

DEMO VERSION OF COMPETITION ASSIGNMENTS

SOCIAL SCIENCES: PERSON. SOCIETY. STATE

10th Grade

To be completed within 120 minutes

Maximum score is 100 points

Assignment 1. (*maximum score – 15 points*)

A famous proverb says: "Who keeps company with the wolf, will learn to howl" (in Russian: «С кем поведёшься, от того и наберёшься»).

How would you interpret this expression from a sociological perspective? What sociological terms/concepts can be used to uncover the meaning of this proverb?

Assignment 2. (*maximum score – 15 points*)

Ten years ago, Vasily, a law-abiding citizen, was sentenced by the court to serve five years in prison for a crime that he had not committed. After coming out of prison, he decided to stop being an upright person and turned to stealing from shops.

Why did Vasily turn into a criminal after leaving prison? What sociological terms/concepts can be used to interpret Vasily's behaviour?

Assignment 3. (*maximum score – 20 points*)

There are different ways to safekeep your money. In some countries, people prefer to open bank deposits even if the interest rates are not very high. In other countries, people choose to stash their money at home "under their pillow" even though financial institutions may offer favourable conditions for safekeeping their personal funds.

How would you explain these variations in behaviour across different countries? Why are banking services more popular in some countries and less popular in other countries? What sociological terms/concepts can help us better understand this situation?

Assignment 4. (*maximum score – 15 points*)

Free play of market forces may prove ineffective in certain situations. These situations are caused by the so-called free-market flaws which can be addressed by interventions on behalf of the state. One of these flaws is the information asymmetry when one of the parties has more information than the other. A typical example is when applying for a job, you have a much better idea about your real knowledge and skills than your potential employer.

Task. Answer the following questions:

- 1) Provide other examples of information asymmetry in areas of social significance (healthcare, education, etc.).
- 2) How can the issue of information asymmetry be solved by the state? Suggest at least three possible mechanisms and include their detailed description.

Assignment 5. (*maximum score – 20 points*)

The two most common forms of government are unitary state and federation. Throughout their history, many states have been changing one form of government for another, switching from federation to unitary state, or vice versa.

Task. Relying on your knowledge of public administration, provide well-grounded answers to the following questions.

- 1) What are the key features, as well as the strong and weak points of these two forms of government?
- 2) In which case would a unitary state be preferable to a federation? Provide examples of such states.
- 3) In which case would a federation be preferable to a unitary state? Provide examples of such states.
- 4) Which form of government implies more authority for the central government? Why is this necessary?

Assignment 6. *(maximum score – 15 points)*

Many countries have introduced a new position at the local governance level – city manager. While in the past a mayor elected by residents was responsible for managing the city's economy, today a professional manager hired under a special contract is charged with these tasks. The mayor is still there, but he/she now has purely representative functions acting as the head of the legislative body in a given municipality. For example, in Russia, a city manager can be appointed by the decision of a competition committee which selects the winner after screening the candidates in line with certain formal criteria.

Task. Answer the following questions:

- 1) *In your opinion, what are the key strong and weak points of the above city governance system?*
- 2) *Who do you think should sit on the committee responsible for selecting the right candidate for the city manager job? Describe the stakeholders and their potential interests.*
- 3) *What key criteria would you suggest for evaluating the candidates for the city manager job?*
