SR 968-22: Sociological Methodology: Interpreting Changing Cultures (Spr. 2025, Subterm B)

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Professor

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**Content Questions**

1. Select One (1) Core Essential Element from the Syllabus Outline:

a. Asynchronous Cores 2 and 4: Create a 350-word original discussion paper (with cited sources) during the first week of the term. Post this discussion in DIAL Discussion Forum. Then, provide two peer responses of 100 words each (total of 200 words) in the Discussion Forum.

b. Professor will check for quality of content and word-count requirements. Grade assigned will be Credit or No Credit (CR/NC).

**Dysfunction or Sin?**

***Course Essential Element: Faith-Integrated Sociological Analysis***

Sociology as a discipline offers extraordinary opportunities for dissecting and understanding human problems and the challenges of diverse institutions, groups, and society in general. In the words of Kenneth Allan, professor at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, sociology provides the social lens from which to view and understand problems and challenges, as well as human and social phenomena (Allan, 2014). The power of sociological explanation is no doubt important in understanding our world and the people in it, and how human and cultural interactions (interactionist and structuralist perspectives) shape and affect experience, order, and quality of life. Perhaps C. Wright Mills’ *sociological imagination* comes into play in understanding best how the historical and contemporary interplay of societal forces shape our views of selves in regards the role we play (Solis-Gadea, 2005). Sociologists have devised the word “dysfunction” to capture when both humans and groups, systems, and processes become discordant with organized roles, purposes, and functions – that is, antithetical to established norms, values, processes – and essentially social order.

The explanations for “dysfunction” offered by sociology range from individual to nonconformity to structural problems with institutions and their leadership and culture. However, a Christian biblical perspective imposed on the sociological imagination characterizes this ‘dysfunction’ as ‘sin’ as the Bible points to the fall of humankind as responsible for many of our problems and challenges. Therefore, any type of ‘dysfunction’ we see and experience stems from what the Bible and Christians see as “sin” as this is responsible for all of humankind’s failures. That is, falling short of the glory of God, humankind and its various social institutions reflect this fall, and therefore, the problems and challenges we see in individuals and institutions are reflective of this ‘imperfect state of sinfulness’ or what the sociologist labels as dysfunction. As *Romans* 3:23 states, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” We must not forget that there are Christian principles that are interwoven into the fabric of society, or what Heddendorf and Vos (2010) call “hidden threads.” For Christians, the sociological explanation of any dysfunction or problems and challenges in humans, processes, and social systems – groups, communities, institutions, education, leadership, culture, and society as a whole – relies on this concept of ‘sin’ expressed in *Romans* 3:23. It is not that faith-integrated sociological explanation negates purely sociological explanation, but goes much deeper to biblical principles that explain the nature of the human person outside of the sociological imagination, because of we are born and conceived in sin, then ‘dysfunction’ is already deep in our DNA. As the Bible notes in *Psalm* 51:5: “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.”

**Question:**

Given this biblical fact or principle, is it then possible to have perfect relationships, institutions, families, and societies or should we expect the level of dysfunction or problems we see around us?

**References**

Allan, K. (2014). *The social lens: An invitation to social and sociological theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Heddendorf, R. & Vos, M. (2010). *Hidden threads: A Christian critique of sociological theory, 2nd ed.*, Lanham, MD: University of America Press.

Solis-Gadea, H.R. (2005). The new sociological imagination: Facing the challenges of a new millennium. *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, *18*, 113-122.

The Bible. (n.d.). *Psalms* 51:5.

The Bible. (n.d.). R*omans* 3:23.