

**UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO**  
**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY**  
**PH.D. COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION IN SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY**  
**February 1-5 2021**

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You are required to answer THREE (3) QUESTIONS (ONE QUESTION FROM EACH OF PARTS A, B & C). Each answer should be 10-12 pages (12-point font, double-spaced and standard margins) in length. The complete exam should not total more than 36 pages in length (12-point font, double-spaced and standard margins) not including references. THE COMMITTEE WILL NOT READ PAST THE 36TH PAGE.

**Part A**

1. Contrast and compare the treatment of *social change* in the thought of a few, significant classical and contemporary theorists. In addition, provide an evaluation of the merits and shortcomings of these different treatments, given your own views about how to do justice to social change in sociological inquiry.
2. Contrast and compare the treatment of *social order* in the thought of a few, significant classical and contemporary theorists. In addition, provide an evaluation of the merits and shortcomings of these different treatments, given your own views about how to do justice to social order in sociological inquiry.

**Part B**

3. Intervene in the debate over “structure and agency.” The essay should briefly but accurately capture the major theoretical and epistemological parameters of this debate, demonstrating what is at stake and for whom. Next, elaborate how this debate tends to play out within two of the six “Traditions” listed under Section B in the reading list. You should take a clear position, articulating your argument within and/or across the two traditions you have identified.
4. What is, in your view, one of the most fruitful debates happening in contemporary sociological theory? This debate might be explicit or implicit (e.g., in the way that Weber’s “The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism” can be seen as a debate with Marx’ ideas). (1) Describe the main issues around which this debate revolves and justify why it is one of the most fruitful for the discipline. (2) Outline the different perspectives on the debate, and point out the strengths and limitations of each. (3) Articulate which perspective(s) you favor and support your stance. (4) Elaborate on how you think sociologists should resolve this debate so as to move sociological knowledge forward.

**Part C**

5. What are the most important contributions theory can offer to sociological knowledge? Elaborate on the potential of sociological theory to enrich research, the constraints within which it must necessarily work, and the limits to its potential.
6. Is there such thing as progress in sociological theory, and if so, what does it consist in? Use examples from the list to defend your position.