Doctoral Examination
Public Policy Process and Analysis
Fall Semester, 2011

Part I:Answer one of the following two questions (either "Question 1" or "Question 2").

Consider public policies in terms of the following two-part construction 1) *Coupling:* a policy is tightly coupled if the behavioral outcome is directly affected by the policy and if a small amount of time elapses before the policy alters behavior for its target group. Tightly-coupled policies are quick and direct. 2) *Discretion:* a policy is discretionary if the agent, often including administrators and bureaucrats in one or more public organizations, can choose whether, when, and how much of an enforcement level to generate when complying with the policy.

Based on these two constructs consider the following 2x2 policy typology: high/low discretion and loose/tight coupling. As an example, economists tend to favor tightly-coupled policies where the agent implementing the policy has limited discretion. Sales taxes are a typical example.

		Coupling	
		Loose	Tight
Discretion	High	(1)	(2)
	Low	(3)	(4)

All policies can be placed somewhere in such a matrix.

Given this background, answer one of the following two questions.

Question 1:

> A. Using a policy that you are familiar with, discuss how it fits into the typology described above. Discuss possible changes in the policy that would cause it to move from more to less discretionary and from more loosely coupled to more tightly coupled, or vice versa. How would these changes be likely to affect the implementation of the policy? Ground your response to this last question in one or more theoretical concepts about policy implementation, and cite the literature where appropriate.

B. Compare and contrast the data requirements and analytic techniques associated with empirically analyzing and evaluating loosely versus tightly coupled policies.

Question 2:

A. Tightly coupled policies typically work by altering the price of a good or service. However, there are many cases for which prices are not directly observable, or do not correlate well with outcomes. Discuss a policy for which this is the case, and discuss methods of improving coupling.

B. In many cases researchers have used the residual from a regression model to estimate the unobservable price. Cases include discrimination, public amenities, and public sector management performance. Discuss the potential problems of using this method. Does maximum likelihood estimation pose any special problems or solutions for employing these methods?

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

Question 1:

The policy process can be used strategically, to "water down" or strip a proposed policy of its effectiveness. Using your preferred model of the policy process and the framework described above, discuss when and how a policy can be made more limited in its effectiveness. For separation-of-powers political systems, discuss both legislative and executive branches' opportunities to limit a policy's effectiveness.

Question 2:

Policies that are loosely coupled will often require large networks of actors to implement. What can we say about policy implementation in these loosely-coupled, network-rich environments? Can we limit discretion in these environments? Should we? Explain.

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

Question 1:

A. Briefly summarize the literature on equity in public policy analysis. What are the theoretical constructs?

B. Under what conditions are individuals motivated by inequality? Does this motivation play a role in standard economic theory? Why or why not?

C. Recent research has called into question the much-discussed tradeoff between equity and efficiency. In what ways might equity *complement* efficiency? Discuss the data and methods necessary to test whether efficiency and equity are complements or substitutes.

Question 2:

In order to be effective in achieving policy outputs and outcomes, elected officials and government agencies must, at a minimum, do the following: manage their own agendas, determine what they regard as the appropriate policy responses to salient agenda items, generate support for their policy preference, and enable agents to enforce their preferred policy. In particular, as part of the process delineated above, they may need to bargain with other actors or institutions to craft or re-craft a policy that commands sufficient support.

Choose a particular policy area that you are knowledgeable about, and choose <u>ONE</u> theory of the policy process to focus your analysis.

 A. Analyze and evaluate each stage of the process using your chosen theory.

 B. Discuss the implication of your choice when there is more than one agency involved.

C. Discuss, in detail, how your chosen theory of the policy process allows us to evaluate the *transition* from one phase of the process to the next.

D. How does the fact that policy development, implementation, and enforcement are non-linear impact your analysis?