

Intro Sociology Midterm Essay Topics Fall 2019

Please answer one L3 question OR two L2 questions OR three L1 questions. An L3 answer should be 6-8 paragraphs, an L2 answer should be 3-4 paragraphs, and an L1 answer should be 2-3 paragraphs. Please upload your exam answer(s) to the midterm category by Thursday, October 10, 2019 at 11:59 p.m. Good luck!

L3

- 1) What is the meaning of the social sciences as part of the liberal arts? Describe how sociology meshes with other liberal disciplines and how it contributes to a heightened understanding of the human condition. Explain how sociology is both a social science and a humanities discipline and then discuss why the humanities label tends to get dropped.
- 2) Explain what makes an experiment ethical or unethical and discuss how experiments have been held to increasingly higher standards of ethicality in recent years. Then discuss an example of an ethical experiment (mention safeguards, debriefing, etc.) and explain how it contrasts with an unethical experiment.
- 3) Discuss the difference between popular culture and high culture. Why is there such a thing as “high culture” instead of a lack of distinction between different forms of culture? Furthermore, why is cultural capital associated in part with high culture? What does high culture offer that popular culture does not?
- 4) Describe the roles of nature and nurture in the socialization process. Contrast the extremes of both sides (Nazis [nature] and Soviets [nurture]) and explain why democratic societies tend to take a middle road. Next describe to what extent is nature more important than nurture and to what extent is the opposite true? Provide contrasting examples for the predominance of nature and the predominance of nurture.
- 5) Explain how individuals are actors and actresses whenever in a social setting. Why do we place so much effort on not being socially-discredited? How can stigma (the result of being discredited) cause people to be hypervigilant about how they are perceived in society? What remedies exist for people who have been discredited?
- 6) Explain why the illicit drug trade finds most of its buyers and sellers in disadvantaged sectors of society. What economic considerations might motivate a person to become a drug trafficker? What steps could society take to combat the illicit drug trade outside of the legal system? Note: If you are involved in the illicit drug trade PLEASE DO NOT WRITE ABOUT THAT IN ANSWERING THIS QUESTION.

- 7) Describe how stratification in the United States can be beneficial by creating incentives to excel. Then describe barriers to socioeconomic advancement in the United States and how those barriers create an uneven playing field by which wealthier Americans tend to stay wealthy while impoverished Americans tend to stay impoverished. Finally, describe how access to education can help equalize the playing field.
- 8) Explain why developed countries might want to keep developing countries from advancing economically. What benefits do developed countries get by keeping developing countries in poverty? How do consumers in developed countries gain from cheap labor and cheap raw materials? Finally, will laborers in developing countries ever catch up with consumers in developed countries? Why or why not?

L2

- 1) Describe the progression of sciences from astronomy to physics to chemistry to biology to sociology. Why have they occurred in that order?
- 2) Describe why an experiment to cause unnecessary harm to a subject would be unethical. What role does the Institutional Review Board play in protecting subjects?
- 3) Explain how popular culture in one era can become high culture in another era (think of art as an example)? Why do we differentiate between popular culture and high culture?
- 4) Explain the role of schools and civic organizations in socializing individuals. Do we need these institutions? If so, why so? If not, why not?
- 5) Why is there a common need in nearly every society to have in-groups and out-groups? What benefits does a person feel from being in an in-group and how would they feel towards an out-group?
- 6) Why have there been disparities in sentencing for powder cocaine (often used by affluent Caucasians, lighter sentences) versus crack cocaine (often used by impoverished minorities, heavier sentences)? Explain the roles of race and socioeconomic class on one's treatment by the legal system?
- 7) How do credit cards benefit the affluent who get cash back and other rewards and adversely affect the impoverished who often carry balances? Is it ethical for the affluent to benefit from those rewards when the impoverished pay for them with their interest charges?
- 8) Why do we outsource or offshore the manufacturing of many consumer goods? What social and environmental problems might that cause in developing countries?

L1

- 1) What makes sociology a social science and how does it differ from other social sciences?
- 2) Describe an unethical experiment and why it is unethical.
- 3) What is the role of culture in the advancement of society?
- 4) Explain how people are socialized through the life course.
- 5) Why might someone want to join a countercultural movement?
- 6) How might sociology be useful in the daily life of a police officer?
- 7) Is the American dream of being able to advance economically despite an impoverished background still true today? If so, why so. If not, why not?
- 8) Why might a person born in and living in a developed country not be conscious of the stark inequalities between developed and developing countries?