Public Administration Exam – Summer 2024

Methodology

- There is a classic debate in the public administration literature about whether research in the discipline should be focused on making a theoretical contribution and develop academic theory or whether it should be prescriptive and centered on generating actionable research. This argument started with the debate between Herbert Simon and Dwight Waldo but has become a larger discussion about the purpose of public administration research. Take a side in this discussion and use examples from the empirical public administration literature to support your argument. Be sure to discuss issues of methodological rigor.

- Many disciplines in the social sciences have an ongoing discussion about whether knowledge is better developed through quantitative or qualitative research approaches. Describe the trademarks of these two approaches and which of them holds more promise for answering important public administration questions. You may want to discuss some of the arguments that each side poses about the utility of its own research agendas. It is recommended that you use examples from the literature.

- Identify a public administration research question and evaluate the quality of empirical research that has addressed that question. Discuss the elements of research design (internal and external validity in addition to measurement validity) in this evaluation. Is this research convincing from the perspective of methodological rigor and how can it be improved?

Collaborative Public Management

- Collaborative governance involves the engagement of different kinds of organizations – including federal, state, and local government agencies; nonprofits; and for-profits – in implementing government programs. What are several (3-5) examples of federal programs that feature collaborative governance? What are several of the major competences and values that each of the different kinds of entities (i.e., government agencies, nonprofits, for-profits) bring to their participation in collaborative governance? From the federal government's perspective, what are several of the major consequences, including both "benefits" and "challenges," of collaborative governance? What approaches have been – or could be tried – to address the challenges of collaborative governance?

- Lester Salamon has written about the different "tools" that government uses to implement programs. Please pick one program area (e.g., health care, higher education, environmental protection, defense); describe several (3-5) tools that

are used in the program area; and compare the operation and consequences of the different tools. What are your views – including both positive and negative aspects – of the "tools" framework? What kind of new research would help to deepen our understanding of this framework?

Nonprofits, Public Policy and Organizational Theory

- Why do we have nonprofits? What are the various theories that help explain their existence and prevalence? What are their limitations and shortcomings? What do they tell us about the relations of nonprofits to the state?

- How do political scientists conceptualize the influence of private actors on public policymaking? Most of the literature focuses on nonprofits as service providers, thus placing them at the implementation end of the policy process. What role do they play on the policy-making side of the equation? Are there differences to other private actors in the policy process?