There will be two in-class exams, “Day One” and “Day Two”, each lasting four hours. Students will answer two questions on each day, from around 6-8 questions.

Day One will involve students answering one question related to contemporary theory and one on classical theory. Day Two will be focused on the student’s area of specialization. To get a “pass with distinction” all four answers across both days will have to be excellent/grade “A” answers.

The Area Leader will prepare a core reading list for Day One that will cover both contemporary and classical sociological theory for all students taking Theory Comps. The Day Two reading list will be generated by the student in consultation with the Chair of the exam committee. The comps committee will consist of 3-4 faculty who will oversee both Day One and Day Two exams. Where there is a pressing reason (e.g. highly focused subspeciality) for Day Two that goes beyond the expertise of the committee, two separate committees may be established, one for each day. The Area Leader will normally also be the Chair of the exam committee(s) but again, where there is a good reason for another faculty member to chair the committee, the Area Leader in consultation with the student may ask another faculty member to chair the comps committee and report back at the end of the process to the Area Leader.

Within two weeks of the exam students will receive a written summary of how they did on their exams from the Area Leader – collated from comments from the committee members and/or chair of the committee – and their grade. Students will be able to take Theory Area comps twice - in other words students will have one chance to re-take the exam if they fail it the first time around. If the second exam results in a fail grade then students will be deemed to have failed their Theory Area comps and no subsequent attempts will be allowed. Finally, the core reading list for Day One will be available for students the summer before the academic year of comps so that students can begin to read ahead and prepare for Day One.
Theory Area Comprehensive Exams 2010-11

For Day One, students should consider the following three points when reading the set texts: (1) How does the text under study fit within the general oeuvre of the social theorist? (2) What are the major critiques of the book? (3) What has been the contribution of the text (and by extension the social theorist) to sociological theory? In other words, while students should focus their Day One reading on the texts themselves, students should also be able to locate each text within a broader sociological universe.

Theory Area Comprehensive Exams Reading List 2010-11: Day One Classical Theory

Theory Area Comprehensive Exams Reading List 2010-11: Day One Contemporary Theory


Note: when working with texts not originally published in English, use the latest translations (indicated above) or the original version where language skills permit. Similarly, for contemporary texts that have been revised, use the more recent version.

Revised: July 6th 2010