

**PHD COMPREHENSIVE EXAM IN SOCIAL CLASS
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
KENT STATE UNIVERSITY/UNIVERSITY OF AKRON
SPRING, 2009**

CORE (REQUIRED)

1. Much contemporary theorizing on class has been about attempting to synthesize the work of Karl Marx and Max Weber on class. These attempts include the works of Ralf Dahrendorf, Gerhard Lenski, and Erik Olin Wright. What have each of these sociologists taken from Marx's concept of class? What have they taken from Weber's? To what extent do the works of these contemporary theorists represent a real synthesis? To what extent are they closer to Marx? To Weber?
2. Class has been measured in many different ways, derived from varying theoretical perspectives. Review the major ways in which social class has been measured in the US, and illustrate each measure with the typical research design with which it is associated. Show how the different measures of class and their typical research designs help to shape the topics being studied, the research designs employed, and the resultant findings.

EXTENDED

Answer two of the following questions.

3. In his dissertation, Erik Olin Wright noted that Arthur Stinchcombe once said in a lecture, "Sociology has one independent variable, class." Although Stinchcombe may have been exaggerating a bit for emphasis, a central issue for stratification research has been the degree to which other cleavages – especially race, gender, ethnicity, nationality – are dependent on or independent of social class. To what degree and in what ways are these types of inequality dependent on or independent of social class? Draw your own conclusions.
4. *How is economic privilege maintained for a particular segment or social class of society?* In your answer, (a) address the basic mechanisms that create and maintain any kind of privilege, (b) evaluate the role or significance of legitimation as a maintenance mechanism, and (c) show how these mechanisms do or do not apply to the conventional models of the powerful [elite versus pluralistic models; power versus class elite models].
5. Social mobility has been and continues to be a central concern in stratification research. After reviewing the primary ways in which social

mobility has been approached and the central conclusions about similarities/differences in rates and types of social mobility across countries, draw some conclusions about the relative roles of ascription and achievement in the US.

6. *What best explains the over-representation of women and/or racial/ethnic minorities among the poor?* In your answer assess which theories, models, and research findings have the best explanatory power to explain this over-representation, and summarize how you would combine these models/findings into a relatively coherent explanation.