

Federation Ph. D. Qualifying Exams Spring 1992 - Spring 2000

(Questions are in chronological order. Some of the questions appear more than once. This repetition has been left in to give a sense of which questions get re-asked)

Part I. Broad Perspective. Choose one.

Compare the views of two of the following on the role of religion in human society: Marx, Durkheim, Weber, Spencer, Simmel.

Compare and contrast the conflict perspective in classical versus contemporary sociological theory, specifically citing the contribution of at least one theorist for each period

Discuss the universality of social class as demonstrated in the works of classical sociologists versus the relativity and the local nature of social class as demonstrated in the works of U.S. sociologists.

Below are a list of topics and theorists generally associated with them. Select three and justify their significance for sociological theory. (a) Social facts - Durkheim; (b) Social class - Marx; (c) Pattern variables - Parsons; (d) Bureaucracy - Weber; (e) Race - Myrdal; (f) Total institutions - Goffman (g) Race relations cycle-- Park; (h) Power elite - Mills; (i) Race/class/gender - Patricia Hill-Collins; (j) World systems - Wallerstein.

Discuss the work of a feminist sociologist in two of the following schools of thought: conflict/critical theories, symbolic interaction theory, and functionalist theory.

Briefly discuss and compare the work of a classical and a contemporary proponent of one of the following schools of thought: critical/conflict theories, symbolic interactionism, functionalism.

Compare the views of Marx, Durkheim, and Weber on one of the following substantive issues: the role of religion in history; the role of conflict in social change; or the nature of social integration

Select two of the following and describe their critique of current, mainstream sociology and their alternative paths for sociological inquiry: Frederick Bates, Pierre Bourdieu, Anthony Giddens, Randal Collins, Jeffery Alexander, Steven Seidman. Compare and contrast how two of the following schools of thought have conceptualized social change, citing the works of specific theorists to illustrate your answer: Structural functionalism, conflict theory, symbolic interactionism, exchange theory.

Compare the views of two of the following classical sociologists with respect to their original contribution to the twentieth century Micro-Macro debate in sociology: Durkheim, Weber, Simmel.

Compare and contrast the views of Marx, Durkheim, and Weber on one of the following substantive issues: the source and role of social conflict; the role of culture; social stratification.

Discuss the original significance, and continuing relevance of two of the following concepts to sociological theory and research: Weber's "Rationalization", Durkheim's "Division of Labor," Marx's "Alienation."

Describe the efforts of an important social theorist of your selection to combine or integrate one of the following: (1) action and systems theory, (2) micro and macro theory or (3) structure and agency.

Compare the views of Marx, Durkheim, and Weber on the future of the modern Society.

Discuss the relationship between theory and method, and explain why a theorist needs to be concerned with method. In answering this question identify and provide a detailed discussion of the development of an empirical work that demonstrates your argument.

One of the oldest and most central questions faced by sociologists has to do with the source and nature of social order. Compare and contrast the views of one macro-structuralist theorist and one micro theorist that have been proposed as answers to this question.

Describe and critique what you see as the best example of theoretical synthesis in sociological theory.

The year 1998 is the 150th anniversary of the publication of Marx and Engels' Communist Manifesto. Discuss the influence of Marxian theory on two of the following: Weber, Durkheim, Tonnies, C. Wright Mills, Alvin Gouldner, Bourdieu.

Compare and contrast the views of two of the following thinkers: Marx, Durkheim, Simmel, Spencer, and Weber on one of the following substantive issues: 1) the role of religion in society; 2) the relationship of the individual and society; 3) the origins of social inequality.

Discuss the influence of the enlightenment belief in progress in the works of three of the following social thinkers: Herbert Spencer, Karl Marx, Auguste Comte, Ferdinand Tonnies, Max Weber.

Compare the views of two of the following thinkers: Marx, Durkheim, Simmel, Spencer, and Weber, on one of the following substantive issues: The role of religion in society, the relationship of the individual and society, origins of social inequality, the course of evolution (or development) of society.

Discuss the relative importance of social evolution as a point of departure for social change theories.

American sociology has since the early 20th century incorporated the study of microsocial processes and interaction. Discuss the merits and disadvantages of this approach. (Be sure to include macrostructural criticisms of this approach. Cite examples to illustrate your discussion.)

