**Introduction to Sociology  
Essay Questions for Unit Exams**

**Unit 1 Exam**

* A topic of interest to sociologists is the problem of drug abuse, both illegal and legal. First, discuss the factors that may account for the problem using the individualistic perspective, and then the factors that may account for the problem using the sociological perspective. Then use each of the three theoretical perspectives in sociology (functionalist, conflict, symbolic interactionist) to analyze this topic. For each perspective, suggest what the view of drug abuse would be, and what would be of interest about the topic.
* Imagine that you are a sociologist researching the topic of marriage, and what leads couples to be satisfied or dissatisfied. In a step-by-step way, describe the process you would go through to carry out your research. Then choose one of the research methods and propose a study you might conduct using that method. Finally, explain how this process would differ from our everyday way of gaining information about people’s satisfaction with marriage.
* Choose three of the research methods presented in the textbook and other course material. For method, describe it briefly, illustrate it with an example, and discuss what we should look for to determine the quality of the research methods.

**Unit 2 Exam**

* Discuss the concepts of ethnocentrism and cultural relativity. In this discussion, be sure to define each term in your own words and present the positive and negative impacts of ethnocentrism. Mention why cultural relativism is important, and give examples. Incorporate examples from the textbook, lecture, article by Miner (the Nacirema) and the Ted Talk (Endangered Cultures) video.
* Discuss what culture is and how it is important to human beings. You should mention where it comes from and why cultures are diverse, why humans require culture, and discuss and illustrate the elements of culture, such as symbols, language, norms, rituals, beliefs, values and artifacts.
* Discuss how people are shaped by socialization. In your discussion, discuss the results of a lack of socialization, the agents of socialization, the theories of socialization, and the impact of socialization throughout the life course.
* Two approaches used by symbolic interactionists are dramaturgy and ethnomethodology. Explain and illustrate these approaches. Include in your discussion what is meant by defining the situation, the social construction of reality, and the unspoken rules of social interaction. Provide examples.
* Define deviance from the sociological perspective. Explain why sociologists claim that deviance is relative, and give examples from the lecture and text.
* Choose two sociological theories of deviance. Discuss how the theory explains deviant behavior, give examples, and present a policy suggested by each theory to reduce deviance.
* How do sociologists approach reducing crime? Describe attempts by society to control deviant behavior, and discuss why these are problematic.
* Explain the importance of groups as a social force. In your discussion, be sure to define and illustrate the types of groups, the operation of social networks, and the group studies of conformity and obedience to authority.
* Define and illustrate the concepts of social structure, social interaction and groups. Give examples to explain how they impact people and their behavior.
* Sociologists argue that social forces (such as culture, socialization, social structure, social interaction, groups, deviance) are very powerful in shaping us. Take the role of a sociologist, and present the case that a sociologist would make to convince people of how important and powerful social forces are in people’s lives. Bring in ideas and examples from at least two of the chapters in the textbook, and any relevant material from lectures, videos and/or websites.

**Unit 3 Exam**

* Explain the important of social class as a social force. Use material from the textbook and other class resources, and refer to both the situation in the U.S. and the global situation. Give examples of how people’s life chances are impacted.
* Explain the extent of and evidence for racial inequality in the U.S. Examine your own group identification, and contrast your experience with that of other groups. Include the concept of white privilege. Refer to what you learned from the McIntosh article, the textbook and lecture material, and videos.
* Discuss the role of ideology in supporting inequality. In doing so, address the following questions: What is an ideology? What is the ideology that supports inequality in the U.S? Who does the ideology benefit, and how does it do so? Who does it put at a disadvantage, and how does it do so? Why do most people believe the ideology when the evidence shows that it is false? Why do sociologists encourage us to challenge the ideology?
* Discuss the consequences of social class in the U.S., and explain how this impacts people. How would sociologists explain why the U.S. has more inequality than other similar nations?
* Contrast individual and institutional discrimination. Explain how institutional discrimination operates, explain the role that power plays, discuss its consequences, and give examples. Your discussion should make clear the difference between the two types of discrimination, and should focus on the impact of institutional discrimination, with clear examples. Incorporate into your response lessons learned from the video *A Class Divided*.
* Discuss the evidence that gender inequality exists in the U.S. Be sure to make clear your understanding of the textbook and other course material on gender inequality and its causes.

**Unit 4 Exam**

* Every society has institutions to meet basic needs, but the actual social arrangements may vary a great deal from one society to another. Choose two of the institutions we have studied and discuss the variations that may occur in terms of how these institutions operate and address societal issues.
* Sociologists may focus on different aspects and issues related to institutions depending on the theoretical perspective used. Choose two of the institutions we have studied, and discuss for each the focus of each perspective and which perspective you think best represents reality. Justify your answers with material from the text and other course material.
* Based on your understanding of the textbook and other course material, describe the major problems facing two of the institutions we have studied. Address possible solutions to these problems, using the sociological perspective.
* Institutions are powerful social forces. For each of the institutions we have studied, explain how that institution impacts our choices and our lives. Provide at least one example for each institution.

**Unit 5 Exam**

* How does social change occur? How do functionalists and conflict theorists view change differently. Include a discussion of the stages of social movements, and illustrate with an example.
* Choose two of the people who were prominent figures in *There Are No Children Here*. Using the sociological perspective, explain why their lives are the way they are.
* Discuss and illustrate (with examples from *There Are No Children Here*) the process of urbanization and the problems of urban areas, including inner-city poverty. Based on the text and other course material, what are possible solutions to these problems?
* Using the individualistic perspective, explain the problems that are experienced by the people in *There Are No Children Here*. Then, using the sociological perspective, explain the problems that are experienced by the people in *There Are No Children Here*. Finally, suggest a solution to one or more of these problems, using the sociological perspective.
* Choose any deviant behavior exhibited in the book *There Are No Children Here*. Using that example (or examples), explain how the social-bond and labeling theory would explain that behavior.