

**CLASS ANALYSIS AND HISTORICAL CHANGE
WRITTEN PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION**

January 2000

AFTERNOON EXAMINATION

Answer one question in Part III and one question in Part IV.

Part III (answer ONE of the three questions in this part)

1. Consider the following list of major historical events involving transformation of the state:

- a. The rise of Absolutism in the early modern period
- b. The collapse of the Weimar Republic and the rise of the Nazis
- c. The French or American Revolutions
- d. The rise of the New Deal
- e. The destruction of Jim Crow in the South in the 1950s and 1960s

Scholars working within various traditions of class analysis have extensively analyzed each of these; so too have scholars who reject class analysis. For any two of these events, critically contrast their treatment by one prominent scholar from each camp.

2. The following scholars have all elaborated distinct understandings of class. For any three of them, first describe, contrast, and critically evaluate those understandings. Second, critically illustrate their application to some empirical problem — showing how they would differ in its treatment, and their relative success in doing so.

Pierre Bourdieu
Alex Callinicos
Anthony Giddens
John Goldthorpe
David Grusky
Frank Parkin
Erik Olin Wright

3. In theories of ideology, no less than in theories of other social phenomena, Elster and others have emphasized the importance of providing “microfoundations.” But this demand can be met in different ways. First tell us what precisely it means to provide microfoundations for a theory of ideology, and how doing so changes the study of that topic. Second, critically evaluate the work of two students of ideology who offer distinct sorts of microfoundations.

Part IV (answer ONE of the four questions below)

1. Marxism's account of epochal historical change — historical materialism — has long been considered a crucial part of Marxism, and the specific transition from feudalism to capitalism has occupied a particularly important place in its testing as a theory of historical change. Discuss the debates on the transition from feudalism to capitalism, critically evaluating the strength of Marxist approaches versus non-Marxist ones.
2. One crucial contribution claimed by 20th century Marxian theorists has been their “recovery” of the “utopian moment” in Marxism. What is this recovery about, and what is your assessment of its contribution?
3. How does a Marxian theory of distributive justice differ from utilitarian and Kantian theories, and what are its relative strengths and weaknesses?
4. Perhaps the most striking fact of recent U.S. political history is that the biggest regressive redistribution of wealth and income in world history has excited almost no popular resistance or even mainstream political notice. What if anything does Marxism contribute to our understanding of this fact?