Discuss two different ways that social theorists or theories have interpreted the relationship between the individual and society.

Marx, Durkheim, Weber, W.E.B. DuBois, and Simone De Beauvoir each in his/her own way, developed social theory in response to the needs of the epoch. Compare and contrast the social theory of two of the four as a response to the changes taking place in the world in which they lived and worked.

Choose one of the following four groups of theories (A, B, C, D); within the group chosen, pick two theories. Then compare these two theories in terms of two of the following: (1) origins, (2) theoretical approaches, or (3) research consequences.

Utilitarian theory, exchange theory, rational choice theory, behavioral theory.

Ethnomethodology, phenomenological sociology, symbolic interactionism, dramaturgical sociology.

Critical sociology, feminist sociology, postmodern sociology, world systems analysis, Marxist sociology, conflict theory

Structural functionalism, neo-functionalism, structuration theory, structuralism, functionalism.

Discuss the justification for a multi-paradigmatic discipline of sociology. Identify and describe the paradigms that would be included. Note: The justification must take into account the inclusiveness of research and interpretative literature.

A recent issue of Contemporary Sociology reviews "the ten most influential books of the past 25 years." Critically analyze the theoretical contributions of any two of the following:

Theda Skocpol - States and Social Revolutions

Harry Braverman - Labor and Monopoly Capital

Clifford Geertz - The Interpretation of Cultures

Pierre Bourdieu - Outline of a Theory of Practice

Nancy Chodorow - The Reproduction of Mothering

William J. Wilson - The Declining Significance of Race

Edward Said - Orientalism

Michel Foucault - Discipline and Punish

Immanuel Wallerstein - The Modern World System, vol. 1

Boston Women's Health Collective - Our Bodies, Ourselves

Discuss the impact and continuing relevance of one of the following classical works on sociological theory and practice: Weber's The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, Durkheim's Elementary Forms of Religious Life, Marx's Economic and Political Manuscripts of 1844.

Compare the contributions and influence of two of the following sociological perspectives. Which of the two do you find most useful for empirical research?: Functionalism, Symbolic Interaction, Exchange Theory, Conflict Theory

Explore the social and historical context of the feminist intellectual tradition in sociology and contrast the feminist intellectual tradition with mainstream sociology.

Identify any two classical theories that have come to be accepted as sociological paradigms. Compare the general outline of the two theories, their underlying assumptions and the research modes used in contemporary work that uses the paradigms.

Compare Marx, Durkheim, and Weber's explanations of the rise of modern society.

Present two theoretical debates that you believe to be the most significant in American sociology today. Justify your choice.

Compare the views of two of the following thinkers: Marx, Durkheim, Simmel, Spencer, and Weber, on one of the following substantive issues: the relationship of the individual and society, origins of social inequality, the course of evolution (or development) of society.

American sociology since the early days of the Chicago Department has incorporated the study of microsocial process and interaction in the tradition of pragmatism. Discuss the merits and disadvantages to this pragmatic approach as it might be critically assessed by any adherent of a macro structural approach of your choosing.

Compare and contrast the points of view of at least one classical theorist who gave priority to society as the independent variable shaping the thought patterns versus one who gave priority to mental categories as shaping society.

Critique any of the following schools of thought from the point of view of another one of them:

critical theory

feminist sociology

functionalism

symbolic interactionism

postmodern sociology

rational choice theory

Critically evaluate the micro and macro contributions in the work of two of the following:

Durkheim

Weber

Marx

Simmel

C. Wright Mills

Parsons

Compare and contrast Durkheim and Weber's theories concerning the role of religion in society.

Critique the "mainstream" sociology from the point of view of the theoretical tradition of either Marxism or feminism.

Discuss and fully develop a theoretical perspective that will, in your opinion, be most useful in understanding cultural and social change in our contemporary world. (Justify your position.)

Compare one contemporary conflict theory with the original Marxian prototype. Address the following: What do the two theories have in common? How are they different? What is gained by the new approach? What (if anything) is lost?

