

Theories of Social Order
SOC 314
John Jay College of Criminal Justice
Essay II
Contemporary Paradigms

This essay assignment is intended to evaluate:

- a) your comprehension of the overall approach of each of the three contemporary paradigms in sociological theory;
- b) your ability to apply our theoretical concepts and approaches to issues you are interested in;
- c) your ability to connect these paradigms to classical theory.

Instructions

Email the exam to mtramontano@jjay.cuny.edu by 11:59pm on Wednesday, November 4.

- **Follow the structure on p. 2:**
 - *An introductory paragraph should introduce the social problem/phenomenon and foreshadow how the three theoretical paradigms will illuminate its different aspects.*
 - *The body should include a minimum of 1 paragraph per theoretical framework (if you only write one paragraph on the framework itself, at least the last two sentences should be about its roots in classical theory).*
 - *A concluding paragraph should make a general statement about how various sociological theories can help facilitate understanding of different views on one social problem/phenomenon.*

Outline

1. Choose any social problem or phenomenon and clearly articulate exactly what you are talking about. Foreshadow the ways each framework will shed light and enhance understanding of the problem/phenomenon.
2. Explain what a structural-functionalist might say about the problem/phenomenon in general to demonstrate you understand the overall perspective of the framework. Next, list 3 functions the social problem/phenomenon serves in fostering social order, social solidarity, or social stability. (You are not required to employ any specific ideas from Parsons or Merton, but you may.)
 - a. Trace your response back to at least one idea from a classical theorist. Be specific about the classical concept and how it relates to your problem/phenomenon.
3. Explain what a conflict theorist might say about the problem/phenomenon in general to demonstrate you understand the overall perspective of the framework. Next, identify at least one source of conflict and explain who benefits and who loses within the relevant social order when it comes to the problem/phenomenon. (You are not required to employ any specific ideas from Gramsci, Mills, or the Critical Theorists, but you may.)
 - a. Trace your response back to at least one idea from a classical theorist. Be specific about the classical concept and how it relates to your problem/phenomenon.
4. Explain what a symbolic interactionist might say about the problem/phenomenon in general to demonstrate you understand the overall perspective of the framework. Next, explain more specifically one of the following, 1) how different individuals might experience the problem or phenomenon, 2) the role of symbols, experiences, and interaction in interpretations of the problem/phenomenon, 3) the influence on others' perceptions once someone has been labeled as part of the problem/phenomenon, 4) or what a study by a symbolic interactionist to better understand the problem or phenomenon might look like and why. (You are not required to employ any specific ideas from Goffman or Hochschild, but you may.)
 - a. Trace your response back to at least one idea from a classical theorist. Be specific about the classical concept and how it relates to your problem/phenomenon.
5. Provide a general statement about how various sociological theories can help facilitate understanding of different views on one social problem/phenomenon.

Contemporary Paradigms Grading Rubric

- Introduction and Conclusion are all or nothing, you earned the point or not
 - Introductions must carefully and precisely formulate the social problem or phenomenon
 - Conclusions must comment on how studying one problem from multiple angles can lend significant insights and understanding
- Paradigms Paragraphs
 - 3 points – significant and substantive application of the framework
 - 2 points – multiple indications of comprehension/dimensions of application
 - 1.5 points – an indication you grasp the framework, without fulfilling every component of the paragraph from the outline
 - 1 point – an indication you grasp the framework, but with several problems/inaccuracies
- Classical Roots Paragraphs
 - 1 points – significant and substantive demonstration of connections, no inaccuracies or ambiguities
 - .5 point – something that indicates you grasp the classical idea and its connection to the contemporary paradigm
 - 0.25 point – you identified the right classical theorists even if you do not accurately explain the classical idea or the connections

Total Grade – /15

Satisfactory Introduction – /1

Structural Functionalism – /3

Classical Root of SF – /1

Conflict Theory – /3

Classical Root of Conflict – /1

Symbolic Interactionism – /3

Classical Root of SI – /1

Satisfactory Conclusion – /1

Overall Quality - /1