
Appendix C

Rutgers University Comps Questions

MPA Comprehensive Exam
Study Guide

Day 1 Morning, March 31, 2009

Institute of Government

Doctoral Comprehensive Examination

Spring 2009

Please write ONLY your Student ID# on your answer sheet.

Answer the following question in its entirety:

In recent years much attention has been given to the issues of equity in funding and performance of children in public schools. The Tennessee Supreme Court in 1993's *Tennessee Small School systems, et al. v. Ned Ray McWherter, et al.* ruled that the:

State Constitution imposes upon the General Assembly the obligation to maintain and support a system of free public schools that afford substantially equal educational opportunities to all students.

The small school districts that sued the state for equity in funding were primarily poorer counties or cities or special school districts that did not have a substantial taxing base in their communities.

It is now 12 years after the implementation of the funding equity formula and you have been called upon to design a study to see if equity in funding has led to comparable performance between the small school systems and non-litigants in the case.

1. How would you operationalize performance? What are the component parts that would comprise a valid, reliable measure of performance in the context of the lawsuit?
2. How would you operationize equity? What are the component parts that would comprise a valid, reliable measure of equity in the context of the lawsuit?

3. What type of research design would you construct to do this study? What would be your unit of analysis? Why? What would be your sampling frame?

Day 1 Afternoon, March 31, 2009

Institute of Government

Doctoral Comprehensive Examination

Spring 2009

Please write ONLY your Student ID# on your answer sheet.

Answer one of the following questions.

1. The budget may be viewed as an instrument of fiscal policy, as a means of determining policy choices, and as a tool for managing the economy. Explain each of these aspects of budgeting. In your answer, emphasize the views of the classical or pre-Keynesian economists, Keynesian economists, neo-Keynesians, the monetarists, the Public Choice school economists, and the leading public budgeting scholars.
2. In his renowned 1940 article, **V.O. Key, Jr.** lamented about “the lack of budget theory.” Twelve years later (1952), **Verne B. Lewis** attempted to construct a normative budget theory. Today the quest for a budget theory continues. In one of her numerous writings, **Irene Rubin** noted that, “budget theory today is fragmented and incomplete.... It is in the process of being invented.” Why is budget theory still viewed incomplete and fragmented? Briefly discuss the major competing theories of budgeting (distinguishing between normative and descriptive theories) treated in the budgeting literature.

Day 2 Morning, April 1, 2009

Institute of Government

Doctoral Comprehensive Examination

Spring 2009

Please write ONLY your Student ID# on your answer sheet.

Answer one of the following questions.

1. Examine the arguments for the legitimacy of the administrative state. Evaluate the significance of this debated to the development of the field.
2. It has been argued that Chester Barnard and Max Weber-two very different persons intellectually-are the founders of administrative theory. Discuss their specific contributions. In view of the wide array of perspectives on administration currently available, is it meaningful to trace the roots of this field back to them? Illustrate your point by referring to several theoretical perspectives on administration.

Day 2 Afternoon, April 1, 2009

Institute of Government

Doctoral Comprehensive Examination

Spring 2009

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Answer the following question in its entirety.

Other than performance-based budgeting, what are the most important recent developments in financial management? Why are they important and what precipitated them? Explain how these recent changes may/can influence the work of public managers and policy makers.

School of Public Affairs and Administration

Rutgers-Newark

Sample Comprehensive Exam Questions

Comp #1 – Theoretical Foundations

601 The Study of Public Organizations

A. 1. Assuming that the body of knowledge which comprises public administration is itself comprised of a series of at least five types of insights, and that each of those insights continues to be relevant to contemporary problem solving, analyze the central problem of the “privatization model” through multiple theoretical lenses. Cite the appropriate literature as to the importance of the concepts you have chosen to emphasize.

Or

A.2. How would you explain to proponents of privatization that their theories have insufficient explanatory power, and that a more systemic view of public administration would prove more efficacious in the long run? . Discuss competing assumptions from an interdisciplinary perspective, and assess the dynamic nature of the “state-of-the-art” of the field of public administration with particular attention to elements which both mainstream public administration theorists and government’s critics may have overlooked.

OR

A. 3. How do the basic themes of American public administration apply to the events of Sept. 11, 2001? Address this question in terms of organizational capacity, or lack thereof, in basic elements of public administration at the federal and municipal levels.