Since August Comte distinguished statics from dynamics there has been a tendency for theories in sociology to attempt integration of structure and process. Present an in-depth analysis and critique of any sociological perspective that illustrates this and evaluates current utility.

Compare the views of Marx, Durkheim, and Weber on one of the following substantive issues: the role of religion in history, the advent of capitalism, or the role of conflict in social change.

Briefly discuss the work of an early and a contemporary proponent of one of the following schools of thought: critical/conflict theories, feminist sociology, symbolic/micro interactionism, functionalism.

Identify the perspective of any one classical theorist and anyone post-WWII theoretical work that has been proposed as a revision of that perspective. Compare the two perspectives, identifying underlying assumptions and research goals, as well as the general outline of the theories.

Compare and contrast the concept of social deviance in the work of two of the following in its theoretical context.

Karl Marx

Robert Merton

Max Weber

Erving Goffman

Emile Durkheim

Robert Park

Talcott Parsons

From a classical sociological perspective, discuss social changes giving rise to capitalism, citing relevant literature.

Examine the common origins, the shared theoretical approach or the intellectual and political consequences of two of the theories in one of the following clusters of theories.

exchange theory, rational action theory, behavioral theory

ethnomethodology (Garfinkel); phenomenological sociology (Schutz); symbolic interaction (Blumer); micro ecology (Goffman)

structural functionalism, neo functionalism, structuration theory

The advent of modern society has been central to the thinking of a number of scholars. Compare the work of two of the following in this area: Marx, Durkheim, Weber.

Discuss the justification for a multiple paradigm sociological discipline. From existing theory, select a paradigmatic model which might best be developed into the single paradigm of a "normal science" in the Kuhnian sense. Defend your choice.

Select any two of the following sociologists and compare/contrast their work, theoretical orientation, contributions to sociology, and how well they will stand the test of time.

Talcott Parsons

C. Wright Mills

Randall Collins

Pitirim Sorokin

Robert Merton

Harold Garfinkel

Immanuel Wallerstein

Erving Goffman

Neil Smelser recently charged that there is a tendency in the behavioral and social sciences for a relatively determinate theoretical formulation to degenerate to the point that it expresses everything and nothing. The result is a kind of theoretical indeterminacy. Compare and contrast the extent to which this has taken place in functionalism and in Marxism. Cite relevant literature to support your argument.

Trace the influence of one of the mid-century sociological paradigms, namely, mainstream structural-functionalism, interpretive theory (symbolic interactionism, etc.), or critical theory in two of the following recent movements: world-systems theory, cultural studies, postmodern sociology, post structuralism, neofunctionalism, feminist sociology, structuration, rational choice theory. Discuss specific works and authors.

Social Realism was a major principle in the classical sociological statements of Comte, Spencer, and Durkheim. Discuss its relevance in contemporary theory. Identify any two specific contemporary (last half of the 20th century) theorists who take distinctive stances on this principle and compare them. Take a position yourself and defend it. Throughout your discussion identify preconceptions or assumptions that are essential.

Select any one of the groups listed below, and discuss the school or tradition represented. For each of two individuals, compare and contrast his/her major contribution to this school/tradition.

Durkheim, Parsons, Merton

Mead, Cooley, Bloomer, Kuhn

Marx, Gouldner, Mills, Maracuse

Dorothy Smith, Patricia Hills Collins, Janet Chafetz, Arlie Hochschild

Compare and contrast developmental theories on the transformation of western societies in the works of two of the following authors: Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Toonies.

The anti-positivist critique, today, is often associated with a micro-analytical approach. From the theoretical literature associated with macro theory, cite an effort to critique and limit positivism. Compare this theory with any specific anti-positivist theory in the micro-tradition.

Compare the logic and sociological orientations of two of the alternative sociological perspectives given below. Which of these do you find most useful for empirical research and why?

- a. Functionalism
- b. Conflict Theory
- c. Exchange Theory
- d. Symbolic Interactionism

American sociology incorporates the study of micro-social process and interaction in a pragmatic context. Discuss the merits and disadvantages of this approach as it might be critically assessed by macro-structural theorists.

Compare and contrast the work of two major theorists who devoted much of their work to the fundamental question of whether inequality among people is a natural and inevitable feature of social life or an unnatural and imposed social arrangement.