

**Public Administration  
PhD Comprehensive Exam  
Fall 2022**

**DIRECTIONS:** Develop comprehensive, coherent, and well-flowing essays in response to your chosen questions in Parts I, II, and III. Please choose one question from each Part. Indicate by Part and number which question you are responding to at the beginning of each essay (i.e. PART 1 Question 1). Cite appropriately throughout all of your work and provide full references at the end of each essay. Remember the 5,000 word limit for this exam, inclusive of all essays but not including reference pages.

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

1. Discuss the value of at least two theories of public administration. Explain your assessment process. Discuss if and how each theory has contributed to or detracted from advancements in the field of public administration. Have these theories influenced the practice of public administration? Defend your response with examples.
2. Juxtapose quantitative and qualitative approaches to scholarship and theory development in public administration. Provide leading examples of each approach in a discussion of their contributions. Explain reliance by scholars on these approaches and if you find the extant literature balanced or unbalanced in approach representation.

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

3. Practically every government engages some sort of performance management along a continuum from “thin” to “robust” in system implementation. Weak or thin systems might simply call for agency and program output measures to be reported annually, while strong or robust ones might require measurement development, analysis, reporting, and auditing continuously across government operations and time. Describe the evolution of public performance management espoused by scholars. Then, explain if and how performance management thus far applied has impacted government results. Justify your response with examples exhibited in practice.
4. Government contracting with private or nonprofit organizations has frequently been touted as a mechanism to improve public service delivery. This approach has been promoted heavily by politicians, scholars, and practitioners, and while it may have benefits, many observers note the difficulties associated with it. Substantial problems have been documented showing that some contractors fail to meet their obligations and some public services falter. 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?

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

5. Many books on public administration are advertised as collections of “classics” in the field. Select your own set of classic readings in the field that consists of six to eight sources that will help readers understand public administration. Explain why you chose each source, and why it has special relevance and importance for understanding public administration theory and practice. Arrange these works in some logical order.
  
6. Populist political leaders in many countries are exerting more control over public administrators to forcefully implement their policy agendas. These leaders often perceive career officials as poorly motivated or disloyal, and they tend to view traditional government bureaucracies as antiquated and decrepit. Their aim is to deregulate the state and reassign government work to private contractors or the voluntary sector. The rising tension between politics and administration harkens back to historical developments during the Progressive era reform movement in the United States. This movement transformed American public administration into a more independent and professionalized field but also unleashed chronic concerns about accountability and performance since non-elected civil servants exercise considerable discretion when implementing public policy. Assess these historical trends that continue to shape our profession, note important scholarly contributions that have caused major shifts in thinking, and reflect on what the past may tell us about the future of public administration.