two questions:

Question 3:

Discuss the performance of government agencies and programs. Describe major concepts of organizational effectiveness from organization theory, and other performance concepts from the public administration literature. Discuss methods that public administration scholars and practitioners have used to assess performance, and the challenges they face in making those assessments, such as multiple and conflicting criteria that complicate the concept of performance in public administration (for example, representativeness, equity, accountability, openness and transparency, and others). What are the drawbacks of identifying and using performance targets in public organizations? Finally, would you say government performs well? Why or why not?

Question 4:

The field of Public Administration and several closely related disciplines (Political Science, Political Economy, etc.) have long been concerned about the existence and effects of *bureaucratic discretion* in democratic government, and the apparent difficulty of ensuring that bureaucrats – who are non-elected public officials – will act responsibly and be held accountable. To whom are bureaucrats accountable, and for what? Drawing from the classic and contemporary literatures, explain how various scholars have tried to resolve the problem of bureaucratic discretion. Give at least four means by which we work to control bureaucratic discretion, and note their pros and cons. Which of these approaches seems most promising to you?

PART III. Please answer one of the following two questions:

Question 5:

Constitutional constraints on public managers create one of the distinctive aspects of human resource management in the public sector in the United States. What are these Constitutional constraints, and where are they found in the Constitution? How do they influence management in government? Do these influences create differences between personnel management in government, as compared to the private and nonprofit sectors in the U.S.? Describe evidence of the effects of Constitutional constraints on governmental personnel management. For example, is there evidence of differences between public and private sector managers in their perceptions of personnel constraints? Cite appropriate sources and authors in the literature in developing your response.

Question 6:

Government contracting with private or nonprofit organizations for the provision of pubic services has frequently been touted as a mechanism to improve service delivery. The concept has been promoted heavily by politicians, scholars, and practitioners, and while it may have benefits, some observers note difficulties associated with it. Substantial problems have been documented, for example, showing that some contractors fail to meet their obligations. Develop an essay that discusses the literature on “contracting out” and summarizes the arguments for and against it. What are the conditions necessary for successful contracting?