

### Brief Answers to Third Mid-Term

All questions are graded on a 10-point scale. Scores on Part A (questions 1-3) are then multiplied by 4, since these are worth 40 points each and those on Part B (questions 4 or 5) are multiplied by 2, since they are worth 20 points. Below is a summary of the key points that we looked for in deciding your grade. By comparing your exam with the answers below you should be able to see what you may have left out or gotten wrong. Please speak with the TA if you have questions about your exam. If you wish to make an appointment with the TA, his email address is on the course web page and the syllabus.

**1. (a = 2 points) What does Weber mean by “innerworldly asceticism” (also translated as this-worldly asceticism) and what does he mean by calling this the “spirit” of modern capitalism?**

Innerworldly asceticism is a form of economic motivation that combines: (i) a passionate pursuit of unlimited wealth, with (ii) a renunciation of worldly pleasure through the consumption of wealth. Weber believes that this was the defining type of subjectivity or system of beliefs and values that motivated the reorganization of production to maximize efficiency and profits, and high levels of savings and reinvestment.

**(b = 2 points) How does innerworldly asceticism differ from the typical types of asceticism and the typical types of economic motives that prevail in traditional or precapitalist societies?** In traditional society asceticism (the renunciation of pleasure) was typically associated with the withdrawal from worldly economic pursuits (e.g., the monastery). In such societies the quest for wealth was more limited, was motivated mainly by the desire for consumption, and was counterbalanced by an interest in minimizing work.

**(c = 4 points) According to Weber, what are (or were) the psychological consequences of the belief in Calvinist Protestantism (the “Protestant ethic”)?** The Calvinist doctrine of predestination was a source of extreme anxiety among believers and led them to strive for economic success as a possible “sign” of their salvation, while Calvinism’s rejection of worldly pleasures led them to avoid luxury and save their wealth.

**(d = 2 points) According to Weber, how and why were these beliefs important for the rise of capitalism in Western Europe?** These psychological motivations were crucial, according to Weber, for the initial “take-off” of capitalism in Western Europe. Weber argued that Protestant religion served as a catalyst for the transition toward capitalist forms of economic motivation and behavior and explains why capitalism emerged in Western Europe at a certain point in history and not elsewhere.

**2. (a = 4 points) Clarify what Weber means by “bureaucracy” by citing at least four distinct characteristics of the bureaucratic official and the terms under which he/she exercises the duties of his/her office.** Bureaucracy is defined by (1) official positions are organized in a hierarchical structure of authority; (2) official actions are bound by written rules and regulations; (3) officials have limited and well-defined spheres of competence and authority; (4) officials are selected on the basis of technical skills or qualifications; (5) officials are salaried and do not “own” their jobs; (6) official positions constitute a stage in an individual’s career, which ties them to the institution and motivates them by the promise of promotion.

**(b = 2 points) Why does bureaucracy become increasingly widespread, according to Weber?** The spread of bureaucracy is based on its superiority as an efficient means of large-scale organization. Weber believes it is the only form of organization capable of the immense tasks of coordination necessary in modern industrial capitalism.

**(c = 2 points) What does Weber see as the negative consequences of the spread of bureaucracy and its distinctive form of rationality?** Weber speaks of the spread of bureaucracy (and associated forms of rationality) as an “iron cage.” He believes that it undermines some of the fundamental values of Western society (individualism, spontaneity, autonomy of action) in the name of increasing efficiency. He also argues that the focus on the ever more efficient selection of means (formal rationality) tends to obscure or displace a concern with the ultimate ends of human action (substantive rationality).

**(d = 2 points) Does Weber see socialism as a possible solution to the problem of bureaucracy? Why or why not?** Weber does not see socialism as a solution to the problem of bureaucracy. If anything, the expanding range of administrative tasks, especially those related to the need for economic planning and coordination, would create an even higher degree of bureaucracy.

**3. Define and clarify the distinctive social processes, institutions, or forms of action that are associated with three dimensions of social inequality and social conflict identified by Weber and give an example of each. (a = 2 points)** **Classes** are social groups that experience common “life chances” or income opportunities based on the market return to such assets such as labor, skills, and different forms of property (e.g., capitalists, small business owners, skilled workers, unskilled workers).

**(b = 3 points)** **Status groups** are social groups that are ranked in terms of their social honor or prestige and typically have high levels of social interaction among themselves and practice a common lifestyle (e.g., racial or ethnic groups, distinguished professions, members of “high society”).

**(c = 2 points)** **Parties** are voluntary organizations that form (sometimes on a class basis, sometimes on the basis of status groups, and sometimes purely as opportunistic coalitions) for the purpose of acquiring control over powerful institutions like the state (e.g. the Democratic or Republican Parties).

**(d = 2 points)** **Compare and contrast Weber’s views on the different forms of social inequality and social conflict with Marx’s concept of class and the struggle between classes.** Marx emphasizes the primacy of class inequality in producing social conflict and social change. Weber views class divisions as important, but does not believe that they are necessarily more important than status or party divisions.

**(e = 1 point)** **How does this difference between Marx and Weber influence their views on the prospects for the emergence of a “class conscious” working class that is united in defense of their common economic interests?** Contrary to Marx’s expectations that the working class would unify and around their common economic interests, Weber denies that people are primarily motivated by economic interests. They also pursue status and power, and status divisions and party allegiances weaken the unity of classes.

**4. From the standpoint of their subjective meaning or motivation, explain what Weber means by each of the following types of social action. (a = 2 points)** **Purposive-rational action** calculates and selects among different means according to which is best or most efficient in attaining a given end.

**(b = 2 points)** **Value-rational action** is chosen because it is consistent with moral or ethical values.

**(c = 2 points)** **Affective action** is determined by the emotional state of the actor.

**(d = 2 points)** **Traditional action** is determined by the actor’s habitual or customary ways of behaving.

**(e = 2 points)** **Which type of social action tends to become more prevalent in modern society?** Purposive rational action tends to become more prevalent in modern society — a trend that Weber calls “rationalization.”

**5. (a = 2 points)** **What does Weber mean by “legitimate” authority?** Authority is “legitimate” when it is accepted as right and proper and obeyed out of consent rather than because of the threat of force or sanctions.

**Explain the underlying motive for obedience that characterizes each of the three types of legitimate authority identified by Weber and give an example of each. (b = 2 points)** **Traditional authority** is based on the belief in the validity or sacred quality of long-standing traditions (e.g. a monarchy or rule by village elders).

**(c = 2 points)** **Rational-legal authority** is based on a belief in the legality of the rules or laws and of the officials who enforce those rules or laws (e.g., a judge, elected official or police officer).

**(d = 2 points)** **Charismatic authority** is based on devotion to the sacred or super-human qualities of an extraordinarily charismatic leader (e.g., a Gandhi or a Hitler).

**(e = 2 points)** **Which type of authority tends to become more prevalent in modern society?** Rational-legal authority (exemplified in bureaucracy) tends to become more prevalent in modern society.