

Introducing Sociology

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What is Sociology?

- Systematic study of human society (more than one person)
- The sociological imagination involves:
 - Seeing the influence of society on the individual
 - Recognizing that the social world affects the decisions individuals make
 - Situating individuals in a historical perspective
 - Going beyond common sense; testing common sense empirically

Why Sociology?

- Enhanced understanding of society (micro/macro)
- Question stereotypes; explore generalizations
- More appreciation for diversity; ethnocentrism
- Understand social phenomena
- Assess the truth of “common sense”
- Recognize broader constraints in our lives
- Empower individuals to actively participate in society

The Sociology of Sociology

- The Scientific Revolution
 - A belief in science began to replace traditional forms of authority
- The Economic Revolution
 - Industrialism and capitalism were changing economic patterns
- The Political Revolution
 - More democratic values and standards were being adopted

The History of Sociology

- Comte's broad view
 - Theological stage
 - Metaphysical stage
 - Scientific stage
- Positivism (quantitative)
 - a 20th century philosophical movement that holds characteristically that all meaningful statements are either analytic or conclusively verifiable or at least confirmable by observation and experiment and that metaphysical theories are therefore strictly meaningless
- Verstehen (qualitative)
 - Understanding a society on its own terms

Sociology and Other Social Sciences

- Psychology
- Economics
- Communications
- Political Science
- Social Work?
- Humanities?

Conclusion

- Things to Remember
 - Sociology goes beyond common sense
 - Sociology situates the individual in the grander scheme
 - Ecological fallacy!!
- Things to Forget
 - Sociology is not stereotyping
 - Paints everyone the same; Ignores facts and distorts reality; Derogatory
 - Not applied indiscriminately; Use 'facts' and data; Aim for understanding, not demeaning

Class Questions: