

## Sociology Final Discussion Questions & Discussion

### Short Answers: due at the beginning of class Tuesday, October 13<sup>th</sup>

**Short Answers:** To prepare for the group discussion, please read through the following list of possible questions/topics and write down your thoughts and opinions to AT LEAST 15 of them. [Note: each individual question counts as one of your fifteen, so if you pick #1, which has five questions, answering all five parts of #1 counts as 5/15. Each answer needs to be 4 sentences in length to earn 2 points credit].

**-Your thoughts/responses should be at least 4 sentences PER response.** You will earn up to 30 possible points (2 per question) for the thoroughness of your written responses. These may be either typed or hand-written.

**-Number your responses to correspond with the question.**

[For example]: 1a.

4.

11c.

**Grading:** The assignment is worth 45 summative points  
(Written responses: 30 points + Participation/Attentiveness in Discussion: 15 points).

**Discussion:** On Finals day, you will split up into smaller groups and will have approximately 40 minutes to discuss some of the following questions/topics. Your group will determine which questions/topics you discuss.

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- 1. a.** What are your thoughts on the issue of illegal immigration in the U.S.? **b.** Should children of illegal immigrants be allowed to apply for “in-state” tuition? **c.** Should children of illegal immigrants be given health care benefits by the U.S. government? **d.** Should children of illegal immigrants be allowed to attend U.S. public schools? **e.** What type of “path to U.S. citizenship” do you think the government should set up to reduce the number of illegal immigrants and encourage naturalization? Explain.
  2. Do you think that the United States should require each person to have health insurance? Why or why not?
  3. If you were running for U.S. President in our next election and had to select only three major issues to focus on, what three issues would you focus on and why?
  4. What are your thoughts on drug testing in schools (both high school and college)?
  5. Should we take into account a political candidate’s morals and values when evaluating whether or not they are a qualified candidate? Why or why not?
  6. Should we uphold the same moral and value standards for all public figures [ie: movie stars, athletes, musicians]? Explain.
  7. **a.** Do you feel that there is a general lack of privacy in the U.S. regarding public figures? Explain why/why not. **b.** If you think there is a lack of privacy, do you think that this is justified? Explain.
  8. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement, “access to health care is a basic human right”.

9. **a.** Is the mass media in the U.S. too powerful? Justify your answer. **b.** What do you foresee in the future as far as technology and media - do you feel that people's lives will become more private or less private? **c.** What impact does this have on our U.S. challenge to tighten national security?

10. A major debate the past few years has been about the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" military policy. Should openly gay people be able to serve in the military? Explain why/why not.

11. In fall 2010, a group of over 100 college presidents signed a declaration stating that the 21-year-old drinking age is not working, and it sparked a national debate. When the age was raised to 21 in the mid-1980s, the goal was to reduce highway fatalities. But everyone knows that the 21-year-old age limit hasn't stopped some minors from drinking. And now some experts believe it's actually contributing to an increase in extreme drinking. Former president of Middlebury College in Vermont, John McCardell, started the movement dedicated to lowering the age back to 18.

McCardell argues *"It may seem counterintuitive, but lowering the age will make kids safer. It's like the old days of prohibition: from the suburbs to college campuses to inner cities, kids find ways to get around the 21 year old limit. It's so widespread, it's the norm."*

**a.** What should the legal drinking age be in the U.S.? Explain. **b.** Do you agree with McCardell (quoted above) that underage drinking is so widespread it has become a norm in U.S. society today (institutionalized deviance)? Why/why not. **c.** Is binge drinking socially acceptable in the U.S.? Explain.

12. **a.** If you had to write a law to explain what right individuals should have (if any) to possess guns in U.S. society, what would the wording of your law be?

13. Taxing cigarette purchases has been a nationwide trend that has generated extra revenue for state governments. Proponents of the cigarette tax argue that it has also decreased the amount of smokers.

**a.** Do you feel that a cigarette tax is an appropriate tax for a state to add? Explain. **b.** If you support a cigarette tax, what percentage do you think the tax should be? Explain how you came up with that percentage of tax (ie: 50% tax added to price of cigarettes, 20%, etc.)

14. Following the same reasoning as a cigarette tax, a "junk food" tax is being suggested on unhealthy food and drinks to help generate revenue and decrease obesity. **a.** Do you feel that a junk food tax is an appropriate tax for a state to add? Explain. **b.** If you support a junk food tax, what percentage do you think the tax should be? Explain how you came up with that percentage of tax.

15. **a.** To what extent has the U.S. made strides forward in regard to civil rights issues? Explain.

16. **a.** Do you support the statewide smoking ban in Nebraska? **b.** Do you support a national smoking ban? Explain.

17. **a.** What is your opinion on criminal rehabilitation? **b.** Is it our responsibility as a society to rehabilitate criminals into U.S. society? Why or why not?

18. **a.** Do you believe that having metal detectors and security systems in place in public schools deters students from bringing concealed weapons, or do the metal detectors just bring a false sense of safety to the students, parents and staff? **b.** Is security an issue that we need to focus on in LPS? If so, how? **c.** Would you support security cameras being installed in the parking lots, hallways and/or Commons area at LSW? Why/why not?

