



Final Examination
PSPA 297 Seminar in Organization Theory
Professor Van Geest
January 25, 1996

Directions: You must answer two of the first four questions in Part I and you must answer question number five in Part II. Each of the two questions you answer in Part I are worth 25% of your examination grade and the question in Part II is worth 50% of the grade. PLEASE CLEARLY INDICATE WHICH QUESTIONS YOU ANSWER. Good luck.

Part I

1. Explain what Systems theory is about.
 - a) Does systems theory represent a departure from the previous scientifically based theories? Why or why not?
 - b) What is the avowed purpose of systems theory?
 - c) What is entropy?
 - d) What is the distinction between "technical rationality" and "organizational rationality" and how is relevant to systems theory?

2. Identify the context of the following quote. Is the general argument in which it is framed, descriptive or prescriptive? What is the importance of this argument for our understanding of public organizations?

"In general, then, we treat effectiveness not as a single statement, but as a set of several (or perhaps many) statements, each reflecting the evaluative criteria applied by the various constituencies involved to a greater or lesser degree with the focal organization....we mean to emphasize the possibility that individuals and groups not directly associated with the focal organization may form evaluations of its activities, and may be able to influence the activities of that organization to some extent."

3. What are the basic themes of the "Power and Politics Organization Theory" school?
 - a) According to organization theorists who study power, who has power and why?
 - b) How do political theories of power challenge the assumptions of organization theorists who study power?
 - c) Considering both political and organizational analyses of power, where does, and where should power reside in public organizations?

4. How does your understanding of multiple constituencies, power, and culture in organizations affect your evaluation of the various models of decision-making? Which models are descriptively and normatively useful?

Part II

You must answer question number five.

5. One of the ways we can evaluate organization theory is to ask how well it helps us to a) understand, b) describe, c) explain, d) predict, or e) apply the above knowledge to practical situations. Evaluate the extent to which each of the various schools of organization theory succeed according to these criteria, and ultimately make for good theory.

