

ECONOMIC SOCIOLOGY PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION

January
WINTER 1998

AFTERNOON SESSION

Part III (50 percent of exam grade)

Answer three of the following questions.

1. Under what conditions can an adequate supply of transferable skills be maintained in an advanced industrial economy? What alternative methods of skill formation are available to firms and governments, and what are their advantages and disadvantages?
2. The last two decades have seen much research supporting the importance of “weak ties” in the operation of labor markets. Assess the state of this research. How convincing is it? What more needs to be known to be convinced, and how might that be found out?
3. The structure and function of business and labor organization vary widely across capitalist economies. What are the most important sorts of variation, and what are their most important determinants?
4. “It was Keynesianism that provided the ideological and political foundations for the compromise of capitalist democracy. Keynesianism held out the prospect that the state could reconcile the private ownership of the means of production with democratic management of the economy.” What changes have diminished confidence in this Keynesian reconciliation of capitalism and democracy? Do those same changes suggest the basis of an alternative reconciliation?
5. Assume you wish to determine the robustness of distinctive regional economic structures — including business and labor organization as well as actual production and marketing arrangements — in face of international product market integration. How might you design such a study?
6. What is agency theory? Describe two situations where the agency problem implies economic outcomes different from what would be predicted by the standard microeconomic theory of markets. Should agency be considered a sociological problem, rather than a modification of economic theory? Describe findings of empirical research that has been guided or inspired by agency theory, or describe research of this kind that could be done, but has not.