

**COMPREHENSIVE EXAM in  
RACE/ETHNICITY  
Spring 2009**

***CORE (BOTH REQUIRED)***

1. Contemporary theorists of race and ethnicity debate whether it is race or class (or both) that best explain social inequality. Drawing on at least two theoretical traditions in the research literature, discuss the contours of this debate, especially as it pertains to the life chances of racial/ethnic minorities. What is your position on this debate?
2. One critique of quantitative scholarship on race and ethnicity has been the lack of adequate and clear measurement. The solution in many instances has been to lump individuals under umbrella terms (e.g., White or Black). What are race and ethnicity? How have the definitions of these concepts changed since the turn of the last century? What are two measurement issues that researchers must grapple with in order to produce research that has clear implications for understanding group differences? Describe and explain two ways that researchers have (or could) deal with the issues you describe.

***EXTENDED (Answer two of the questions below)***

1. How effectively does the “prejudice-causes-discrimination” thesis, the most common explanation of race/ethnic inequality, explain the contemporary experiences of racism? In your answer (a) compare and contrast the initial and current formulations of prejudice, discrimination, and their relationships, and (b) analyze how the “prejudice-causes-discrimination” thesis has been used in research to explain racism towards African Americans.
2. Since the election of Barack Obama as President, some in the popular media claim the US is now a “post-racial” society. As a sociologist of race and ethnicity, do you agree with such a claim? Why or why not? Please draw exhaustively on existing scholarly work (i.e. the reading list) to support your argument.
3. How can we best explain the racial differences in the occupations held and the race gap in earnings? In your answer[a] summarize the race differences found in current research documents for at least European Americans, African Americans, and Latino Americans, [b] identify the factors and/or mechanisms in the current research and theories that create and maintain these race differences, and [c] develop your own “best” explanation of occupational and earning differences by race in a way that assesses the current research and explanations.
4. Sociologists routinely refer to race as a social construction. Classifying race as a social construction implicitly indicates that the meaning of the race changes over time; yet, being a racial minority in the United States has been consistently and highly correlated with reduced life chances for hundreds of years. With the implications of being a racial minority so constant, how is race a social construction? Does this changing meaning have implications for structural outcomes? For individual outcomes?