Sample Comp Exam Questions for Theory

1. Compare and contrast how one classical sociologist and one more contemporary sociologist writing primarily in the latter half of the 20th century address the question: How is social order possible?

2. The 19th century was clearly the "epoch" of sociological theory in that the great fore-parents of the discipline laid the building blocks of various theoretical perspectives and conceptual frameworks. What might be some of the contributions of the 20th century social theorists to the continued development and enrichment of sociological theory? In addition to your general comments, please include in your response examples of at least three contemporary (20th century) theorists and their respective work to illustrate your contentions.

3. Objectivity or subjectivity in social theorizing has been an issue widely discussed since the birth of sociology as a science. What is this issue all about, and have we resolved it yet? In as much as an abundant number of contemporary theories focus on the subjective and constructed realities of humans in society, does this cast a shadow on the scientific nature of sociology as a discipline the way it has been traditionally construed?

4. Compare and contrast at least three distinctive ways in which theory is used in contemporary sociological research or practice.

5. Compare and contrast theories of power from one classical and one contemporary social theorist. Make sure to provide quotes from the original primary texts of these theorists. Apply and discuss some real-world examples of current social problems or situations to illustrate your arguments. What are the relative merits of each theory of power? In your view, which theory (or set of theories) is more compelling to understand the contemporary world, and why?

Bibliography:

Please consult the following readers in construction of your answers. You may consult additional works in theory, particularly ones that you used in your theory class or that relate to theory in your substantive area. In either case, you will be asked to provide citations and a list of references in American Sociological Review format.


Kivisto, Peter, (ed.) SOCIAL THEORY: Roots and Branches, Roxbury Publishing Co. California, 2000 or later.