I. Theory

A. Origin of Social Theory

1. Western Society: Great Transformation

a. From: Feudalism (Middle Ages)

i. feudal political system: monarchy

ii. feudal economic arrangement

iii. knowledge: Church dogma (revelation)

iv. place: Great Chain of Being

b. Social Change

i. Protestant Reformation

ii. Science and technology: Newton, Galileo

iii. industrial revolution

iv. political revolutions

v. Enlightenment

c. To: Modern Western Society

i. new forms of political organization: democracy

ii. new forms of economic organization:

iii. new forms of social organization

iv.. new world view: reason, science, progress, individual

d. new world and theory

i. new world needs to be explained

ii. new world can be explained by the application of the scientific method

iii. explanation is valuable

leads to knowledge (Truth)

leads to progress

B. Classical Theory

1. definition: a theory is a coherent set of propositions that explains universal laws (Newton’s laws of motion)

2. theory construction is rule-governed

a. application of scientific method: empiricism

b. scientific community: verification and falsification

3. assumptions

a. mind independent reality

i. observer

ii. objective world

b. objective world governed by natural laws

(aka laws of cause and effect) which are universal

c. scientific method leads to discovering facts about

objective world

d. factual knowledge leads to understanding universal laws

e. society is governed by universal laws

f. Auguste Comte: Law of Three Stages

4. theory construction has a instrumental value

a. scientific theories= power over nature

b. natural science

i. genetic theory

ii. atomic theory

iii. theory of gravity

iv. electromagnetic theory

c. social theory = power to shape society =progress

II. Classical Social Theory: Assumptions

A. Laws of nature

1. universal

2. include human societies

3. discoverable through science

B. Method: positivism

1. empiricism and determinism

2. human social world

C. History

1. progress

2. social evolutionism

i. all societies follow a sequence of stages

linear and irreversible

simple to complex (small to large)

analogous: growth and development of organism

ii. human society is naturally progressing: telos

iii. European countries progressed furthest

D. Grand Narrative

III. Contemporary Theory

1. Skepticism
   1. universal laws and human society
   2. scientific method
   3. history as progress
   4. science as progress

* 1. social evolutionism
  2. knowledge and truth

7. Grand Narrative

B. Examples

1. Post-colonial theories
2. Post-structural theories

3. Post-Modern theories

4. Feminist theories

5. Neo-Marxism