

Take-home Essay: This assignment consists of a short essay (3-4 pages) in which you must evaluate a current sociological event or situation in relation to material covered in class. This assignment is not an in-depth research project but rather an *opportunity to apply* the sociological theories and perspectives we have been exploring in class to an issue that interests you. For example, you may find it surprising that the United States is the most unequal country in the developed world and for that reason you choose to write your short paper on inequality in the U.S. Once you have a topic, such as inequality, you will want to learn more about it by reading newspaper articles and mainly *academic* articles (<http://www.adams.edu/library/databases/databases.php>). I want to stress this point. You may inform yourself with newspaper and/or opinion-based articles but I expect you to read *at least* two academically refereed articles. If you have questions concerning where to find these types of articles please refer back to the assignment description for “How to use the library.” Once you have researched your topic from several different sources you should consider a sociological lens through which you can analyze your issue. In the case of inequality, for example, you may want to argue, as Kingsley and Davis did, that society needs inequality in order to function. You will find that the section “Applying Theory” in *Society* (the textbook) will be very helpful in guiding you through this task. Each of your short essays should: (1) introduce an issue, (2) make an argument, (3) provide a theoretical analysis and (4) conclude. You should also include a bibliography at the end. What follows is a breakdown of how to approach your paper:

1. Pick an issue: inequality, racial segregation, outsourcing, gender discrimination, etc.
2. Research your issue by reading several academic articles. As you read, make note of any disagreements that you see within the literature. That is, is there a general consensus concerning the issue or are there particular points that can be disputed?
3. After you finish researching your issue, return to the disputable points that you wrote down and take some time to consider your position. That is, who do you tend to agree with? What evidence do you recall from the articles you read that supports your position? Is there any evidence that contradicts your position? If so, how do you account for these discrepancies? After considering the aforementioned points, write down an initial *main* argument concerning your issue.
4. Take some time to review the major sociological theories that we have discussed in class and in the textbook *Society*. With your main argument in mind, consider whether or not any of these theories help you understand *how* and *why* the issues you are interested in are related. Depending on your topic, you will find that some theories are more helpful than others. With this in mind, pick the theory that best helps you relate the variables you are interested in.

5. Sketch out your essay by answering the following questions:
 - a. What is the issue?
 - b. What is your argument?
 - c. What are the different perspectives surrounding the issue?
 - d. What theory are you applying to the issue and why? (i.e., how does the theory help the reader understand *how* and *why* the issue you are analyzing fits your argument?)
6. With the outline from above in front of you, begin writing your essay. Be sure to include: (1) an introduction, (2) a clear argument, (3) a theoretical analysis and (4) a conclusion.
7. Revise your essay and seek out potential editors that can help correct your essay for grammar/punctuation errors.
8. *If* you get your essay done several days prior to the deadline, send it to me and I will provide you with suggestions.
9. Turn in your essay by the deadline.
10. If you followed steps 1-9, enjoy a good night's rest. If you did not, begin praying for divine intervention.