1. The Social Construction of the Individual
2. Claim/Conventional Wisdom
3. individual is:

a. separate biological organism

b. separate psychological entity

c. a separate person who:

i.has the capacity to shape his/her life by making choices and taking action

ii. responsible for success or failure

d. *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe

2. individual and society

1. individual(s) exist in nature prior to any form of social relation
2. except competition in struggle for survival
3. society is a secondary phenomenon; primary phenomenon is individual

3. individual and human nature

a. competition is not just human condition

b. human nature: all human beings are greedy and self-interested.

4. society needs to be organized around this understanding of the human nature and the individual

5. freedom is highest value: freedom to pursue self-interests

6. institutions need to be organized towards this end

a. free market system

b. democracy

B. Individual is economic, social, political, “scientific,” and ideological construction

1. Free market and social construction of the individual

a. forced people off the land

b. destroyed traditional communities and relationships

c. people to cities

d. situation of person in new urban/industrial environment

i. dependent upon himself/herself for survival

ii. survival =s sell his/her labor power in market

iii. in competition with others

e. Marx’s “Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts”

i. alienation

ii. “individual” is alienated from species being

2. marriage and the “individual”

C. Individual as a political/legal construction

1. Liberal democracy and political rights

a. polity is composed of citizens

b. individual with civil rights (“rights bearing persons”)

2. Liberal democracy and legal rights

* 1. “life, liberty and property”
  2. laws that protect individual property rights

D.Individual as a scientific construction

1.Freud and the social construction of the psyche

a. self-contained psychic entity

b. id generates psychic energy

2.Craniometry

a. hereditarian theory of unitary intelligence

b. intelligence is a thing that is an essential characteristic each individual

c. can be quantified/measured

E. ”Individual” as a Cultural Construction

1. Religion: Reformation and the idea of the individual

a. Martin Luther: “individual”

i. individual stands before God alone

ii. individual is saved by faith through grace

iii. previously

salvation occurred within set of social

relationships

saved by the intervention of church and priests

and good works (defined and recognized by community)

b. Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism

i. breakdown of feudal world view raised question of knowing if or whether one were saved

ii. God must know

iii. success in this world-newly emerging capitalist system is good indication

iv. individual success = salvation

2. Philosophy

a. Descartes

i. The breakdown of the “old” world and emergence of “new”

ii. Question: How can I be certain of anything?

iii. conclusion: *Cogito Ergo Sum*

iv. birth of modern philosophy and birth of philosophical understanding of individual: consciousness (res cogitans) embodied (res extensa).

v. three crucial points

*cogitos* are separate from world and others

dualism: consciousness is valued

everything else is matter in motion (cultural assumption of modern science)

b. Hobbes, Locke, Hume (British Enlightenment)

i. in nature: free, autonomous, competitive individual (equal)

ii. these characteristics reflect natural law

iii. society needs to be organized according to natural law

iv. individual rights that guaranteed freedom with one limit

v. also guarantee individual ownership of property (private property0

3. Sociology: Social Darwinism

4. U.S.

a. “Rags to Riches”: Horatio Alger Jr.

b. “Rugged Individualism”