

Sociology 401 Test #1 Review Sheet

Essay questions. Answers to essay questions will be graded according to two criteria: (1) mastery of the material (i.e., repeating back what you have learned) and (2) applying the material in an interesting way. Four of the following seven essay questions will be on the test. You will select two of them to answer.

1. Write a essay arguing that a contemporary gathering of your choice is a Durkheimian periodic gathering. Be sure to address the crucial components and effects described by Durkheim.
2. Explain Durkheim's concept of the "social fact" and give examples of phenomena studied by contemporary sociologists that are social facts and that aren't social facts. Explain why you believe sociologists should or should not limit their research to social facts.
3. Durkheim claimed that religion is derived from society. Assuming that religions developed elsewhere (e.g., Christianity, Judaism, etc.) hadn't been diffused to the contemporary United States, speculate upon what religion would be developed here. Show your understanding of the key concepts in Durkheim's theory in your answer.
4. In his essay "Estranged Labor," Marx described four types of alienation. (1) Briefly explain each type of alienation. (2) For your current or future job, explain to what extent you are or expect to be alienated. Be sure to discuss all four of Marx's types.
5. Do you agree with C. Wright Mills' argument that our image of U.S. democracy as people freely formulating, discussing, and deciding between viewpoints is a "fairy tale"? Why or why not? Be sure to explain his argument completely, including his discussion of the power elite and the "middle levels" of society.
6. Both Davis & Moore and Wallerstein provide sociological analyses of meritocracy. Give your own analysis of meritocracy in contemporary American society, making sure to address the key points made by the Davis & Moore and Wallerstein. Include what you believe should be done to improve or replace our meritocracy.
7. Overall, has capitalism been good or bad for humankind? Explain your answer by drawing upon (and possibly rejecting) arguments from Wallerstein's "Balance Sheet." Be sure to address at least five of his arguments.

Important ideas to know

Everything from assigned readings or lecture is fair game for the test. Pay special attention to the class overheads, which are available on the class web site. Here are some concepts with which you may want to be familiar:

Seven theory starting points

Durkheim

Theory of suicide and use of the theory in research

Elementary forms of religious life/religious gatherings

Social facts

Mechanical vs. organic solidarity

Structural-functionalism/Talcott Parsons

Robert Merton

Types of functions, deviance as strain, etc.

Davis and Moore's explanation of stratification and Melvin Tumin's critique

Karl Marx

The Communist Manifesto

Labor theory of value

Estranged labor and human potential

Fetishism of commodities

C. Wright Mills on the Power Elite

Zweigenhaft & Domhoff on "The Ironies of Diversity"

Immanuel Wallerstein

Zones of world system

Dependency vs. modernization perspectives

Capitalism as a historical system

The balance sheet

Universalism, racism, sexism

Absolute vs. relative immiseration

Anything else we discuss Wednesday

Readings from Kivisto (Hornsby, Colomy & Greiner, Walsh & Zacharias-Walsh)

Anticipated design of exam

Two essay questions (of four) 40 points (20 per question)

Match the theorist with the quote 36 points (12 questions, 3 points per question)

Multiple choice questions 24 points (12 questions, 2 points per question)

Bonus questions