

# Non-Thesis Track M.A. Comprehensive Exam

## Spring Semester 2016

### Instructions

You must address one of the following three questions in your policy paper. Generally, each topic requires you to review, analyze, and synthesize the literature as it pertains to a particular policy area and draw conclusions or make recommendations based on your findings. Please be sure you read the entire question and address all parts of it.

The Spring 2016 exam will be distributed on Monday 2/15/2016 by the graduate program director (Robert Brame). Both a paper and electronic copy (pdf format) of your completed examination must be submitted to the program director by noon on Friday 4/15/2016. Late examinations will not be accepted and will result in a failing score. Please note that once you receive the comprehensive examination, you are required to submit an examination by the deadline; otherwise your exam will receive a failing score. If you experience extenuating circumstances that interfere with your ability to complete your comprehensive exam, you should notify the graduate program director immediately. Please make sure your exam complies with the following submission requirements:

- You have written a response to one of the three questions on the exam.
- Your submission should contain 4 parts: (1) an Executive Summary (2-3 pages briefly outlining the contents of your paper); (2) a Policy Paper (20-25 pages in length); (3) a separate List of References (which does not count against the page limit); and (4) a signed Honor Pledge. Please note that students receiving assistance from the University's writing center is considered a violation of the Honor Pledge. not including the cover page and reference list).
- You do not identify yourself anywhere within the document other than on the cover page. You will be assigned an identification code for each question so your answers can be linked to your name after grading is complete.

- Your identification code is typed on both the cover page and the top right-hand corner of each page of your answer.
- You follow the APA format, with 12-point Times New Roman font, double-spacing, and 1-inch margins throughout your answer.
- You have checked your document to ensure that you have not plagiarized. Any finding of plagiarism will result in a failing score on the exam. If you are unsure what constitutes plagiarism, please see <http://plagiarism.org/>.
- You provide a signed honor pledge indicating that you neither gave nor received assistance with the comprehensive examination.
- Be sure to use a well-developed list of academic sources (i.e., no Wikipedia and if necessary, a very limited number of popular media sources such as newspapers, magazines, etc.).

When possible (i.e., when there are two or more test takers), your comprehensive examination will be graded in a double-blind manner – neither you nor the faculty graders will know each others identities (though students may know who the graders are after grades have been assigned). A committee of three graduate faculty members will grade all examination questions. Your assigned grade on the exam will be a “high pass,” “pass,” or “fail” from each of the faculty graders. In order to pass the comprehensive examination, at least 2 of the 3 faculty members must give your paper a passing score (pass or high pass). A paper receiving three “high passes” will be scored as a “high pass.” If you fail the examination, you will be permitted to retake it one time.

Your Exam Identification Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Honor Pledge: In accordance with the ideals set forth in the Carolinian Creed, I hereby pledge that I neither gave nor received assistance on this examination.

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## Exam Questions (Please Answer One):

- The Supreme Court has recently held that the Eighth Amendment forbids the imposition of the death penalty, life without parole for non-homicidal cases, and mandatory sentences of life in prison without parole for juvenile homicide offenders. Write an essay in which you: (1) describe the rationale used in these key cases, and (2) outline the relevant empirical evidence on which these cases are based.
- Recent events involving police officers and citizens across the U.S. (e.g., Ferguson, MO and NYC) have garnered widespread media and public attention concerning police-community relations. Drawing on theoretical and empirical research, write a policy paper that describes and evaluates: (1) the importance of strong police-community relationships (i.e., what beneficial outcomes occur for the police and public alike?), (2) the theoretically salient factors that contribute to positive public perceptions of the police, (3) the state of empirical research surrounding such factors, and (4) the policy implications for police organizations based on this line of research.
- Mass incarceration is one of many pressing issues in the current criminal justice system. Todd Clear in his recent article, “The Criminology of Downsizing” argues that there appears to be an important shift in the support and dialogue around the issue of reducing mass incarceration. First, discuss the scope and nature of the mass incarceration issue, including the growth and size over the last several decades, and factors contributing to the use of prisons at both the state and federal levels. Second, discuss how state and federal systems are responding to mass incarceration in their own respective systems. In other words, what policies and approaches are they using to address the size of their prison systems (either to support the continued growth or reduce the size)?