

**DEPARTMENTS OF SOCIOLOGY AND RURAL SOCIOLOGY  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON**

**Preliminary Examination in Comparative-Historical Sociology**

August 1, 2005

**MORNING**

*General Instructions:* Complete Part A and Part B.

**PART A**

*Instructions:* Answer Question #1.

1. Compare the discipline of history with the subdiscipline of comparative-historical sociology – theoretically, methodologically, and substantively. What, in your view, is the proper relationship of comparative-historical sociology to history? and to the rest of sociology?

**PART B**

*Instructions:* Answer either Question #2 **or** Question #3.

2. Select two of the following three figures: Marx, Tocqueville, Weber. Discuss how the work of these two thinkers speaks or might speak to present-day debates in comparative-historical sociology. Be sure to include in your answer an assessment of the strengths and limitations of the various ways in which the ideas of the two thinkers are being used (implicitly or explicitly) today.
3. Select two of the following five figures: Theda Skocpol, Charles Tilly, William Sewell, Jr., Michael Mann, Andrew Abbott. Discuss how the work of these two thinkers speaks to present-day debates in comparative-historical sociology. Be sure to include in your answer an assessment of the strengths and limitations of the various ways in which the ideas of the two thinkers are being used (implicitly or explicitly) today.

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**AFTERNOON**

*General Instructions:* Complete Part C.

**PART C**

*Instructions:* Answer two of the following four questions.

4. Examine the impact that the “cultural turn in the social sciences” has had in comparative-historical sociology, discussing substantive examples as you go and assessing the current state of the debate.
5. What has comparative-historical sociology contributed to our understanding of the historical conditions for democracy? Be as specific as possible in referring to texts, authors, or arguments.
6. Ever since Werner Sombart asked "Why Is There No Socialism in the United States?," comparative-historical sociologists have debated the "exceptionalism" of the American working class. In what senses, if any, can American working-class formation be legitimately considered "exceptional" in comparison to that of other developed capitalist societies, especially those of Western Europe? Provide a critical assessment of the state of the debate, giving substantive examples of landmark works on the topic.
7. Following Gosta Esping-Andersen, comparative scholars of the welfare state conventionally distinguish three major families of welfare regimes: the social-democratic/universalist, the liberal/residualist, and the Christian Democratic/conservative-corporatist. How theoretically robust and empirically comprehensive is this typology in accounting for cross-national variations in social welfare provision? What factors best explain the historical evolution of distinctive national welfare regimes, and how path dependent are their responses to internal and external challenges?