

Department of Sociology
American University
Comprehensive Examinations in Theory
January 2005

Please answer a total of **four** questions, **one** each from the four sections. Read the whole exam first, identify the question you wish to answer from each section, outline your answer and then proceed to answer each question fully. All four answers will be considered equally, so allocate your time accordingly.

Theory Comprehensive–January 2005

Choose one question from each of the following four parts. Be sure to use the following performance strategies

- a. Take care to frame a general answer to the question in your opening sentences and explain how you will develop your answer.
- b. Place your answer in the context of the central problematic of the theory you are considering.
- c. Underscore and define (in parentheses or in a sentence) all key concepts used.

Part I–Classical

1. One way to understand a social theory is to describe its model of society. Compare and contrast the model of society in two of the following pairs:
 - a. Marx/Engels and Emile Durkheim
 - b. Marx/Engels and Max Weber
 - c. Marx/Engels and Charlotte Perkins Gilman
 - d. Marx/Engels and Classical Africana social theory.
2. The Classical theorists were concerned with analyzing the changes in their own time which they knew as “modernity.” Describe what two of the following said about modernity.
 - a. Jane Addams
 - b. Karl Marx
 - c. Georg Simmel
 - d. Herbert Spencer

Part II Modern

1. The chief problem confronting Neo-Marxian social theory is to explain why the world has not developed as Marx and Engels had predicted; analyze the explanations given by the Frankfurt School and World Systems Theory.
2. Discuss whether modern Positivism (Structural-Functionalism and Exchange Theories) can be of any use to the social policy theorist confronting the problems of inequality. Explain what principles from the theory you might use and how you would adapt them to the problem of social inequality.

Part III–Classical and Contemporary

1. Compare and contrast the George Herbert Mead and Alfred Schutz in terms of their understanding of the relation between mind and society.
2. Trace the continuities and developments in the macro-positivist theoretical tradition from Herbert Spencer, through Emile Durkheim, to Talcott Parsons and Robert Merton.

Part IV–Application

1. President Bush is currently arguing for a radical change—some would say “dismantling”—of Social Security. Discuss which social theorists you would use to support him if you were hired by the Republican National Committee and why. Discuss which social theorists you would use to oppose him and why if you were hired by the Democratic National Committee.
2. Give a theoretical explanation of the outcome of the 2004 Presidential election.