

Comprehensive Exam on the Ph.D. Core in Public Administration

The Nelson A. Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy
University at Albany — State University of New York

January 16 through 19, 2001

INSTRUCTIONS: This exam is handed out at 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday, January 16, 2001, and is due back to the department secretary in Milne 103 by 4:00 p.m. Friday, January 19. Each question is intended to take about five hours to complete, and the entire exam is intended as two questions a day for each of three days, Wednesday through Friday, but you may allocate your time as you see fit. You may use published references or your own notes; however, you may not ask for or receive help on the exam from any person.

Please answer each question in a separate document, labeled to identify the question. It is expected that you will use a personal computer to prepare your answers.

Please use the number assigned at the top of this exam on all your answer sheets. Please return this cover sheet, signed, when you hand in your exam.

I am aware of existing program, school, and university policies on academic dishonesty. My work submitted on this examination is in compliance with those policies.

Signed _____ Date _____

Name:

Address:

Work phone: _____

Home phone: _____

University ID: _____

Please answer each question in a separate document, identified with your university ID.

PAD 702 - Politics and Administration

President-Elect George W. Bush has summoned you to his transition office to seek your advice. “(Your name), as I assume the Presidency of the United States, I need your perspective on issues of public administration. Some of my advisors (Set A) emphasize to me that the chief problem we face is one of accountability and control. Administrative agents want to do their own thing rather than be responsive to executive leadership. They claim that in this and other ways, public administrators really do threaten democracy and that we must develop and draw on a broad range of control mechanisms. Another group of advisors (Set B), however, says not to worry so much about control and accountability but instead to focus on solving the performance problem through a wide range of strategies. They claim that administrative agents generally try to be responsive to law and political leadership but that they frequently fail to achieve high levels of efficiency and effectiveness. If this weren’t confusing enough, yet another cluster of advisors (Set C) claims that the whole accountability-performance tension can be resolved by implementing a system of performance measurement and management. In a sense, I can have my cake and eat it too. In any event, I can’t make head nor tail of all this and I want you to draw on your vast expertise (including some of the literature you have read up there in Albany) to help me evaluate the advice of Set A, B, and C. Which one is giving me the best guidance?” Please respond.

PAD 703 - Economic and Financial Theory

Government regulation of economic activity has distributional as well as efficiency consequences. Much regulation—for example, airline regulation before 1980 and securities regulation (especially) before WWII—appears to have benefited “producer interests” at the expense of consumers and efficiency. Other kinds of regulation appear to favor consumers or groups of consumers at the expense of producers. For example, the FCC licenses broadcasters, but requires programming that benefits only a few. Utility regulation requires utilities to serve rural consumers even when costs exceed revenues.

- (1) In 1970, Congress created the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to regulate work-place safety. OSHA is empowered to require firms to install equipment designed to reduce injuries to workers. What forces would you look for to explain why OSHA was created and how it is likely to operate? In your analysis, identify the theoretically relevant characteristics of the affected industries and workers and explain their importance in shaping OSHA’s impact.
- (2) Explain more generally what the economic analysis of regulation implies about (i) when regulation will favor consumers vs. producers (and vice versa), and (ii) which industries will be regulated first.

- (3) Many kinds of regulation benefit one group of customers (or workers or firms) at the expense of another. What does the theory imply about when cross-subsidization occurs and what direction it runs?

PAD 704 - Research Methods I

Over the past several decades, several presidential and gubernatorial candidates have campaigned on platforms that included plans for government reform, often focusing on promises to make government more efficient. While this was not a major feature of the most recent presidential election, there is an interesting opportunity for studying organizational changes in federal agencies during the transition President Clinton to President Bush.

As a public administration researcher, you have long been interested in studying whether such organizational changes during changes in result in significant changes in organizational structure or processes at the federal level, and are planning to take advantage of this opportunity. Anticipating the change in administration, you began the research project during Spring 2000.

- (1) Describe the research strategy you developed last Spring to examine the influence of change in administration on one (or more) element of organizational structure or process. Discuss the design in some detail, including the data collection procedures and sampling procedures, where appropriate. Discuss also what procedures you will use to operationalize your independent and dependent variables.
- (2) Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of your research strategy in terms of threats to internal and external validity. Discuss also any other criteria that might be used to judge the research design.
- (3) Discuss any concerns you have about ethical issues that are raised by your research design.

PAD 705 - Research Methods II

Please review the *Public Administration Review* article “Goal Displacement: Assessing the Motivation for Organizational Cheating” (Bohte and Meier, 2000) by evaluating the appropriateness **both** of their **a) use** and **b) reporting** of univariate, bivariate, and multivariate statistics. Do not assess the appropriateness of their research design except as it pertains directly to their use and reporting of statistics. In addition, address whether you believe the statistical results support the authors’ conclusions.

PAD 708 - Organization Behavior and Theory

According to many authors, the bureaucratic form of organization has come to dominate modern times because it is a distinctively efficient form of organization. Yet, other authors in the past century have suggested that management theories based on simple

bureaucratic principles are based on a simplistic and wasteful conception of how individuals function in organizations and why they do or not work effectively. Discuss this dialogue, and what you see as its implications for contemporary organization design and management.

PAD 709 - Foundations of Public Administration

Many scholars of public administration have noted that, although the field lacks a core theory, there are a number of “paradigms” or approaches which have characterized the intellectual development of the field. In your experiences in PAD 709 and elsewhere in your doctoral studies, select two intellectual perspectives on public administration (e.g., the “classical” approach as represented by authors such as Frederick Taylor and many other scholars; the new public administration as represented by George Frederickson; perspectives based on economics and/or public choice; public management theory as embodied in the work of individuals such as Eugene Bardach and Kettl and Milward; or other perspectives), and compare and contrast the writings of the various authors who have each contributed to the paradigms or approaches.