

SAMPLE HANDOUT**Important Political Thinkers And Definitions Related to concept of Power (Theories of Power is separately dealt with)**

(How much of these should be remembered and how to use these details in Answers will be dealt with in classes)

Hobbes defined power as the ability to secure well-being or personal advantage ‘to obtain some future apparent Good

Lasswell’s ‘Theory Of Elites’ wherein he highlighted the “distribution of values” as the base point of the political process became the source point of the majority of American students of politics, and Political Science came to be treated as the science of power

Steven Lukes, in his book “Power: A Radical View (1974)” talks about three faces of power : Getting things done, Agenda Setting and Opinion Changing and Building.

Important Thinkers :**Thomas Hobbes :**

He was an English philosopher, considered to be one of the founders of modern political philosophy. Hobbes is best known for his 1651 book *Leviathan*, which expounded an influential formulation of social contract theory.

Robert Dahl :

He established the pluralist theory of democracy—in which political outcomes are enacted through competitive, if unequal, interest groups—and introduced “polyarchy” as a descriptor of actual democratic governance. An originator of “empirical theory” and known for advancing behavioralist characterizations of political power, Dahl’s research focused on the nature of decision making in actual institutions, such as American cities

His influential early books include *A Preface to Democratic Theory* (1956), *Who Governs?* (1961),

Michel Foucault:

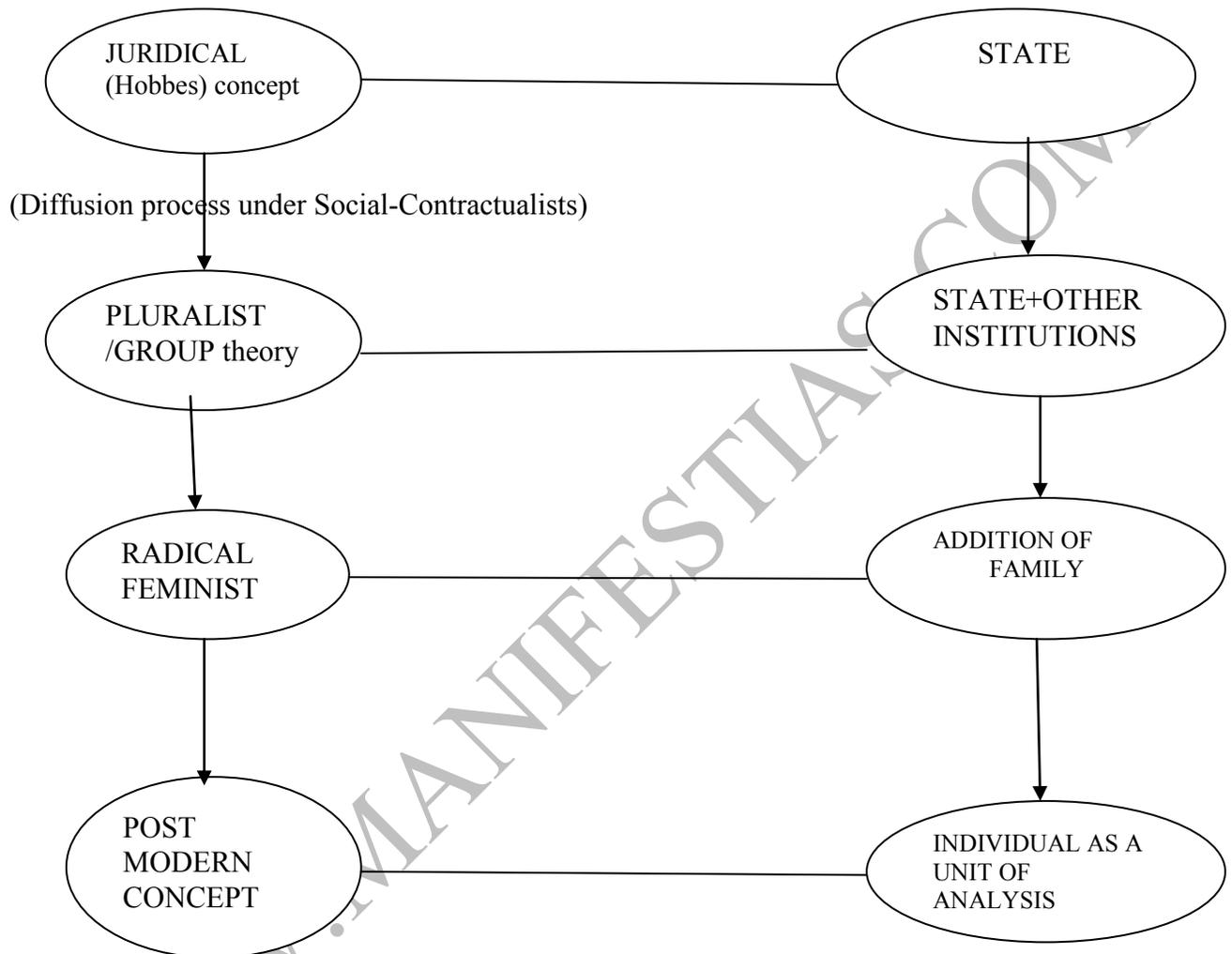
Foucault’s theories primarily address the relationship between power and knowledge, and how they are used as a form of social control through societal institutions. Though often cited as a post-structuralist and postmodernist, Foucault rejected these labels, preferring to present his thought as a critical history of modernity.

