

Ph.D. Comprehensive Examination in Sociological Theory, Fall 2017

DIRECTIONS: You are required to answer three questions. Answer one question from Section I, one question from Section II, and one question from Section III. This is a closed book, six-hour examination. Your answers should demonstrate facility and knowledge of a range of sociological theories and theoretical issues.

Section I

1. Weber theorized social formations through types of legitimation that define domination as central to maintaining power. Durkheim, by contrast, did not make the analysis of power central to his theory of society, focusing instead on solidarity as key to analyzing types of society. Compare and contrast these alternative approaches to the analysis of society. In particular, how do types of legitimate domination relate to solidarity? What is the significance of these alternative approaches for the analysis of society?

2. Sociologists argue that an individual's understandings of the social world are fundamentally shaped by their social location. By extension, a theorist's social location should be reflected in their approach to society, concepts, and substantive focus. Explore this issue by comparing key writings of two of the following theorists:

Karl Marx
W.E.B DuBois
Max Weber

Section II

1. The study of marginalized groups has been a key theme in sociological theory since the end of World War II. Different theorists have approached the study of marginalized groups through alternative frameworks: some focus on outsiders through an analysis of social norms, others focus on these groups in terms of self-consciousness and liberation. Compare two of the following theorists' views on how to study marginalized groups:

Judith Butler
Patricia Hill Collins
Erving Goffman

2. Compare and contrast the core concepts of Jurgen Habermas and Michel Foucault on issues of rationality, the individual, and sources of emancipation. How are their views on these three issues rooted in alternative intellectual sources and projects?

Section III

1. Sociological theories provide directions and concepts for defining issues for inquiry and for interpreting data. Empirical research, in turn, serves to illuminate, substantiate and refine theoretical approaches. Discuss your substantive research interests with these themes in mind. How do the writings of two theorists inform your views on these issues?

2. What role does social theory play in the literature associated with your substantive research interests? How are broad frameworks and concepts related to substantive issues in this literature? How do you see the contribution of your research agenda to both social theory and substantive knowledge?