

SUBSTANTIVE AREA: Cultural Sociology

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DATE: June 2015

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, recent cultural sociology handbooks and anthologies, 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 supporting— 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 six to 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

At the time of the exam, the committee chair will draw questions randomly from the prepared list. The administrative assistant for graduate studies will communicate the chosen questions to the student at the start of each exam period. Students will develop essay answers to the questions, organizing support of a central thesis through discussion and assessment of their readings. No books, electronic resources, or notes are to be used during the exam. At the conclusion of the exam period, the student will communicate their essays to the administrative assistant

EXAM SCHEDULING

Students will sit the exam at the time scheduled by the department. Typically, the preparation process should involve at least three and preferably more, up to six months, so advance planning is required.

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 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