

**Prelim Examination in Class Analysis and Historical Change
January 2001**

General guidelines for answers

- 1. Be sure to read the questions carefully. None of the questions are “trick questions”, but students often fail to answer the specific question asked.**
- 2. Be sure to cite specific authors and specific works where relevant for each of the questions and identify what specifically they say on the issues. We are not interested in long lists of vague citations of references, but we do want evidence that you know the relevant literature.**
- 3. Organize your answers clearly. It is often a good idea to first prepare an outline.**
- 4. Don't “beat around the bush” with long introductions and preambles; get to the point and answer the questions in a crisp, systematic manner.**

AFTERNOON EXAMINATION

Answer one question from Part III and one from Part IV

Part III. Class

Question 5

Stock ownership remains heavily concentrated, but both it and certain sorts of worker claims to the residual surplus are now a widespread feature of the capital-labor exchange. For example, more U.S. workers are now members of “ESOP” (Employee Stock Ownership Programs”) and profit-sharing schemes than of unions. What difference does this make in theorizing the class structure of contemporary capitalism? How do these new forms of property rights affect working class behavior? What possibilities for worker advance do these developments suggest?

Question 6

In recent years a number of books and articles have appeared which argue that class has ceased to be a useful concept for sociological analyses either of narrow questions of social inequality or of broad questions of social institutions and social change. Present the strongest case possible for this “death of class” thesis and then examine the strengths and weaknesses of these arguments.

Part IV. Metatheory

Question 7

"Methodological individualism" has often been regarded by Marxists as one of the foundations of "bourgeois" social science. Recently, some scholarship within Marxism has incorporated many of the ideas traditionally associated with micro-individualist analysis, and some people have even argued that methodological individualism as the proper way of formulating microfoundations for Marxist theory itself. Write an essay in which you define and discuss the central ideas of methodological individualism and analyze their relevance to Marxism. Be sure to discuss the views of specific authors in your analysis.

Question 8

Some Marxists, including for example, George Lukacs, have argued that what is distinctive about Marxism is its *method*, not its substantive theories of the development and future of capitalist society. Others, for example, Jon Elster, have argued that the methodological positions in Marxism that are claimed to be distinctive are either indefensible or are simply standard methodological positions dressed up in esoteric language. Discuss these contending views of the nature of so-called "Marxist methodology".