

## American Politics Field Exam—January 2020

Answer **THREE** of the following questions, but no more than **TWO** from **SECTION A** or **SECTION B**.

All answers must be typed.

### SECTION A

1. What is the role of political parties in Congress? Has this role changed over time? If so, what might explain the change(s)? Discuss and critique the theoretical and empirical literatures related to these questions.
2. Assess the influence of presidents in American politics. What formal and informal powers do they possess? To what extent and under what circumstances can these powers be leveraged to shape policy outcomes? Has the answer to the preceding questions changed over time? In your response, discuss the various approaches scholars have used to answer these questions and which have been most fruitful.
3. It is common for students of U.S. public policy to describe policy developments as “path dependent.” What does this mean? Under what circumstances is it likely to be true? What does it imply about policymaking? Finally, what would be a good test of whether policy in a particular domain is indeed path dependent?
4. Some scholars argue that judges only pursue satisfaction of their personal policy preferences (e.g., the attitudinal model of Segal and Spaeth). Considering the judicial politics/public law literature, does law matter? Why or why not?
5. When will Congress delegate to the bureaucracy, what form will that delegation take, how does this vary depending on different contexts, and why? Finally, what theoretical and empirical approaches to answering these questions do you find most convincing?

## SECTION B

1. While many political commentators believe that interest groups have significant influence on policy, the empirical evidence connecting interest group activity to policy outcomes is mixed and has been met with skepticism. What are the theoretical and empirical challenges that arise when trying to identify the influence of interest groups on policy?
2. In the United States, to what extent do voting and elections provide meaningful democratic control of federal government officials? Use relevant literature to support your argument.
3. In the field of American politics, scholars typically distinguish between the study of institutions, on the one hand, and the study of mass behavior, on the other. Write an essay specifying the extent to which this distinction is sustainable analytically, descriptively, and normatively. Obviously, you will need to make selective and intelligent use of the literature.
4. Party identification and ideological identification have become increasingly intertwined. Four or five decades ago, there was barely a correlation between the two in the mass public. What were the dynamics of this change within the mass public? What role did elites play—and, in particular, to what extent did they drive or respond to the change? Are issue positions changing along with ideological and party identifications? How can we do better at figuring this all out?
5. Prior to the 2016 election, even professional political scientists largely failed to predict that the next president would be Donald Trump. Considering the political science literature's theories about public opinion, the media, voting, parties, and the structure of elections, to what extent does Trump's nomination and subsequent election upend these theories? Does anything need to be revised? Or, can Trump's election be accounted for by these theories?