19. The legislature is considering replacing NeSA testing by having all juniors in the state take the ACT and using those scores as a benchmark for achievement. Explain your opinion on replacing NeSA with the ACT?
20. **a.** What are your thoughts on separating genders for all middle and high school classes? (At LSW, boys only have classes with boys and girls only have classes with girls) **b.** What are the costs and benefits of this system?
21. There has recently been a debate about whether religious employers should have to include coverage for contraception in health plans offered to employees at affiliated institutions. **a.** Should a company who offers health insurance to employees have the right to decide what is covered by a company's insurance plan based on their "religious conscience"? Why/why not. **b.** If yes, should this include being able to choose to deny an unwed pregnant female access to prenatal care? Explain.
22. **a.** What are your feelings on censorship? **b.** Should the parental advisory warnings be attached to music and video games? **c.** Should Southwest administration and/or the Lincoln Public School Board have the authority to ban certain books and internet sites from our schools?
23. **a.** Do you feel that a person who is not a natural born U.S. citizen is qualified to become President, although the Constitution doesn't grant it? **b.** Do you think we will see this constitutional requirement change in the future (explain)?
24. A common concern for many high school students and parents is the rising price of college tuition. In an attempt to make college more affordable, it has been suggested that the U.S. federal government establish a "tuition reimbursement program" where the government would reimburse students for a portion of their college tuition in exchange for students enrolling in and completing a community service program upon graduation (ie: peace corps). Do you support this idea for college students? Why/why not.
25. **a.** Discuss your views regarding same-sex marriages. **b.** How many years from now do you think it will take for Nebraska to propose, debate and pass same-sex marriages in our state? Explain your reasoning.
26. **a.** Should emergency contraception be sold without a prescription (explain why or why not)? **b.** If so, should there be a minimum age requirement for purchasing this drug?
27. **a.** Why is music so popular in society? **b.** Should musicians be held responsible for any of the actions that their listeners take? **c.** Should there be any restrictions on what artists say in their lyrics, portray in videos, etc.? **d.** If so, who should censor these musicians?
28. What is the biggest problem facing Nebraska today? Justify your answer.
29. Many people argue that there is so much discrimination, hate and stereotyping of certain religious groups simply because people are uneducated about religion. Do you believe that religion should be taught in public schools as a graduation requirement? Explain your reasoning.
30. **a.** Discuss the level of discrimination in the U.S. (gay rights, race, religion) today. **b.** Why type(s) of discrimination are occurring here out Southwest? **c.** What can we do as a society to prevent discrimination? **d.** Do you feel that biologically we all discriminate to one degree or another, even subconsciously?
31. **a.** What are the major issues that need to be addressed when we talk about the social inequality of women and men? **b.** Do you feel that if we elect a female President in the U.S. that she will be held to the same standards as a male? **c.** Do you think there be any differences in how a female would lead our country? Provide examples.

32. **a.** Do you feel that there is a need for the U.S. to make changes in our government policies so that the gap between social classes does not continue to grow wider? Explain. **b.** What are your thoughts about a flat income tax in the U.S. (everyone pays the same % tax on their income regardless of salary and regardless of how their money is made – income versus investments)? **c.** If you support the idea of a flat income tax, what % tax do you propose implementing?
33. Would you support or oppose of school uniforms? Justify your answer.
34. What are your thoughts about same-sex couples adopting children? Justify your answer.
35. **a.** Is it constitutional for government officials to use controversial interrogation tactics to question potential U.S. terrorists? Explain. **b.** Which interrogation tactics do you think are acceptable (if any)? Justify your answer.
36. A continuing argument in the U.S. is that the death penalty is not a deterrent for criminals. **a.** Do you agree with having the death penalty as a potential sentence for crimes? Explain. **b.** If you agree with the death penalty as an appropriate sentence in some cases, are there any crimes aside from murder in which you feel the death penalty would be justifiable? Explain.
37. Recently, the National Transportation Safety Board called for a nationwide ban on the use of cell phones and text messaging devices while driving. The recommendation is the most far-reaching yet by the NTSB, which in the past 10 years has increasingly sought to limit the use of portable electronic devices. If adopted by states, the recommendation would outlaw non-emergency phone calls and texting by operators of every vehicle on the road. It would not apply to hands-free devices, or to passengers. **a.** Do you agree or disagree with this recommendation from the NTSB? Explain. **b.** If this ban became law, what do you think would be an appropriate penalty for violating it?
38. Last year, City Council approved the “Fairness Amendment”, which would provide protection against discrimination in employment, housing and public accommodations in Lincoln for gays, lesbians and transgender people. But opponents launched a successful petition campaign, collecting 10,000 signatures to require the Council to either let the ordinance die or put it on a future ballot.
39. Within the past few years in the U.S., some very high profile trials were televised on cable. (Dr. Conrad Murray – accused of involuntary manslaughter in the death of Michael Jackson, Casey Anthony – accused of first-degree murder of her daughter, George Zimmerman – accused of second-degree murder in the killing of Trevon Martin). Spectators, news reporters and protestors surrounded courtrooms in anticipation of the verdict. **a.** In your opinion, do you think trials that carry a lot of public interest should be televised? Why/why not. **b.** Should spectators who do not have any tie to a case be allowed to sit in the courtroom during the trial? Explain.
40. Would you like to see casino gambling legalized in Nebraska? Explain.
41. Eric Garner. Michael Brown. Tamir Rice. Walter Scott. Freddie Gray. Is this a list of isolated, if tragic, incidents where black men died in encounters with the police, or evidence of a pattern of police behavior? Systematic racism, or isolated abuses?