

Doctoral Comprehensive Examination in Public Administration  
School of Public Affairs  
American university  
January 25, 2008

Answer THREE questions in 4.5 hours. Try to avoid duplication in your answers.

1. Does New Public Management represent a new paradigm in public administration? Or is it simply an incremental development in the ongoing history of public administrative reform? Construct arguments for both sides of this issue. Then, take a stand – what is your assessment?

2. Some scholars argue that there are fundamental flaws in the theoretical assumptions underlying the use of market strategies in delivering government services. Identify at least two of these alleged flaws and discuss their implications for administration and democratic governance.

3. The bureaucratic form of organization has been declared dead at various times in the past half century, yet continues to show remarkable persistence. Exactly what is the theory of bureaucracy? Is it still useful? If not, describe what has replaced it and why the explanatory power of the replacing theory is superior to that of bureaucratic theory. If the theory of bureaucracy is still useful, explain why.

4. What characterizes a good theory in any field of study? How is a theory different from a concept or taxonomy? With these distinctions in mind, discuss whether social scientists have been successful in formulating theories that address one or more of the following questions.

- What is the relationship between politics and administration?
- Why are certain issues selected for public attention?
- Why do bureaucrats have so much power in the modern state?
- How do culture and ideology affect the practice of public administration?
- Why do the collective policies of government seem to depart so frequently from public preferences?

5. We have just learned that civilization as we know it will end next week. You have been asked to put together a reading list to put into a time capsule. That list is to include public administration readings that that might serve as guides to future generations in any attempt to rebuild civilization? You have been asked to limit your list to the individual or collected works of four scholars. What would you include on that reading list and why? **Do not include the work of any current American University faculty member.**

6. Some have argued that the evolution of the discipline of public administration has been characterized by fragmentation and conceptual borrowing from fields like

economics, sociology, anthropology, law, and other disciplines. This, they argue, is because of the nature of the practice of public administration and/or because of its quest for disciplinary legitimacy. First, compare and contrast the strengths and weaknesses of the contributions of any two disciplines to public administration research (e.g., economics, sociology, history, business, political science, psychology, etc.). Second, is such fragmentation and conceptual borrowing a strength, weakness, or not important in and of itself?

7. Some argue that "governance" has replaced "government" as a central framework for understanding the administrative state. Tracing the development of the administrative state, why would scholars make this argument? Is it accurate? That is, have governance models really replaced the conventional bureaucratic model in practice? Why or why not? How well has theoretical development in research on governance progressed so far?