

**GRADUATE QUALIFYING EXAMINATION  
CULTURAL SOCIOLOGY  
August 31, 2006**

**Please answer 3 of the following 5 questions in 8 pages or less. Your exam should not exceed 20 pages in length. You MUST answer #1 but can choose any other two.**

- 1) Identify a significant theoretical schism in the field and craft research that would speak to this debate. Provide a detailed explication of the theoretical positions as well as a comprehensive research design. Be meticulous in the discussion of your plan and provide clear accounting of your design choices.
- 2) Although Marx was not as Marxist as some of his followers made him to be, he did suggest that ideology was a superstructure connected/determined by the economic structure. Since then, most analysts working on culture, ideology, and now discourse have attempted to distance themselves from this “vulgar” and “determinist” interpretation. First, explain the nature of the last 150 years of critique of this vulgar interpretation of ideology. Second, articulate what you think we have gained theoretically, conceptually, and politically by moving away from economic views on ideology and culture. Lastly, take a reasoned stand for (or against) those who believe that there was something beautiful in the old-fashioned and vulgar Marxist view, that is, those who believe we have lost something really important by abandoning the Marxian insistence in the economic realm determining ideological formations “in the last instance.” (This is an open question, but we expect you to incorporate the ideas of at least 8 different authors in your answer.)
- 3) Using ideas from Darnell Hunt, Michael Burroway, Patricia Hill Collins, Ann Swidler, Michele Lamont, Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, and others, explain the following:
  - a. How was it possible for the aftermath of hurricane Katrina to be framed as a “natural” disaster?
  - b. How and why was it possible for blacks to be framed as “refugees” rather than as “citizens” in distress?
  - c. What role did the media play in the above matters?
  - d. What ideas from visual sociologists and writers on narrativity help understand how we all discussed Katrina?
  - e. What ideas from cultural sociology could have helped to foster a deeper discussion on this “natural” disaster?
- 4) Mainstream sociology (is there anything else?) has had a hard time dealing with post-structural ideas and approaches. In the pages of *ASR*, *AJS*, and *Social Forces*, authors such as Derrida, Foucault, Barthes, Bhaba, Appadurai, de Certeau, and others shine by their absence. Explain how the ideas of these authors might enlighten our discussions and analyses in our research on attitudes (you can choose to discuss racial, class, or gender attitudes), power, and social change.
- 5) What distinctions are made in the extant literature between mass/public/and popular culture? How useful is this distinction? What underlying theoretical debates does it echo? Make liberal use of a diverse range of work making sure to give concrete examples. But make special note of how the literature in the emergent field of visual sociology might provide particular insights.