I. Assumptions of Classical Social Theory

1. History as explanation
   1. universal history
   2. all societies: stages or evolution

B. Faith in Reason

1. Positivism
   1. laws of cause and effect
   2. empiricism

c. quantifiable, predictable and controllable

1. Knowledge as liberation
   1. physical sciences and liberation from forces of nature
   2. human sciences and liberation from superstition, opinion, emotion
2. Nature

a. needs to be dominated and controlled

* 1. matter in motion

b. human beings: Lords of the Earth

1. Questions that needed to be explained
   1. social order
   2. social change

II. Classical Social Evolutionism

A. Social Evolutionism was central to most classical social

Theorists

B. Most believed

1. all societies followed a sequence of stages

2. sequence was hierarchical: superior/inferior

3. European countries ranked highest on the scale

than non-European countries

4. Lamarckian

a. simple to complex

b. goal: perfection

C. Characteristics

1. inevitable, linear, and irreversible

2. movement: simple to complex (often smaller to

larger)

3. teleological: perfection as end state

4. analogous to stages of growth in an organism

a. stability

b. change

5. social progress (not just complexity, but better)

D. As Science

1. evidence

a. all societies

b. end state

2. unexamined assumptions: ethnocentrism

3. function as ideology: colonialism and White Man’s Burden

4. basis for biological determinism; idea of race