

University of Florida  
Criminology, Law and Society  
Law & Society Area Comprehensive Examination  
April 12, 2008

THEORY-ORIENTED QUESTIONS (Answer one of the following):

1. Choose one of the classical general social science theoretical perspectives on law and society (e.g., that of Weber, Marx, Durkheim, or someone else of your choosing). Briefly discuss its basic premises and then review more specifically how that perspective deals with law. Identify several key hypotheses about law and society that are derived from the perspective. Show how that perspective continues to influence research and/or modern explanations of law and society.
2. Definitions of law frequently incorporate emphases on coercion and legitimacy. Write an essay that discusses the importance (or unimportance) of either or both as they apply to law. Are both needed to conceptualize law? Is one more important than the other? Do they relate to each other? How do they relate to compliance?
3. Select a modern theory in law and society/psychology and law and summarize it. What are its basic assumptions? What is its scope? What are its key concepts and propositions? What are some hypotheses that are derived from it? How well does the research support it? What are its policy implications? What are the theory's strengths and weaknesses?

OTHER LAW AND SOCIETY QUESTIONS (Select two of the following to answer).

4. In the past years, DNA testing has resulted in the exoneration of over 200 wrongfully convicted citizens. What are the major factors that have led to these wrongful convictions? In your answer, you should name the factor and then explain the research demonstrating that it has contributed to the problem of wrongful convictions. What policy recommendations (based on the research) would you make to reduce the problem?
5. Many research programs in law and society/psychology and law are designed to include goals of informing public policy decisions. Choose two effective programs of research in our field that have directly influenced public policy. Describe each of the research programs and justify why you selected them. Explain the effects the programs have had on public policy and discuss the fidelity between the research findings and the public policy practices they influenced.
6. One major area of research in legal psychology addresses how jurors make decisions. First, describe the major research in this area. Second, use the existing literature to answer the research question: Are jurors effective/good decision

makers? You should integrate the research explaining how jurors make decisions with research directly testing the assumptions underlying the research question to inform your analysis of whether jurors are effective decision makers. Last, offer some suggestions (backed by research) for improving juror's decisions.

7. Select a line of research that illustrates the problems and promises associated with the comparative study of law and society or psychology and law. Write an essay that reviews the research and use that research to show the problems that comparative research faces and demonstrates the kinds of insights that we can gain from cross-cultural comparisons. Discuss how our cultural perspectives affect comparative research, what we need to do to generalize our findings across cultures, and how much we can apply lessons learned from other cultures to our own.
8. Write an essay about the effectiveness of law to produce change. Under what conditions (if ever) can law change things? Choose at least one line of research looking at an individual level phenomenon (e.g., behavior, attitude) and at least one line of research looking at a group-level phenomenon (e.g., rate of behavior, group norm) to support your arguments about when and how law can be an effective agent of change or why it is not an effective agent of change.