

Dialectics IAS

For One-To-One Mentorship

Examiner's Expectations

What the examiner expects in the answer? The answer to this question lies in the question itself. If one reads the question carefully, he/she can read the mind of the examiner. As a general rule, one must focus on the keywords and phrases used in the question. One must also try to sense the overall tone of the question.

Question asked on 16 November 2025

Q. Identify important paradigmatic shifts in the evolution of sociological thought. Elaborate your answer with the help of suitable examples. (20)

Key words and phrases: 'identify', 'important paradigmatic shifts', 'evolution of sociological thought', 'elaborate', 'with suitable examples'

This is a very analytical question. Those candidates who answer this question well, will surely leave a lasting impression on the examiner.

In this question, the examiner is looking for a deeper understanding of the evolution of the theoretical and methodological debates in Sociology. It is expected from the candidates to give the context in which a particular theoretical and methodological paradigm develops. Candidate must also then mention the limitations of the dominant theoretical and methodological paradigm of the time and adequately explain the shift in the existing paradigm highlighting the important characteristics of the new one. And, so on.

Evaluation Guidelines

Social and intellectual context of emergence of sociology - in introduction (20%)

Early phase (Phase I) – theoretical assumptions (functionalism) – subject matter (social fact) – methodological paradigm (positivism) – case study (*Suicide* by Durkheim) (30%)

Next Phase (Phase II) – criticisms against functionalism and positivism – new subject matter (social action) – methodological paradigm (non-positivism) – case study (*The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*) (30%)

Contemporary Phase (Phase III) – emergence of reflexive sociology (Gouldner), sociological imagination (C.W. Mills), middle-range theory (Merton), post-modernism, neo-functionalism, neo-Marxism, mixed methods approach (20%)

***Candidates must explain the transition from Phase I to Phase II very clearly in sociological terminology as it is the core of the demand of the question.**

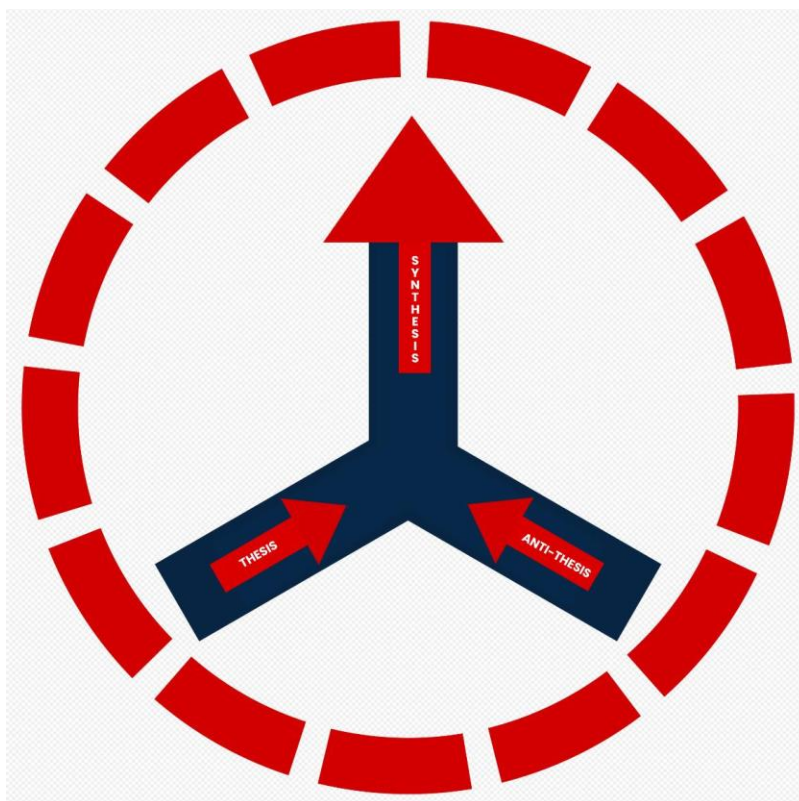
Credits: Prof. B. Mohan

Result

Out of the 21 answers received by 11:59 PM on Wednesday, 19 November 2025, only one answer (by Mudit) could secure 50% marks. Two candidates (Aditi and Shubham) managed to score 40% marks. Most candidates reflected a lack of conceptual clarity about the theoretical and methodological paradigms in sociology and failed to articulate their arguments in sociological language.

Practice Questions are posted every Sunday.

Best wishes



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