Notable works *Madness and Civilization* (1961)
 The Order of Things(1966)
 Discipline and Punish(1975)
 The History of Sexuality (1976)

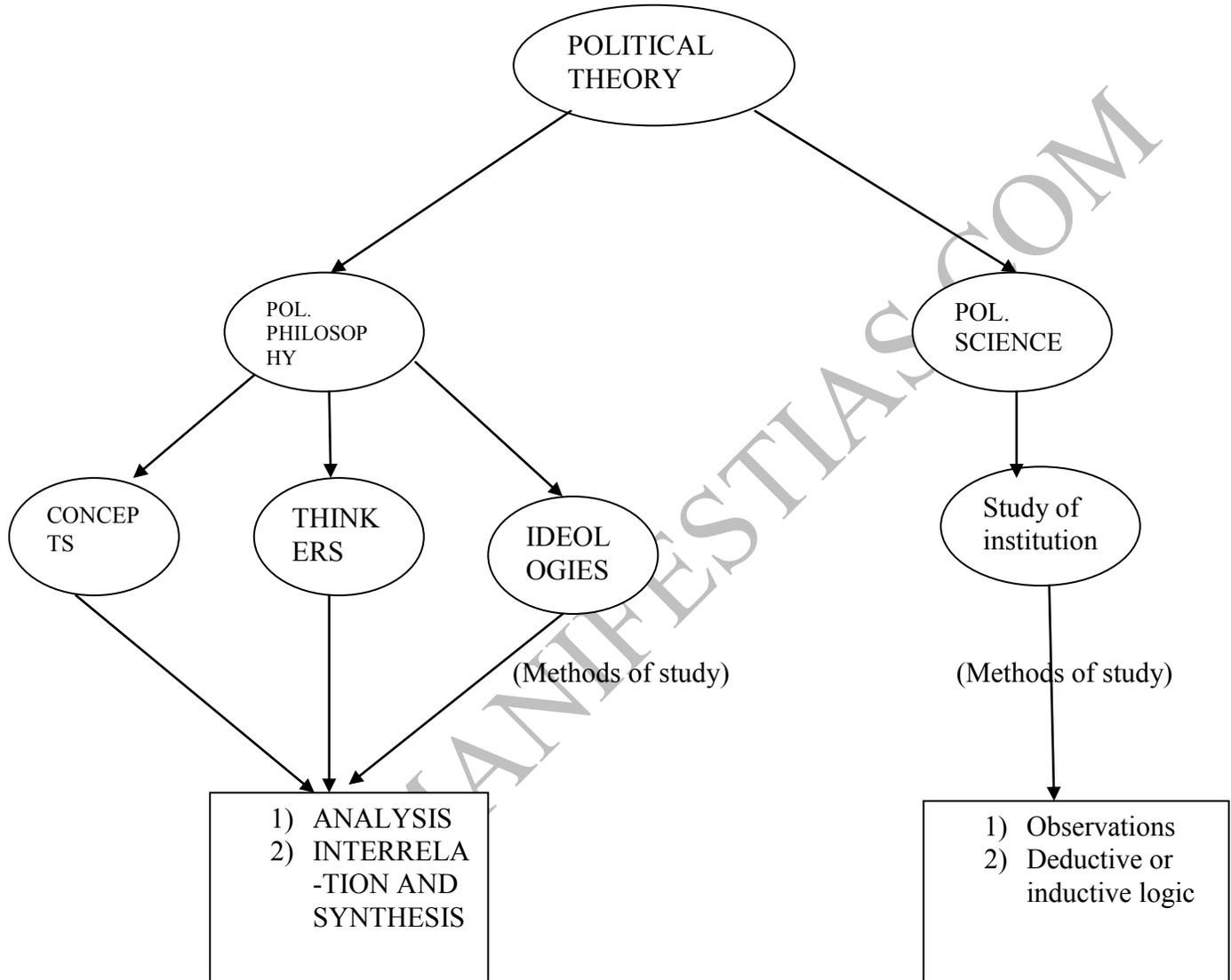
EVOLUTION OF POWER AS A CONCEPT

EVOLUTION

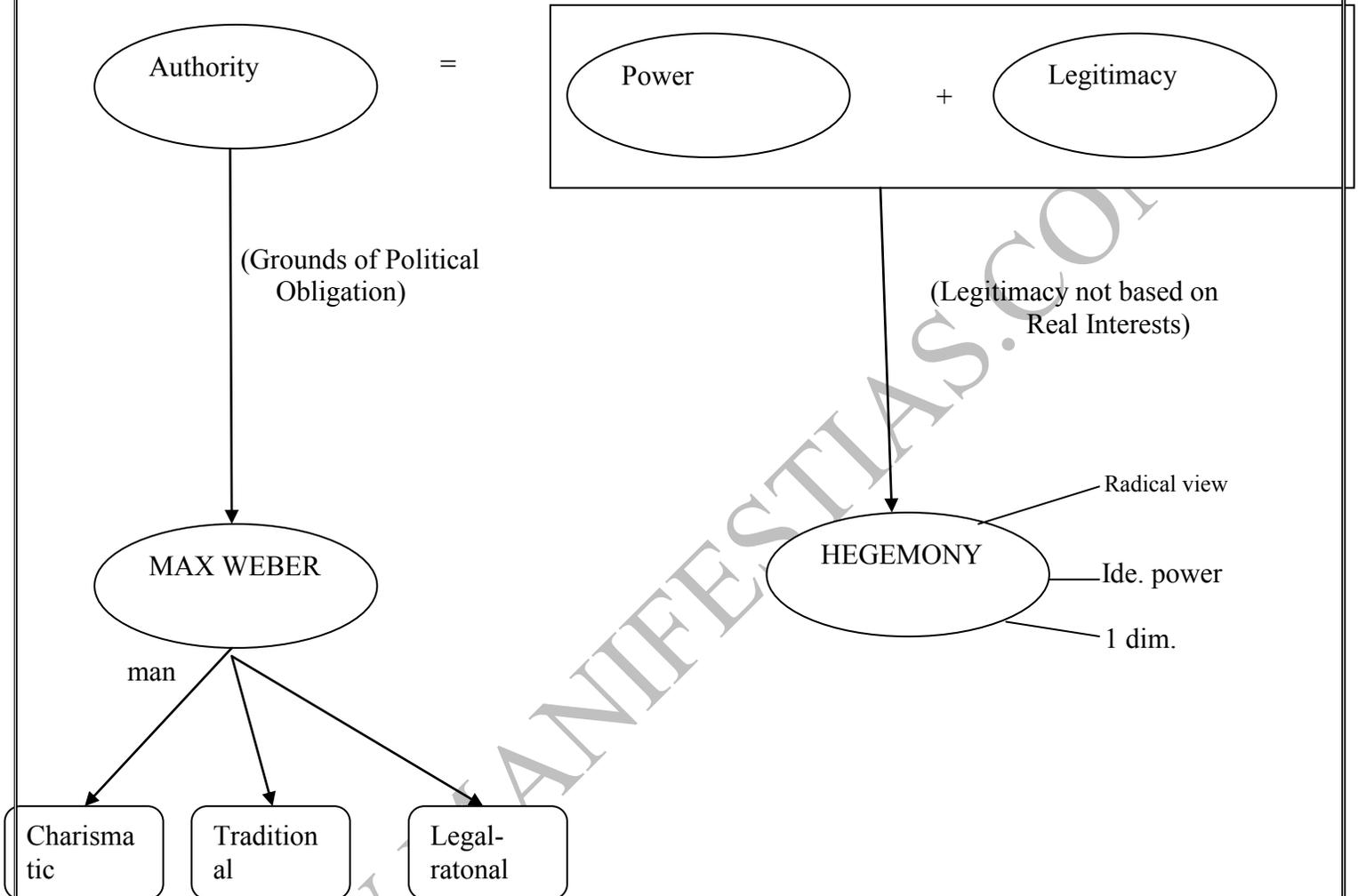
SCOPE OF DISCIPLINE



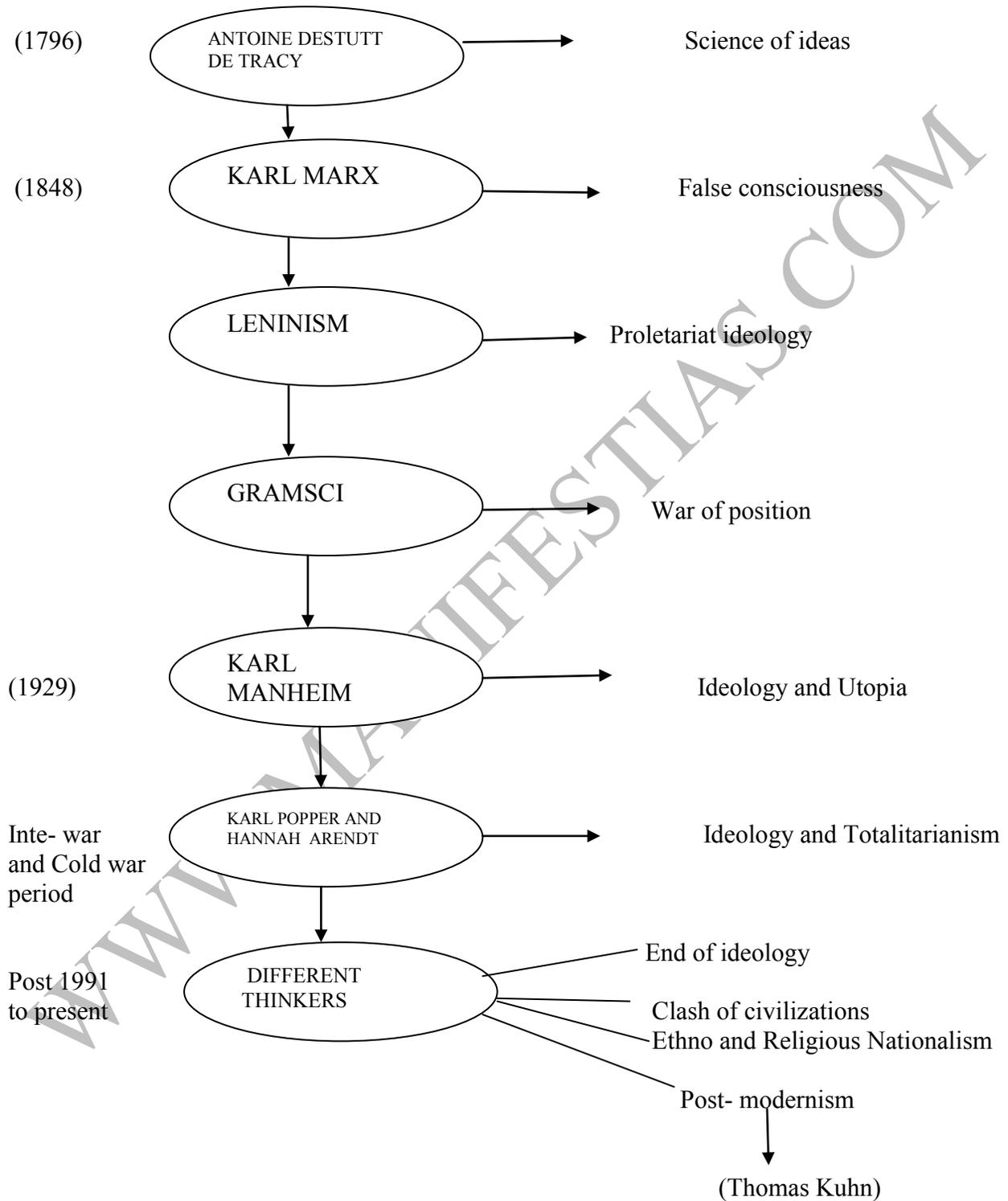
SCOPE OF THE DISCIPLINE



POWER, AUTHORITY AND LEGITIMACY



EVOLUTION OF THE CONCEPT OF IDEOLOGY



Model Question and Answer (Class test – Short Note type)

1. Comment on the concept and importance of Power in Political Science (150 words)

Components of the answer:

- A. Introduction (Lack of agreement on a single definition giving different views of different Thinkers Thinkers)
- B. Steven Lukes concept of Power with three faces
- C. Interrelation: Compare Power with Authority and Hegemony
