

Sociology Essays and Classes - Michaelmas 2000

Groups A&B

Admin: You have to write two sociology essays by the end of the term. Overall you have a tight schedule these first two terms, so don't let the work pile up, please (better two adequate-but-written essays than two potentially-brilliant-but-unwritten masterpieces). The defining role in what you 'need to know' is played by the circulated general sociology reading lists; mine these for your essay reading. I return essays with comments, and my report on your performance (in class and essays) is fed to your tutor to form part of the end-of-term report on your progress (but **none** of this is part of the formal assessment for your MSc and DipSW).

Essay Titles

Why is social class such an important determinant of life chances?

What evidence would you use to determine whether Britain was a meritocracy?

'Ethnicity is not, nor is likely to become, a major basis of social organisation and conflict in modern Britain.' Do you agree?

Are structural and labelling theories of deviance contradictory or complementary?

"Social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance" Do they?

Is inequality between men and women inevitable?

How good is the 'fit' between the nuclear family and modern industrial society?

Does sociology have anything useful to say about the occupation of social worker?

Why are some groups healthier than others?

Attached are some past ASS1 exam papers¹ (any of the sociology questions therein would probably be a sensible alternative essay choice).

¹ Notice though that 'sociology' will also appear elsewhere in your assessed work in relation to particular issues.

Classes. In sociology, the classes are run separately from the essays, and are treated as an opportunity for exploratory discussion of issues. I propose structuring the five classes in this series around the following topics:

- 1 'What is sociology?' and 'Social mobility' - the two items interacting
- 2 'Gender (and status)'
- 3 'Professions'
- 4 'Health (and gender)'
- 5 'Race'

For classes other than the first we shall have two presenters to introduce points for discussion. For each class you will be given a bundle of written matter; the expectation is that all will read and come to the class prepared to discuss.. (Though I have provided a default list of topics, if a particular group wishes to examine other sociological issues that should not be a problem.)

Note also that portions of the second year teaching - though not labelled 'sociology' - will inevitably contain much sociological material (you cannot discuss unemployment, mental disorders, poverty, race relations, divorce, so forth, without lapsing into sociology?).

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