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A. 2. How would you explain to proponents of privatization that their theories have insufficient explanatory power, and that a more systemic view of public administration would prove more efficacious in the long run? . Discuss competing assumptions from an interdisciplinary perspective, and assess the dynamic nature of the “state-of-the-art” of the field of public administration with particular attention to elements which both mainstream public administration theorists and government’s critics may have overlooked.

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A. 1. Assuming that the body of knowledge which comprises public administration is itself comprised of a series of insights, and that each of those insights continues to be relevant to contemporary problem solving, analyze the central problem of the

“business model” through multiple theoretical lenses. Cite the appropriate literature as to the importance of the concepts you have chosen to emphasize.

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A. 2. How would you explain to proponents of privatization that their theories have insufficient explanatory power, and that a more systemic view of public administration would prove more efficacious in the long run? . Discuss competing assumptions from an interdisciplinary perspective, and assess the dynamic nature of the “state-of-the-art” of the field of public administration with particular attention to elements which both mainstream public administration theorists and government’s critics may have overlooked.

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or

A. 2. Define the field of public administration in no more than one hundred words. Then defend your definition, arguing for the central nature of the concepts in your definition, and citing the appropriate literature as to the importance of the concepts you have chosen to emphasize.

602 Decision Making and Policy Analysis

A. 1. Assuming that the body of knowledge which comprises public administration is itself comprised of a series of at least five types of insights, and that each of those insights continues to be relevant to contemporary problem solving, analyze the central problem of the “privatization model” through multiple theoretical lenses. Cite the appropriate literature as to the importance of the concepts you have chosen to emphasize.

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OR

A. 3. How do the basic themes of American public administration apply to the events of Sept. 11, 2001? Address this question in terms of organizational capacity, or lack thereof, in basic elements of public administration at the federal and municipal levels.

B. 1. From an policy-analytic point of view, compare the role of empirical and normative information in the phases of the policy cycle (policy agenda -setting, policy formulation, policy adoption and legitimation, implementation, and evaluation) and discuss the interplay of methods appropriate to each.

Or

B. 2. . Explain the three most important challenges confronting knowledge utilization in public managerial decision-making and examine their implications for the practice of policy analysis.

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B. 2. . Explain the three most important challenges confronting knowledge utilization in public managerial decision-making and examine their implications for the practice of policy analysis.

B. 1. Focusing on the need for usable knowledge, compare and discuss the logic of policy decision-making with that of positivist-oriented policy analysis. How, in your view, might decision-making and policy analysis best be brought into a mutually beneficial relationship?

Or

B. 2. Examine the differences between outcome and process oriented policy evaluation and suggest how they might be utilized together to improve the policy decision-making process.

B. 1. Discuss the differences between the positivist and postpositivist approaches to policy analysis. How, in your view, should the tensions between these two perspectives be dealt with? Explain.

or

B. 2. . Despite Lasswell's call for a "policy science of democracy," policy science, as it came to be practiced, has often been described as "technocratic" and "apolitical." Explain the ways in which policy science is seen to work against democratic decision-making. And how might we begin to mitigate this tension between expertise and democracy?

603 Public Administration in a Democratic Society

C. 1. The classic theory of bureaucracy formulated by Max Weber identifies certain formal dimensions of administration that presumably remain constant over time and in different social systems. Other thinkers have argued that the functions of administration change in response to the orientation of the state (liberal, authoritarian or welfare state, for example) or economy. Discuss various perspectives on this issue and what each implies for how we understand the role of public administration in democratic societies.

Or

C.2. The public administration literature has paid more attention to normative questions of 'administration' than to what we mean—or should mean—by 'public.' How should the 'public' in public administration be understood? What challenges

are posed to this concept in market societies? Illustrate this understanding or these challenges in a particular substantive area (environment, race, sex, poverty, etc.).

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(b) The public administration literature has paid more attention to normative questions of 'administration' than to what we mean—or should mean—by 'public.' How should the 'public' in public administration be understood? What challenges are posed to this concept in market societies? Illustrate this understanding or these challenges in a particular substantive area (environment, race, sex, poverty, etc.).

C. 1. How does its economic or political context change the role of public administration? With specific reference to their different economic and political institutions, compare the role of administration in ancient or feudal society, market capitalism and the corporate or Keynesian welfare state.

Or

C.2. How can public participation in governance be improved? A number of thinkers have faulted democracy for the dominant role of business, the over-reliance on technical experts, and low-levels of civil education and/or participation in governance at all levels. Responses to these criticisms include 'deliberative democracy' and so-called "e-governance". Discuss the pros and cons of these or related attempts to 'fix' democracy. Consider what proposals for reform imply for public administration.

