

COMPARATIVE HISTORICAL EXAM
Fall 2004

Directions:

Answer ONE question from each section. No one essay should exceed 8 pages and the total length should not exceed 20 pages. Be sure to include a list of references for each essay.

General Approaches:

1. What are the relative advantages and disadvantages of small N comparative versus large N comparative studies? Employ several empirical examples in crafting your argument.
2. Pick the 5 most significant books written since 1965. Explain why they are critical and how they changed the field of comparative historical sociology. What are the similarities and differences between these books? As a set what do they say about the field—its past, present and future?
3. Discuss the different views on the use of narratives in comparative-historical sociology and the different roles of narratives in generating social science theories. Cite empirical studies to make your point.

Research Design:

1. Identify an unresolved problem in any one area of comparative historical research. Outline the competing theoretical arguments noting all relevant studies and then design research that would adjudicate them. Be sure to provide/defend your detailed research strategy noting general approach, independent and dependent variables, sources of data, mode of analysis, etc.

Substantive Debates:

1. Ryan Denniston
 - a. Do explanations of revolution traditionally employed to explain pre-20th century social change account well for the spate of post World War II revolutions? What are the competing explanations and how well do they address the historically very different types of revolution experienced worldwide? Do we need new arguments?
 - b. Use two or more specific empirical studies to illustrate the similarities and differences in the causal mechanisms that sustain the globalization of culture and the globalization of market forces.
2. Rebecca Dunning
 - a. Frank Dobbin and Viviana Zelizer represent two different views of practicing the cultural perspective in studies of social change and public policy. Discuss these differences.

- b. Discuss the contributions of historical institutionalism to our understanding of social change. How do the related concepts of path dependency and political process factor into an institutional perspective of social change? Employ empirical examples to make your case.

3. Joanne Durchfort

- a. Review and critique the central arguments in the literature on transnational social movements? What lessons has the social movement literature in general gleaned from this recent work? What directions (research questions and research approaches) would be most fruitful for further work in this area.
- b. Use two or more specific empirical studies to illustrate the similarities and differences in the causal mechanisms that sustain the globalization of culture and the globalization of market forces.

4. Don Ebel

- a. What causes social movements? Review and critique the competing explanations. To support your argument compare religious movements to anti-globalization movements.
- b. Religion as a field of sociological study tended to be taken as a given institution in functional analysis, with legitimation being an important function. What are alternative conceptualizations and research treating religion as a social movement? What are alternative conceptualizations relating religion to globalization?

5. Liz Essary

- a. Review and critique the central arguments in the literature on transnational social movements? What lessons has the social movement literature in general gleaned from this recent work? What directions (research questions and research approaches) would be most fruitful for further work in this area.
- b. “Globalization” and “identity” have rapidly become a “buzz words” they may well have lost their conceptual rigor. How are these terms different from former ways of thinking about large-scale social change and about social differentiation. Do these terms represent truly new phenomena or are they new terms to describe old phenomena? To make your case employ a review of perspectives detailing the relationship between identity and globalization? Note possible future directions for this line of thinking.