I. Classical Social Theory

A. Theory: a generalized set of statements or propositions that explain phenomena.

B. Scientific theory

1. above A.

2. explanation through use of empirical method

a. observation and induction

b. discovery

c. verifiable and/or falsifiable

3. instrumental

a. prediction and control

b. technology

c. “learning the laws of nature = domination of nature”

4. early natural scientific theories:

a. knowledge = laws of physical world

a. examples

i. physics

ii. biology

iii. chemistry

C. Classical Social theorists

1. belief

a. theories were scientific

b. theories were “necessary”

2. empirical method to social phenomena

a. observation and induction: social world, history

b. verifiable and falsifiable

3. instrumental value

4. examples

a. Comte’s Law of Three Stages

b. Marx Theory of Surplus Value

D. What is not a scientific theory?

1. religion: creation stories

2. personal theories: all people are greedy

3. ideology is a system of ideas that

a. conceals and/or legitimates unequal and unjust social arrangements

b. perpetuates those social arrangements

c. acts as a means of social control

d. examples

i. religion

ii. fascism

iii. manifest destiny

iv. free market capitalism

E. Classical Theory: Classical Period

1. Mid-1700s to 1920

2. Great Transformation: Enlightenment to WWI