Or

C.3. Marxists, pluralists, and managerial/elite theorists present different stories about the nature of governance in market societies. Discuss these competing views

and what each implies for the role of public administration

C. 1. From the theorists you have studied, both classic and modern, select three with competing views of how democracy, administration/bureaucracy and markets are related. Briefly describe each view and for each identify a researchable question that might help determine whether the theory is correct and how you might go about answering it. For example, for Marx, you might ask: Do industrial workers support radical change?

C.2. Pluralist, managerial/elite, and class theories recognize the importance of the (1)State, (2)Capitalism, (3) Democracy (4) interest groups, and (5) Administration. But they are assigned very different meaning and importance by each perspective. Employing the vocabulary associated with the perspective as closely as possible, compare how each of the 3 approaches conceptualize these phenomenon.

C. 3. Competing interest groups increasingly claim special privileges from the state because of past disadvantage, disability and/or discrimination, including privileged access to education, the electoral process and employment. Select a claim associated with disadvantage or inequality (e.g. affirmative action, equal pay, the ADA, redistricting, and so forth) and discuss how it bears on public administration.

C. 1. Among the key factors that shape the making and administration of public policy in democratic societies are inequality, bureaucracy, the influence of business and professional elites, and the growing importance of cultural diversity. Basing your answer on the theoretical literature, discuss the importance of two of these factors for public administration.

or

C.2. Classic as well as contemporary theories of democratic governance recognize the importance of (1) the State/Administration, (2) Markets, (3) Knowledge/Information, and (4) Society/Participation. But they are assigned very different meaning and importance by each perspective. Select two major perspectives (e.g. class, statist, technocratic, managerial/elite, pluralist, etc.). Employing the vocabulary associated with the perspective as closely as possible,

compare and contrast how major proponents of the perspective conceptualize these phenomenon and their interrelationships.

611 Administrative Politics

Describe the role of the bureaucracy in the U.S. policy-making process. Pay particular attention to bureaucracy's role in the American constitutional system, and to the impact of politics on bureaucratic policy making.

Comp #2 - Performance Application

604 Performance Improvement in Public Administration

D. 1. Public sector productivity improvement strategies are of differing interest to the practitioner as opposed to the academic.

From the practitioner's point of view -- what are the techniques or strategies that promise the most productivity improvement and how have they been implemented in the public sector?

From the academic's viewpoint -- what are the issues that offer the largest research opportunities?

OR

D. 2. What are the central research questions concerning the relationship between innovation and organizational productivity? Please discuss the questions and authors according to the process model and by level of analysis. What are the recommendations emerging from the research to create an innovation-friendly organization?

OR

D.3. Please trace the history and development of public administration as a discipline, paying special attention to the importance of the concepts

Of quality, productivity and efficiency to that history. Then place American public administration within a global context: how has our history been

Influenced, and in turn influences, global public management. Finally, what are your predictions for the future path of the field?

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D. 1. The movement to privatize many government activities has led some to question the appropriate role of government in society. Some public administration theorists have been very concerned about the emphasis on privatization in the public administration literature, what are the major concerns? Historically, what has been the private sector involvement in producing public goods and services in this country? And how has the American experience compared to other countries in Asia or Europe? Finally, if privatization strategies are pursued by state and local

governments, what recommendations have emerged from the PA literature.

OR

D. 2. What are the central research questions concerning the relationship between innovation and organizational productivity? Please discuss the questions and authors according to the process model and by level of analysis. What are the recommendations emerging from the research to create an innovation-friendly organization?

OR

D.3. Develop and defend a comprehensive framework for productivity improvement in the public sector, supporting your conceptualization with specific and extensive citations from the literature.

605 Government Budgeting and Resource Acquisition

E. Answer either E.1. or E.2. or E. 3:

E. 1. Performance budgeting advocates have proposed an alternative to the traditional, line-item methods of budgeting, first, to reorient many of traditional budgeting's incentives and, second, to integrate budgeting with management. Describe the performance budget in these terms. Account for performance budgeting's spread across nations and lower-level jurisdictions. Critically evaluate performance budgeting's long-term prospects.

OR

E. 2. Taking into account the literature in the area, how do budgeteers make sense of reality in making resource allocations? What limits exist in using rational analysis in budget decisions? In addition to or instead of rational analysis, when do budgeteers "interpret" and "narrate" the phenomena they observe in making resource allocations? Illustrate from the literature you've read. What practical implications do interpretation and sense-making have for public administration and public budgeting?

