

Doctoral Examination
Policy Process and Analysis
Fall 2020

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

Question 1:

Choose an area of public policy with which you have good familiarity and describe the latest major piece of legislation or regulatory initiative adopted within this domain. Next, briefly outline the alternative policy approaches that were set aside in favor of the actual policy established. Using concepts/frameworks/theories from the literature on problem definition and agenda setting, explain why the policymaking process on this issue developed and turned out as it did. Finally, what implications for program implementation (approach, challenges, likely effectiveness) follow from the fact that policymakers settled on this particular policy design while rejecting more or less ambitious alternatives?

Question 2:

Market failure, primarily public goods and externalities, as a justification for government intervention have been around since Musgrave (1959). Since then, considerable theoretical and empirical work has expanded the justifications for intervention. One of the most important is the role of asymmetric information in the design of government policy. Discuss **both** the import and the impact of asymmetric information on policy development. To what extent have government policies been reformulated in an effort to overcome information asymmetries? How have these design changes allowed the government to get citizens to reveal information to alleviate the problem?

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

Question 3:

What is the utility of models that depict policymaking as a cycle? Alternatively, what is the utility of models that depict policymaking as the confluence of a set of streams? Has one of these approaches been more valuable for generating research that is theoretically grounded and substantively relevant than the other? If so, identify which one and explain why. If not, explain why not?

Question 4:

How would you define the field of public policy? What is the substance of the field as an area of academic interest? What is the purpose of systemic study in this field? How is policy as a field distinct from the study of politics or public administration, or are there any meaningful distinctions? What do you see as some of the major contributions that have come from the study of public policy? What is your assessment of the field?

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

Question 5:

Policy analysts have debated whether there really exists an “efficiency-equity tradeoff” associated with public policies and programs. Explain what is meant by the efficiency-equity tradeoff. Discuss the standard economic viewpoint (as expressed by Weimer and Vining) on the existence of the tradeoff and contrast it with the views of political theorists such as Stone. Give an example of a public program that has the potential to increase both efficiency and equity.

Question 6:

The private sector provision of what has been traditionally provided by the government has become increasingly common. Contracting to the private sector is seen by some analysts as a panacea for bureaucratic inefficiency. Discuss the problems that typically arise when bureaucratic supply is the sole form of production. Provide a detailed exposition of the sources of inefficiency. Describe the rationale as to why “contracting out” may fix these problems, and describe ways in which the efficiency theory of the private sector may not hold.