

Ph.D. Comprehensive Paper Examination 2006
The Heller School for Social Policy and Management
Brandeis University

The comprehensive paper questions are available for distribution on Wednesday, May 17, 2006 from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. from Kay Bennett, Assistant Director of the Ph.D. Program, Room 222. Your comprehensive exam must be submitted in person to Kay by Wednesday, May 24, 2006, by 5 p.m.

Please put the number of the one question you are answering and the number you were assigned when you collected the questions on each page of your paper. Do NOT put your name or any other identifying material on the paper.

General overview

The comprehensive paper is intended to be an original, scholarly integrative analysis of a policy issue written upon completion of course work. Students are expected to demonstrate through this paper:

- An ability to relate theoretical approaches to the assigned topic based on either one or multiple disciplines or areas of knowledge.
- Knowledge of the history, developments and issues in the substantive aspect of the topic.
- An ability to demonstrate an analytic approach to the assigned question.
- An ability to argue their point clearly and to write at a level suitable for publication in professional journals.

To demonstrate these abilities in the essay you write, please be mindful to:

- (a) read the question! and be sure that your essay addresses the question that is asked;
- (b) state clearly your objectives and strategy;
- (c) demonstrate knowledge of, and critical assessment of, the topic reviewed or addressed in your essay;
- (d) bring in relevant contextual information, e.g. history, theory, empirical information, statistics, policy, program descriptions, or other relevant information (not all of this will apply);
- (e) be logical and coherent; if your question has multiple parts, your essay should not address them separately, but must include all in a unified whole;
- (f) avoid unsupported assertions or polemical arguments, i.e. this is not an advocacy piece;
- (g) write for an academic or policy audience.

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To bear in mind: Dimensions that will be used to assess your essay

- **Overall organization:** Does the paper state clearly the objectives and strategy of presentation of the writer? Does the writer follow through on his/her plan?
- **Ability to use analysis and theoretical approaches to construct an argument:** Does the paper demonstrate the writer's knowledge of theories pertinent to the topic? Does the writer construct a logical argument?
- **Knowledge of the history, developments and issues in the substantive aspect of the topic:** Does the writer demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the current substantive issues? Of the major ideas in the substantive area? Of historical events that may shape the current understanding of the topic?
- **Capacity to marshal evidence and critically assess it:** Evidence may include statistics, policy references, program descriptions, and citations. The writer should demonstrate a critical understanding of the evidence, not blind acceptance.
- **Competently addressing all major aspects of the question:** Are any important dimensions of the topic overlooked? Are there major gaps in the writer's argument?
- **Overall quality of the writing:** Is the quality of the writing such that it would be appropriate to submit it as a professional journal article, a book chapter, or a policy report to an administrator or legislator?

Other important information and requirements:

The paper may be completed at any place of the student's choosing.

Many students find that literature reviews and novel ideas they developed in course work are relevant to answering their chosen comprehensive exam essay question. All writing for the comprehensive exam must be done by you alone with no editing by any other person and no team efforts. It must be original and unique to this context.

While you will almost certainly draw upon what you have learned or written about in courses, you may not quote your own previous writing verbatim, except if it has appeared as a published document with a definite copyright and is fully referenced. Materials included in course papers, seminar presentations, and grant proposals do not meet this criterion and may not be used verbatim. Under Brandeis rules, it is not permissible to submit any portion of a work twice for credit.

You are expected to use reference materials with proper citations and to clearly attribute ideas, writing, lectures, statistics, conclusions, and other work by using a standard form of bibliographic reference. Please review Brandeis rules on plagiarism:

http://www.brandeis.edu/studentlife/sdc/rr/html/rr_section3.html

Papers should be no longer than 15 pages and must be printed or typed double-spaced with at least 1-inch margins and a font no smaller than 12 point. Papers need not reach the maximum limit of 15 pages. Length is a student decision. The bibliography is not included in the 15 pages.

If you use a personal computer, save to diskette frequently and print out as you write, to avoid the effects of system crashes.