

**Ph.D. Comprehensive Exam in Public Administration**  
**Fall 2010**

Answer three of the following questions in 4.5 hours. Keep duplication between answers to a bare minimum.

*Responses should demonstrate a comprehensive command of the literature by citing a sufficient number of scholars and/or studies as evidence for the position taken in each question.*

Good luck!

1. The term "legislative-centered public administration" is sometimes used to denote the U.S. Congress' post-World War II role in federal administration. What are the chief components of legislative centered public administration, how did they develop, and what is their impact on federal administrative behavior and contemporary public administrative theory?
2. The values of equity and efficiency have been fundamental to the development of public administration in the United States. Some argue that equity and efficiency are "trade-off" values (i.e., pursuing greater efficiency diminishes equity, and vice versa). Indeed, many of the field's primary intellectual movements in the past 100 years have promoted one of these values or the other, but not both.

Explain how emphases on equity and efficiency have evolved across the primary streams of research and theory in public administration over the past 100 years. Be explicit about the intellectual movements that emphasized equity, those that emphasized efficiency, and how these movements progressed chronologically. Be sure to cite the primary scholars associated with each stream of theory that you discuss.

3. Echoing Herbert Simon, Ken Meier argued in a 1996 *PAR* article that public administration is a design science: a "science of the artificial." Unlike the natural sciences, it is not concerned with empirical description ("how things *are*") but rather with improving governance ("how things *should be*").

Evaluate the extent to which you believe PA has been successful as a design science. Has it effectively provided policymakers and public managers with tools and methods for improving governance? Do PA researchers focus on how things "should be" rather than how things "are"? Provide examples of research that feel support your evaluation. Make sure that you include in your response a discussion of the theory-to-practice issue in public administration, and conclude your answer with a prediction about PA as a design science moving forward.

4. Extensive PA research has discussed the role of street-level bureaucrats in the administration of public services. Much of this research has focused on whether (and to what end) these front-line government employees have *discretion* in their day-to-day work. Write an essay in which you explain why this issue is so important to the field of PA? What are the consequences if street-level bureaucrats have discretion? What are the consequences if they do *not* have discretion? Be sure to cite specific scholars and studies in writing your response.
5. Which mainstream, peer-reviewed PA journal produces the most valuable knowledge in the field? Put differently, if we were forced to cease publishing all but one of our journals, which one would you save? Why? *Be explicit and comprehensive* in crafting your response, referring to the specific characteristics of the journal that make it so valuable. Be sure to cite some influential articles that have appeared in the journal as evidence for your position and discuss their impacts on the field. [Note: Responses that choose a journal solely because it is the "best" or "most rigorous" will not pass.]
6. Everybody likes things that are new, and PA is no different. Explain the comparative merits of the New Public Administration and New Public Management. Explain the basic premise behind each movement, the primary scholars associated with each, and the historical contexts in which the movements took place. In your opinion, which of the two movements has had greater influence over PA research? Which of the two has had greater influence over PA practice? Why? Be sure to cite relevant research in responding to the question.
7. Frederickson and Smith suggest that a theory should be "parsimonious and elegant," which they define as a theory's ability to "account concisely for the phenomenon under study by using tightly ordered internal logic" (2003: 230). On a scale ranging from "low" to "high," they assess Public Management Theory as being particularly "low" in parsimony and elegance. Do you agree? Why or why not? Be sure to cite existing research in writing your response.