



SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES

BACHELOR OF ARTS (BIS/BDP/BAC)

END OF SEMESTER EXAMINATION

**BDP 1207/BIS 1203: INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY/SOCIOLOGY FOR
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**

DATE: 12th March 2018

Time: 08:45-10:45 hours

Instructions

1. This examination consists of **FIVE** questions.
2. Answer **Question ONE (COMPULSORY)** and any other **TWO** questions.

1. Read the essay by Peter Berger below and answer the subsequent questions that follow from it.

Invitation to Sociology: Peter Berger

We would say then that the sociologist (that is, the one we would really like to invite to our game) is a person intensively, endlessly, shamelessly interested in the doings of men. His natural habitat is all the human gathering places of the world, wherever men¹ come together. The sociologist may be interested in many other things. But his consuming interest remains in the world of men, their institutions, their history, and their passions. He will naturally be interested in the events that engage men's ultimate beliefs, their moments of tragedy and grandeur and ecstasy. But he will also be fascinated by the commonplace, the everyday. He will know reverence, but this reverence will not prevent him from wanting to see and to understand. He may sometimes feel revulsion or contempt. But this also will not deter him from wanting to have his questions answered. The sociologist, in his quest for understanding, moves through the world of men without respect for the usual lines of demarcation. Nobility and degradation, power and obscurity, intelligence and folly—these are equally interesting to him, however unequal they may be in his personal values or tastes. Thus his questions may lead him to all possible levels of society, the best and the least known places, the most respected and the most despised. And, if he is a good sociologist, he will find himself in all these places because his own questions have so taken possession of him that he has little choice but to seek for answers.

¹ This selection was written before stylistic changes occurred in the English language, "he," "his," "him," himself," "man," "world of men," and so on, are generic, referring to both males and females.

... What interests us is the curiosity that grips any sociologist in front of a closed door behind which there are human voices. If he is a good sociologist, he will want to open that door, to understand these voices. Behind each closed door he will anticipate some new facet of human life not yet perceived and understood.

The sociologist will occupy himself with matters that others regard as too sacred or as too distasteful for dispassionate investigation. He will find rewarding the company of priests or of prostitutes, depending not on his personal preferences but on the questions he happens to be asking at the moment. He will also concern himself with matters that others may find much too boring. He will be interested in the human interaction that goes with warfare or with great intellectual discoveries, but also in the relations between people employed in a restaurant or between a group of little girls playing with their dolls. His main focus of attention is not the ultimate significance of what men do, but the action in itself, as another example of the infinite richness of human conduct.

In these journeys through the world of men the sociologist will inevitably encounter other professionals ... Sometimes these will resent his presence, feeling that he is poaching on their preserves. In some places the sociologist will meet up with the economist, in others with the political scientist, in yet others with the psychologist or the ethnologist. Yet chances are that the questions that have brought him to these same places are different from the ones that propelled his fellow trespassers. The sociologist's questions always remain essentially the same: "What are people doing with each other here?" "What are their relationships to each other?" "How are these relationships organized in institutions?" "What are the collective ideas that move men and institutions?" In trying to answer these questions in specific instances, the sociologist will, of course, have to deal with economic or political matters, but he will do so in a way rather different from that of the economist or the political scientist. The scene that he contemplates is the same human scene that these other scientists concern themselves with. But the sociologist's angle of vision is different. ...

... Much of the time the sociologist moves in sectors of experience that are familiar to him and to most people in his society. He investigates communities, institutions and activities that one can read about every day in the newspapers. Yet there is another excitement of discovery beckoning in his investigations. It is not the excitement of coming upon the totally unfamiliar, but rather the excitement of finding the familiar becoming transformed in its meaning. The fascination of sociology lies in the fact that its perspective makes us see in a new light the very world in which we have lived all our lives. This also constitutes a transformation of consciousness. Moreover, this transformation is more relevant existentially than that of many other intellectual disciplines, because it is more difficult to segregate in some special compartment of the mind. The astronomer does not live in the remote galaxies, and the nuclear physicist can, outside his laboratory, eat and laugh and marry and vote without thinking about the insides of the atom. The geologist looks at rocks only at appropriate times, and the linguist speaks English with his wife. The sociologist lives in society, on the job and off it. His own life, inevitably, is part of his subject matter. Men being what they are, sociologists too manage to segregate their professional insights from their everyday affairs. But it is a rather difficult feat to perform in good faith.

The sociologist moves in the common world of men, close to what most of them would call real. The categories he employs in his analyses are only refinements of the categories by which other men live—power, class, status, race, ethnicity. As a result, there is a deceptive simplicity and obviousness about some sociological investigations. One reads them, nods at the familiar scene, remarks that one has heard all this before and don't people have better things to do than to waste their time on truisms— until one is suddenly brought up against an insight that radically questions everything one had previously assumed about this familiar scene. This is the point at which one begins to sense the excitement of sociology.

Let us take a specific example. Imagine a sociology class in a Southern college where almost all the students are white Southerners. Imagine a lecture on the subject of the racial system of the South. The lecturer is talking here of matters that have been familiar to his students from the time of their infancy. Indeed, it may be that they are much more familiar with the minutiae of this system than he is. They are quite bored as a result. It seems to them that he is only using more pretentious words to describe what they already know. Thus he may use the term “caste,” one commonly used now by American sociologists to describe the Southern racial system. But in explaining the term he shifts to traditional Hindu society, to make it clearer. He then goes on to analyze the magical beliefs inherent in caste taboos, the social dynamics of commensalism and connubium, the economic interests concealed within the system, the way in which religious beliefs relate to the taboos, the effects of the caste system upon the industrial development of the society and vice versa—all in India. But suddenly India is not very far away at all. The lecture then goes back to its Southern theme. The familiar now seems not quite so familiar anymore. Questions are raised that are new, perhaps raised angrily, but raised all the same. And at least some of the students have begun to understand that there are functions involved in this business of race that they have not read about in the newspapers (at least not those in their hometowns) and that their parents have not told them—partly, at least, because neither the newspapers nor the parents knew about them.

It can be said that the first wisdom of sociology is this—things are not what they seem. This too is a deceptively simple statement. It ceases to be simple after a while. Social reality turns out to have many layers of meaning. The discovery of each new layer changes the perception of the whole. ...

- a. Who is a sociologist, according to Peter Berger? 4 marks
- b. Outline at least two benefits of studying Sociology that flows from the essay? 4 marks
- c. In what ways does the sociological perspective differ from common sense? 4 marks
- d. Outline two fundamental characteristics of the sociological perspective identifiable in the essay. 4 marks
- e. Explain three key assumptions of the sociological perspective presented by the selection. 6 marks
- f. Describe how sociology differs from psychology or economics or history. 8 marks

- 2. a.** Use the check-list below to distinguish between primary and secondary groups. 6 marks
- i) Quality of relationships
 - ii) Duration of relationships
 - iii) Breadth of relationships
 - iv) Subjective perception of relationships
 - v) New technologies
 - vi) Typical examples
- b.** Explain the importance of the various types of groups to social life. 9 marks
- 3. a.** What is social change? 3 marks
- b.** Outline any four causes of social change. 4 marks
- c.** Analyze how social life is changing in the age of social media. 8 marks
- 4. a.** Define globalization and outline five key features that typify it. 7 marks
- b.** Explain how a global perspective enhances the sociological approach. 8 marks
- 5. a.** Define Social Stratification 3 marks
- b.** Outline four principles that lie behind social stratification. 4 marks
- c.** Discuss how the functional paradigm differs from the conflict paradigm in its explanation of social stratification. 8 marks