

GRADUATE QUALIFYING EXAMINATION

COMPARATIVE HISTORICAL PRELIM EXAM
AUGUST 25, 2008**Answer ONE of the following three broad theory questions.**

- 1) Compare and contrast the Marxist/neo-Marxist, Weberian, and Foucauldian theories of power and the state. Give empirical examples to demonstrate how these different theories have informed the work of comparative historical researchers. Which of the three do you find most useful? Develop an argument for why a particular theoretical orientation (or combination) on power (and, if fitting, the state) should (or should not) rule research in comparative historical sociology.
- 2) Marxist, Neo-Marxists, functionalists, postmodernists, and poststructuralists have debated the nature of the state, politics, and democracy forever. Review the basic arguments of these camps (please make sure you cite people in each camp) and assess what each may say about democracy in contemporary America. Conclude your essay by pulling elements out of this debate to explain whether or not the Obama phenomenon may (or may not) be a “progressive” development in our history?
- 3) How could a feminist and racially cognizant comparative historical sociology look at the following matters: state, class, class consciousness, and revolution. Use the work of specific authors in the reading list to highlight the limitations of how all these concepts have been defined as well as the analyses they have inspired. Use examples from your specific field of interest (race, law, intersectionality, and feminist politics) to demonstrate how including gender and race, along with class, may produce deeper concepts and analyses in the field of comparative historical sociology.

Answer ONE of the following two questions on methods.

- 1) One of the biggest challenges of Comparative Historical Sociology (CHS) is to use the richness of case studies to develop theories that go beyond individual cases. Choose three CHS studies in sociology that you feel make strong theoretical claims, and analyze the main arguments of each one. If you had to add one additional case to each study that could extend their theoretical claims, which case would you add and why?
- 2) Evaluate Charles Ragin's impact on the discussion of the comparative method in sociology. What are the advantages of case-oriented research compared to variable-oriented research? Choose one significant study using each method, and discuss their strengths and weaknesses.

Answer ONE of the following two substantive questions on CHS and intersectionality.

- 1) Most knowledge of “racial matters” is based on a masculinist, middle-class reading of the world. How would an intersectional approach help expand and deepen our understandings of racial matters? To answer this question, first discuss how the gender- and class-bias in the literature (and please mention specific authors) affect at least three substantive issues in the field. Then proceed to discuss how the work of authors in the intersectional tradition may help produce better race analysis (please use specific empirical examples to illustrate this part of your answer).
- 2) Discuss how “the law” has been studied by authors in CHS. Examine the differences and similarities in their conceptualization of legal canons, legal practices, and legal work. After this review, explain how studies by critical race legal scholars and feminist legal scholars, in particular, and critical race scholars and feminists, in general, are producing new understandings of “the law.” Make sure you illustrate your answer with specific examples of legal work in one area (e.g., abortion law, divorce law, civil rights law, etc.).