

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 9 November 2025

Q. Sociology emerged as a conservative reaction to the Enlightenment. Comment.

(20)

Key words: 'emerged', 'enlightenment', 'comment'

Phrase: 'as a conservative reaction'

The examiner expects from the candidate a basic understanding of social conditions in Europe that influenced the emergence of sociology as a discipline. A deeper and more analytical understanding is expected from the candidate on the intellectual conditions, particularly during the early period of emergence of sociology, that shaped the initial theoretical and methodological thrust in sociology. Last, but not the least, this initial theoretical and methodological focus in sociology needs to be discussed within the overall context of philosophical debates taking place during the period of enlightenment. The candidate must clearly highlight that how sociology as a discipline emerged 'as a conservative reaction' to the enlightenment. Answer should be analytical, rather than descriptive.

Evaluation Guidelines

Meaning of enlightenment and conceptual clarity of social and intellectual conditions that influenced the emergence of sociology (30%)

Concern among conservatives (Maistre and Bonald) as well as early social theorists about the spread and threat of revolutionary ideology in Europe, particularly after Industrial Revolution and French Revolution (10%)

Enlightenment philosophers emphasized on ‘individual’, ‘freedom’ and ‘autonomy’ but early sociologists emphasized on ‘society’ as a unit of analysis, focused on the process of socialization, interdependence among parts of society for the maintenance and sustenance of equilibrium in society (functionalism), highlighted the significance of scientific research for corrective social legislations to bring about social reforms – gained support from the governments in Europe (30%)

Discretion of the examiner with regard to sociological articulation and presentation by the candidate (10%)

Credits: Prof. H. Narain

Result for the Practice Question asked on 9 November 2025 (Sunday)

Out of the 14 answers received by 11:59 PM on Wednesday, 12 November 2025, only one answer (by Aditi Ranjan) could secure 40% marks. Most candidates failed to answer the key component of the question i.e. how emergence of sociology could be explained as a conservative reaction to the Enlightenment? Candidates are requested to go through the references mentioned in a previous file for a comprehensive understanding of the subject.

Practice Questions are posted every Sunday.

Best wishes

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Join our Telegram Channel: Dialectics IAS (Sociology) <https://t.me/dialectics79>

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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.

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Examiner's Expectations and Evaluation Guidelines

Examiner's Expectations

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Question asked on 23 November 2025

Q. In social research, it is the bias that is unethical and not the subjectivity. Do you agree with the statement? Substantiate your argument with theoretical and methodological insights. (20)

Key words and phrases: 'bias', 'unethical', 'subjectivity', 'theoretical and methodological insights'

In this question, the examiner expects a clear understanding of the objectivity-subjectivity debate in sociology. Candidate must be able to convince the examiner that how subjectivity is multidimensional and unavoidable in totality. On the other hand, bias can be and must be checked by the researcher in view of the ethical guidelines of conducting social research.

Evaluation Guidelines

Sociology as a science and significance of objectivity in social research – in introduction (10%)

Understanding of theoretical debates centering on objectivity (Durkheim, Weber, Myrdal, Gouldner, Mills, etc.) (20%)

Unavoidability of subjectivity at various levels of research – discuss with the help of methods of research employed for collecting data (in light of the theoretical debates discussed above, especially that of Gunnar Myrdal) (30%)

Discussion on possibility of bias in social research (particularly on the part of the researcher) and how it is unethical and comprises the scientific character of sociology (30%)

Concluding remark on the limitations imposed by the unique subject matter of sociology and the possibility of ‘contextual objectivity’ (10%)

Credits: Prof. B. Mohan

Result

Out of the 7 answers received by 11:59 PM on Wednesday, 26 November 2025, only one answer (by Mudit) could secure 40% marks. Most candidates lacked the conceptual understanding of the theoretical and methodological nuances related to objectivity in social research.

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Examiner's Expectations and Evaluation Guidelines

Examiner's Expectations

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Question asked on 30 November 2025

Q. Elucidate how mixed method approach addresses the concerns of reliability and validity in social research. (20)

Key words and phrases: 'elucidate', 'mixed method approach', 'concerns of reliability and validity in social research'

The language of the question indicates that the examiner is looking not only for clarity regarding the concepts of reliability and validity but also interested in knowing the practical challenges that a researcher may face in addressing the concerns of reliability and validity when the research is actually conducted. Since mixed method approach involves the use of both quantitative as well as qualitative methods of research, candidate must highlight the advantages and limitations of both before explaining that how mixed method approach addresses the concerns of reliability and validity.

Evaluation Guidelines

Reliability and validity – meaning and significance in establishing Sociology as a science (20%)

Features of quantitative research methods – advantages and limitations with the help of case studies (20%)

Features of qualitative research methods – advantages and limitations with the help of case studies (20%)

Relevance of mixed method approach (also called as blended approach, pluralistic methodology, triangulation, etc.) in addressing the concerns of reliability and validity in social research with the help of examples and case studies (40%)

Credits: Prof. N. Sukumar

Result

Out of the 11 answers received by 11:59 PM on Wednesday, 3 December 2025, only two answers (by Sandeep Patil and Nikhil Jain) could secure 40% marks.

Practice Questions are posted every Sunday.

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