OR

E. 3. Budget reform movements have tended to produce reforms in thinking applicable not only to budgeting but also to public administration generally. That is, both budgeting and public administration have tried to deal with accountability issues at about the same period. Both have focused on decision-making. Both have tried to deal with government performance.

a. characterize the budget and public administration reforms that have emerged since the Progressive era and the issues they have both dealt with.

b. assess whether budgeting reforms and general public administration reforms have worked together to further changes and improvements in the ways government operates or whether the reforms have worked at cross purposes.

c. argue whether budgeting and management are fundamentally dealing with the same issues or different ones and assess whether budgeting and management are part of the same or different areas of public administration theory.

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E. 1. Anthony Downs (“Why the government budget is too small in a democracy”) and James Buchanan (“Why does government grow?”) present two opposing views on the budget problem. Outline their arguments and the specific points on which they differ. Design and present a research proposal in which you resolve specific points on which they differ.

OR

E.2. Performance budgeting adherents have proposed an alternative to the traditional, line-item methods of budgeting, first, in dealing with the many of traditional budgeting’s incentives and, second, by integrating budgeting with management. Describe the performance budget in these terms. Critically analyze performance budget’s long-term prospects.

OR

E. 3. V. O. Key asked the basic question for budgeting researchers and theorists. What was that question? What did he mean by the question?

Wildavsky and others have outlined and defended a budget theory that consists of roles and as such is a behavioral approach to budgeting. Meyers and others have outlined a budget theory that is structural and follows a functionalist approach to

budgeting. Contrast these two theories. Assess each in terms of its explanatory power in answering the basic question put forth by V. O. Key.

E. 4. Budget reform movements have tended to produce reforms in thinking about public administration generally. That is, both budgeting and public administration generally have tried to deal with accountability issues at about the same period. Both have focused on decision making and process. Both have tried to deal with government performance.

- a) characterize the budget and public administration reforms and what issues they have both dealt with since the Progressive era.
- b) assess whether budgeting reforms and general public administration reforms have worked together to further changes and improvements in the ways government operates or whether the reforms have worked at cross purposes.
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606 Administrative Law

F Answer either F.1. or F.2:

F. 1. “Due process,” as we know, is an elastic concept, but even so it is difficult to reconcile the Court’s holding in *Goldberg vs. Kelly* (the welfare case) with its one six year later in *Mathews v. Eldridge* (involving the poor person who disability payments were terminated). What factors can you cite to account for these disparate rulings.

OR

F.2. Cann, in his *Administrative Law* text, observes that “Congress has the power to control agencies but lacks the will; the President has the will to control them, but lacks the power.” What did Cann mean? Please explain, with reference to cases we have briefed and discussions we have shared.

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F. 1. "Our governmental structure is based upon the separation-of-powers, and we have discussed several cases in which the Courts have disallowed actions on the ground that one branch has usurped, or encroached upon, the powers of another. At the same time, the Supreme Court has long recognized that the branches are not hermetically sealed, and must occasionally share or delegate power.

Please discuss some cases in which the High Court has, and has not, allowed some breaches of the "walls of separation" between the three branches, and explain its rationale for so doing."

F. 2. In the context of administrative law, what, essentially, is meant by "due process"? Please discuss, incorporating when appropriate actual cases we have discussed in class.

612 Performance Measurement and Evaluation

The belief that individuals should be given a voice in their governance appeals to our democratic ideals. While there appears to be universal agreement that the involvement of citizens in the decision making process of government is a good idea, there is little agreement as to the best way to achieve meaningful involvement. There are many ways to consult with the public and get a sense of what they see as problems and opportunities; it is quite another thing to actively engage citizens in the decision-making process and more explicitly the measurement of government performance. Some theories advocate direct and active influence in decision making, while others suggest more indirect approaches. Which approach do you

advocate and why? Be sure to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of including citizens in the measurement of government performance. Include appropriate references to support your argument.

Much discussion has centered on the appropriate relationship between citizens and public administrators. Discuss the key elements of the various relationships, as presented in the literature, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of each relationship. In your opinion, what relationship is most appropriate for a well functioning society and why? Support your choice with relevant arguments from the readings. Draw a model/diagram of what your citizen/government relationship looks like and explain the model.

Compare and contrast the following: Classic public administration

New public management

New public service

Discuss the core values of each model of administration as well as the strengths and weaknesses of each model. After discussing these models, present your model for a new public administration. Your response must be supported by the literature and relevant citations.