

Student #1

Theory Exam Questions, Spring 2014

THEORY EXAM DAY 1

Answer one question from each area. PLEASE include the question with your typed answer, and number the pages.

CLASSICAL THEORY

1. Discuss the emergence and central challenges/problems of modernity from the viewpoint of Marx, Weber, Durkheim, and Simmel.

URBAN THEORY

1. Beginning with the earliest sociological theorists, cities have been seen as sites of anomie, social disorganization, and unconventionality. How do various theories of urbanism (e.g., ecological, compositional, subcultural) explain the increased prevalence of social problems (as well as innovation and creativity) in cities?

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Theory Exam Questions, Spring 2014

THEORY EXAM DAY 2

Answer one question from each area. PLEASE include the question with your typed answer, and number the pages.

THEORIES OF ETHNICITY/RACE, RACISM, AND ETHNIC CONFLICT

1. Describe, compare, and contrast the major theoretical approaches to racism, from the beginning of American sociology to the present (e.g., biological, ethnicity-based, class-based, symbolic, group position). Specifically, how do the various theories account for the shift in the form of racism in the U.S. from more overt (i.e., Jim Crow) to more covert (“institutionalized,” “laizzez faire,” or “colorblind”) forms?

INSTITUTIONAL LOGICS

1. What are institutional logics? Is the institutional logics approach in theoretical conflict with neoinstitutionalism? How does the logics perspective differ, and what implications do those differences have for social theory?

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Relational Sociology

1. One of the common themes in relational sociology is the idea that persistent cultural forms are the result of sustained interaction over time, but these forms are in a constant state of flux and that actors have the ability to disrupt and alter the flow of interaction in a setting, providing the grounds for social change. Can you develop this theoretical understanding of the field? What are the theoretical underpinnings of this orientation, and how does the theoretical work within this domain support this orientation towards culture and structure?

Group Theory

1. The Bales research agenda was developed using a particular methodology that was developed on the basis of Parson's theoretical agenda. What were the primary attributes of this methodology and how was it utilized in different ways to address questions of group development, status hierarchies and interaction patterns within groups? How has this methodology been expanded on in the future?

Student #2

Theory Exam Questions, Spring 2014

THEORY EXAM DAY 2

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Relationship Theory

1. How are different relational types seen as theoretically distinct and what is the evidence for this? What role does reciprocity and responsiveness play in the formation of closeness? What role does the concept of self play in theories of closeness and intimacy? What are the theoretical models of relationship development, persistence and dissolution?

Sociology of Emotions

1. What are the theoretical roots of emotion within sociology? What had delayed the study of emotions within the field? What are some of the primary assertions of the field and how have they been developed?

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Section One: Classical Theory

One key societal change that concerned the classical theorists was the rise of individualism that accompanied industrialization in the West. Describe how Marx, Durkheim, Weber, and Simmel conceived of the changing role of the individual in society with the development of industrial capitalism. What did they think these changes implied for the future of both individuals and society?

Section Two: National Identity and Nationalism, with a focus on Religious Nationalism

The work of making nations is one of the fundamental processes of modernity. How are nations made? Discuss both the macro-historical (examples include Anderson 1983, Brubaker 1992, Gellner 1983, Greenfeld 1992, and Marx 1998) and meso-/micro-analytical (such as Billig 1995 and Surak 2012) answers to these questions. Include studies that examine self-conscious efforts to create national symbols and identities (such as Adams 2010, Cerulo 1997, Spillman 1997). Also touch upon the kinds of challenges that nationalisms based on religion pose for secular nationalisms centered on the nation-state (for example, Cavanaugh 2010, Juergensmeyer 2008, Omer and Springs 2013).

Student #3

Theory Exam Questions, Spring 2014

THEORY EXAM DAY 2

Answer one question from each area. PLEASE include the question with your typed answer, and number the pages.

Section Three: Theories of Late Modern Society

Describe different theories of contemporary society, including post-industrialism (Bell 1973), postmodernity (Harvey 1989; Jameson 1984; Lyotard 1984), late or reflexive modernity (Beck 1992; Beck, Giddens, and Lash 1994; Giddens 1991), and globalization (Appadurai 1996; Castells 1996; Robertson 1992). What are the commonalities in these theories, and where and why do they diverge? Does our current society represent a continuation of or break with modernity as conceived by the classical theorists?

Section Four: Symbolic Boundaries, Narratives, Collective Memory, and Meaning-Making

Bourdieu's (1984, 1986) work helped highlight the cultural dimensions of structural inequalities and motivated a great deal of research into (and criticism of) this issue, along with his theory more generally (for example, Daloz 2008, Erickson 1996, Holt 1997, Kane 2003, Lizardo 2010). Describe this literature, and pay particular attention to how research on symbolic boundaries, through its focus on how such conceptual distinctions can perpetuate and further social inequality, furthered his insights (Lamont 1992, 2000; Lamont and Molnar 2002, Milner 2010).