

**American University Department of Government**

**M.A. COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION**

American/Applied Politics

*Spring 2022*

This exam consists of questions drawn from the field of American Politics and questions drawn specifically from our Applied Politics concentration offered through the Public Affairs and Advocacy Institute and the Campaign Management Institute.

**DIRECTIONS:** You will write three essays. Be strategic in your selection of questions, choosing those that allow you to show the greatest breadth and depth of your knowledge. Note that, in almost every case, you are expected to demonstrate your knowledge by drawing on a range of appropriate scholarship. When doing so, be sure to cite the scholarship you are drawing upon explicitly and include a reference list at the end of the exam.

**All students must answer one question from Section I.**

**Applied Politics students must in addition:**

- Answer one question from Section II and one question from Section III.

**Students *not* in Applied Politics in addition may either:**

- Answer two questions from Section II, OR
- Answer one question from Section II and one question from Section III.

*Clearly identify the questions you choose to answer. Please use 12-point type, double-spaced, and standard margins when preparing your essays. While essay length will vary depending on the question and author, successful responses are typically 3-4 pages.*

## SECTION I

1. Define and then describe the difference between scientific, professional, and political orientations of policy analysis.
2. Compare and contrast the differences between qualitative and quantitative research designs. Begin by defining and characterizing these approaches. Then, describe the strengths and weaknesses of each approach, with particular interest in how qualitative and quantitative designs can aid researchers in learning about the world. Use examples and cite relevant literature as appropriate.

## SECTION II

1. Frances Lee wrote that “the key outstanding question is whether the current impasse between the parties and the constitutional system is sustainable.” How has the party polarization Lee described affected the political incentives and actions of members of Congress, and what are the consequences for governance? Include in your answer a discussion of how the rules and procedures of the House and Senate have evolved – and may continue to change – in reaction to this divide between the parties.
2. Why and how have presidents politicized the executive branch? Explain. Identify the costs and the benefits to the presidency in particular and to the integrity of the Constitution in general. Finally, does the Biden administration provide examples of such politicization? Briefly explain why or why not.
3. Discuss the Riker-Ordeshook 1968 model of the calculus of voting:  $pB + C - D > 0$ . Specifically,
  - (1) Explain what each of the equation elements mean.
  - (2) Explain how this model attempts to solve the "paradox of voting."
  - (3) Discuss the ways in which in recent cycles the cost of voting has gone up/down due to changes in election administration.
  - (4) Finally, discuss the potential limitations of the model.

### **SECTION III**

1. As the COVID pandemic seems to be lessening, it is likely that campaigns will begin to resume pre-COVID field activities. Explain the importance of field activities to a campaign, and discuss what a successful campaign field program involves. Also, what have campaigns learned about field during the pandemic, and are there any lessons that might be incorporated in field programs in 2022?
2. What are the critical factors that shape the level of support of a newly elected President? What can a President do to maintain at least the majority of the country's support while he (and someday she) attempts to manage the administration's agenda in divided government?