

The Sociological Imagination Essay (2-3 page essay)

Come up with an example of an everyday activity (such as taking a shower, getting dressed, grabbing lunch at a fast food restaurant) and use your sociological imagination to connect this experience to larger social structures, historical forces or patterns of behavior. You should “think yourself away” from your personal reasons for doing this activity and think about how the activity reflects society.

Be sure to summarize the concept of the sociological imagination, attributing it to C. Wright Mills, and explain why it is important to develop this kind of sociological perspective. While you can and should write about your reasons for engaging in your chosen activity, you should focus on how your experience is shaped by and connected to larger social forces and structures -- ask yourself what are the social and historical reasons that you do this particular daily activity in the way that you do it.

Here are some questions and prompts that might be helpful for your organizing and writing essay:

What is the sociological imagination (come up with a definition in your own words)?

Select an everyday activity that you will develop using your sociological imagination (some examples are: taking a shower, getting dressed, exercising, eating breakfast, listening to music, ordering take out from a restaurant, etc.):

WHY do you engage in this activity (you may have several reasons)?

Now, think about how HISTORY and SOCIETY influence both WHY you do this activity (see your reasons above) and HOW you do it:

HISTORY: have people always done this activity? Why or why not? How is the way that you do this activity different from how it has been done in the past? How has society changed in a way that changes this activity?

SOCIETY: do people in other societies do this activity in the same way? Why or why not? How is the way you do this activity different from how others do it? What are some of the economic, political, religious, practical, and other structures and forces that influence how and why you do this activity? What are some social expectations of your society that shape why and how you do this activity? What does this tell you about our social structures?

