

Study Guide for the Midterm Exam

The 100 point exam will include 40 points worth of multiple choice questions covering the readings and lectures. The other 60 points of the exam will come from your answers to two short essay questions based on the readings, lectures, and classroom discussions. You will not have a choice from among the four. At the beginning of the exam period, I will throw a die, and Lady Fortuna will determine your fate.

A word about studying for an exam of this type: it's ok to talk in a very general way with classmates about these prompts or to ask each other clarifying questions about them. It is plainly out of bounds to divvy up the labor by, for example, having four students prepare a thorough answer to one prompt each, then exchanging notes. Somewhere between those two scenarios, cheating commences. Consider that the goal of an exam is to get each student to master the material for himself or herself. If you're undermining that goal, you're cheating. If I catch you cheating, I will (at least) give you a zero for the exam and bring academic dishonesty charges. If the boundaries in this regard aren't clear to you, ask me about them!

Generally speaking, I'm more interested in seeing mastery of the material rather than evidence of memorization of undifferentiated material. Sometimes the essay questions in this course will ask you to pick one side or the other. In such cases, pick one side and stick to your guns. No waffling, please. Saying "both" and then rehearsing everything in your notes that is somehow related to the question does not let me see whether you really understand what we're talking about.

Again, keep in mind that the point of an exam is to get you to cement your understanding of the specific course material, and to document that you've done that. An ill-prepared student could respond to a prompt with a bunch of true statements and no false statements and still fail, because the essay would contain just a bunch of general observations anybody from off the street could come up with. If, for example, you're asked to describe some event in terms of concepts of deviance and social control, about which we all know lots of general stuff already, you had better make specific reference to particular theories, concepts, and findings from SOCI 1310.

Here are the four possible questions for the midterm.

1. Think about the process of socialization in the United States to answer two questions. First, looking back over the past 100 years, what has changed most in terms of the way Americans practice socialization? Second, what is the most important aspect of American socialization that has not changed substantially in the last 100 years?
2. Consider the current controversy over the Trump administration's travel ban for refugees from seven countries. How would a conflict theorist describe and study the ban and controversy? How would a functionalist describe and study the ban and controversy?

3. More than a year ago, Breitbart News editor and alt-right provocateur Milo Yiannopoulos said in interviews that he thought it could be acceptable for an adult to have sex with a 13 year old. After those comments came to wide attention last week, Yiannopoulos was disinvited from a conservative conference, lost a book deal, and was obliged to resign from Breitbart. Discuss this turn of events in terms of sociological understandings of deviance and social control.
4. Write about social stratification and inequality, as we have been using those terms, from the specific perspective of a typical American millennial (i.e., someone who is now 17-37 years old).

The multiple choice questions generally won't be simple vocabulary questions. That was high school. I'm more interested in seeing whether students can apply concepts rather than just rehearse definitions. The kind of superficial memorization that comes with making flash cards will not serve you well here. Below are a few examples from an old exam, to give you a sense of what the multiple choice questions might feel like. These particular questions will not be on your midterm; they're just examples.

1. Which principle of good research methodology would we violate if we used the experiences of recent immigrants to make claims about overall race relations in America?
 - b. classification
 - c. generalizability
 - d. both
 - e. neither
2. You are a middle-aged sociologist interested in studying drug use at teen raves. You attend some raves but find that you are observing far less drug use than you anticipated based on previous research. Perhaps your study is being affected by
 - a. the Hawthorne effect
 - b. the Thomas theorem
 - c. the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis
 - d. the Hubble constant
3. Which was the most important factor promoting the emergence of sociology as a discipline?
 - a. the natural progress of history
 - b. praxis
 - c. political correctness
 - d. the Industrial Revolution
4. You are interested in determining the family dynamics of serial killers. It would make most sense to research this via
 - a. telephone survey
 - b. participant observation
 - c. experiment
 - d. interview