1. The Social Construction of the Individual
2. The conventional wisdom that the “individual” by nature is independent, autonomous, and competitive is a political, economic, social and cultural construction.
3. Claim/Conventional Wisdom

1. in nature, before societies, there were individuals.

2. individuals in nature reveal human nature

a. autonomous

b. competitive

c. free

3 society is a secondary phenomenon; primary phenomenon are individuals

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

5. freedom is the environment that allows individuals to achieve self-interest

6. freedom is the market

7. U.S. “rugged individualism”

1. 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. Historians

1. Scientists of the past: historical comparative studies
2. Searched for and discover of human nature.

c. That which didn’t fit was judged: inferior, backward etc.

d. White Man’s Burden

4. Psychology

1. Self-contained psychic entity
2. Intelligence

5. Craniometry

a. hereditarian theory of unitary intelligence

b. intelligence is single entity that can be measured

6. Literature

1. Daniel Defoe: Robinson Crusoe
2. Horatio Alger
3. Individual as a political/legal construction
4. Liberal democracy and political rights: “rights bearing person” (citizens)
5. Economic rights/responsibilities
   1. equality of opportunity: pursue self-interest in market place

b. responsibility to accept personal blame for failure

1. Individual as economic construction
2. Wage laborer
   1. individual sells labor power in market place

b. individual receives money in exchange

1. Competing against other workers
2. Marx’s “Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts”

4. Smith’s “The Wealth of Nations”

D. Social

1. Destruction of community and social relations
2. Isolated and alone in new urban environment
3. “Individual” is a euphemism for socially isolated, alienated and alone.