- D. Evolution of power (Include the flow chart). Summarize the flow chart in a paragraph
- E. Critical evaluation : Importance of Power in Political Science

Answer :

Power as a concept is central to Political Science similar to money in Economy. But there exists a lot of disagreement among thinkers over what exactly Power is. It gets primacy in the discipline with Hobbes who defines it as the ability to secure well-being or personal advantage ‘to obtain some future apparent Good.’ Such a definition is too narrow. Steve Lukes in his book *A Radical View* gives a broad definition of power by giving three dimensions to it. He says that power performs three important functions

1. Compliance – getting an objective done against the wish of a person
2. Political Agenda setting
3. Manipulation

A better idea of Power can be obtained by Interrelation with Authority and Hegemony. Power does not include the aspect of legitimacy as compliance though exists but is against the wish of the person. But when legitimacy is obtained Power becomes Authority. And when the legitimacy though obtained is not based on the real interests of the people Power acquires the character of Hegemony which was propounded and explained by Gramsci in his *Prison Notebooks*.

Authority = Power + Legitimacy

Hegemony = Power + Legitimacy not based on Real Interests

The nature of Power has altered over a period of time since it was brought to the forefront by Hobbes. After Hobbes the diffusion of Power sets in from State to other institutions. It is held that State is no longer the only authority but many groups are involved in decision making. Chief contributors of such an idea are the Group theorists and Robert Dahl is a prominent figure in it who gives the concept of ‘Polyarchy.’ The diffusion of Power ends with Foucault who gives the Post-Modern concept. Power is now studied as part of social relations. Power in his opinion is diffused and networked like the blood capillaries.

Critical evaluation :

1. Power as a concept gives a distinct identity to Political Science differentiating it from other discipline
2. With changing definition of Power the scope of Political Science has expanded from State to other institutions including family through the call of Personal is Political by Radical Feminists
3. Power now being a process and not an institutionalized concept gives Political Science an interdisciplinary nature (Political Sociology Approach and Political Economy approach)