

**SUBSTANTIVE AREA:** Cultural Sociology

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## **OVERALL SCOPE OF AND EXPECTATIONS FOR THE EXAM**

Cultural sociology aims to analyze and account for processes of meaning making in a variety of social contexts. The goal of this exam is to provide the opportunity for interested students to develop and demonstrate a broad grounding and expert familiarity with key research and guiding questions in cultural sociology. In the process of exam preparation, students should also practice and ultimately demonstrate mastery of the ability to develop and focus independent questions which may advance the subfield. Having passed this qualifying exam, students should also be competent to interact with professional peers on the basis of shared knowledge and understanding, and to organize syllabi and to teach cultural sociology.. .

## **EXAM PREPARATION**

***REQUIRED/RECOMMENDED COURSES*** Students should have completed one or two advanced graduate classes related to cultural sociology before beginning exam preparation (exceptions may be negotiated with the committee for students with strong prior background).

### ***READING LISTS***

Important training in cultural sociology's traditions, key questions, and habits of thought is provided in the process of exam preparation, which requires the following steps:

Students should develop six to eight areas of topical interest. Such topics may include those which the student has found particularly compelling in past work, key topics emphasized in contemporary overviews, topics which may be particularly relevant in light of students' interests in future research, etc. Examples will be provided and can be developed in consultation with the committee and with other students; it is the responsibility of committee members to offer guidance coordinating student interests with existing work in the field. Sub-areas will typically include one or two sections in cultural theory, and may also include a section in qualitative methods.

Students should take responsibility for developing their own reading lists in consultation with the committee. Developing a substantial and interesting bibliography is considered an important part of the training process concluded by the exam. Lists will typically be revised several times, and developed in discussion with the committee. Students may draw on previous reading lists at the start of their work, but should not simply reproduce them. Other resources for list development

may include core sources in the field, especially those of particular interest to the student, and journals providing book reviews, such as *Contemporary Sociology*. The completion and approval of a reading list should indicate possession of skills in developing solid scholarly bibliography in new areas of interest to the student.

### **EXAM PREPARATION**

Preparation for the exam continues with reading and developing a detailed understanding of the questions, arguments, intellectual resources, evidence, and conclusions of the works on the list. Students may prepare in the ways they prefer, but the preparation must include regular meetings with committee members to discuss topics and questions in each subsection, and should result in close familiarity with the scholarship behind— not simply the conclusions of— the relevant works. When more than one student is preparing for the exam, the process should include meetings for mutual discussion of preparation work along with the committee members.

Students will develop a set of seven or eight exam questions based on their list. They may draft questions either as work on each section of the list is concluded, or when most of the other preparation for the exam is done. A good question will identify a key issue in the literature and allow the student to develop a thesis on that issue on the basis of the scholarship included in the reading list. Exam questions will typically involve several iterations of revision in discussion with the committee.

### **EXAM FORMAT**

Students may choose to sit the exam in two four hour sessions over two days, or one eight hour session on one day. On the day of the exam, the committee chair will draw the appropriate number of questions (two or four) randomly from the prepared list. Students will develop essay answers to the questions, organizing support of a central thesis through discussion and assessment of their readings.

### **EXAM SCHEDULING**

Typically, the exam preparation process should involve at least three and up to six months. If more than one student is preparing for the culture exam on roughly the same schedule, they are expected to take the exam at the same time.

### **EXPECTATIONS REGARDING CITATIONS**

While exam essays should display close familiarity with substantive particularities of the readings discussed, complete and detailed formal citation is not required in the exam setting. Students should refer to authors' names, along with title or date of work if necessary for identification purposes. Of course, more formal citation is acceptable.

### **EXAM RESULTS**

Overall, exams will be assessed as pass, fail, or (rarely) pass with distinction. If students fail the exam, they may retake the area exam (in its entirety) after meetings with committee members to discuss ways to improve, and after devoting significant time to coming to a better understanding of the area with more preparation. Students may also choose to take a different area exam.

#### ***FEEDBACK***

Students will be notified of exam results by the committee chair, who will coordinate the reports of committee members. Every attempt will be made to provide results two weeks after the exam; however, this deadline may be extended if the exam date chosen by the student creates deadline conflicts for committee members. The committee chair will keep the student informed of when the report is expected. To emphasize the expectation that the importance of the exam lies in the substantive training it provides, more than the technical performance expected, students will be provided with written substantive comments on each exam question from each committee member. Students should also meet with the committee chair to discuss this feedback, and should also meet with other committee members if possible.

#### ***MISCELLANEOUS***

N/A