

DEMO VERSION OF COMPETITION ASSIGNMENTS

SOCIAL SCIENCES: PERSON. SOCIETY. STATE

11th Grade

To be completed within 120 minutes
Maximum score is 100 points

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

A popular expression says: "Money has no smell".

What arguments for and against this viewpoint can you suggest? What sociological concepts can be used to interpret this expression?

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

Peter is a well-known volunteer in his town. Every now and then, he takes part in various academic events where he helps prepare rooms for popular science lectures, put signs in the halls to ensure easy navigation, etc. At the end of each forum, Peter usually gets small branded souvenirs from the event organizers.

Why does Peter get souvenirs instead of a monetary reward? What reaction would you expect from Peter if instead of branded merchandise he were offered an envelope containing an amount equal to the cost of the souvenirs? What sociological concepts can be used to interpret Peter's behaviour?

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

Today, a relatively small number of experts is engaged in the wholesale diamond trade. Before making a purchase, they must assess the batch, so the seller normally provides diamonds to the potential buyer without any insurance and oversight to prevent possible substitutions.

What serves as a warrant behind the honest relationship between sellers and buyers instead of insurance and formal oversight? Why is mutual deception relatively rare? What sociological terms/concepts can help us better understand this situation?

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

At different points in history, many researchers proposed their vision as to why some countries developed faster and ended up more prosperous than others. D. Acemoglu and J. Robinson in their book "Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty" proposed a theory stating that public institutions play a key role in the economic development of states. On the one hand, the authors talk about inclusive institutions which offer citizens an opportunity to engage in economic processes, protect their rights, and allow them to take part in state governance. On the other hand, we have extractive institutions designed to rule over and exploit the population for attaining certain short-term goals. When inclusive institutions prevail, a state gets better at producing wealth and using it with maximum output.

Task. Answer the following questions:

- 1) *Do you agree with the authors that the development of states is pre-determined by its institutions (or rather, the type of institutions)? Explain your standpoint.*
 - 2) *Provide two examples of inclusive and extractive institutions (you may choose any time period, but please specify the impact of this institution on socio-economic relations in a given society).*
 - 3) *Do you know any other theories describing the factors that lie at the bottom of national wealth? Provide a brief description.*
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Assignment 5. (*maximum score – 20 points*)

Many countries are engaged in debates about their spatial development priorities. Often, you can find two contrasting views in these debates:

- 1) State resources should be allocated to promote the development of major agglomerations which can serve as points of growth for the national economy.
- 2) State resources should be used to stimulate the development of struggling territories that are now lagging behind in terms of socio-economic aspects.

Task. Answer the following questions:

- 1) *Provide three detailed arguments in favour of each of the proposals.*
- 2) *In your opinion, what are the key weak points of each of these solutions? What consequences would the underdeveloped regions have to face if we choose the first solution?*

3) *What alternative solutions can you suggest for a country's spatial development?*

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

Many countries across the globe still have monotowns. Their economy is usually centred around one large enterprise or a few enterprises working in the same industry. In case of unfavourable market conditions (for example, a drop in demand for local products), such towns may face serious problems, including mass layoffs, reduced tax revenues, high level of household debt, etc. Local authorities are normally not capable of solving such problems on their own and turn to the regional or central government for help. However, just asking for help is not enough, they also need to come up with a plan to restructure the economy in a way that would prevent any market fluctuation damage in the future. Three of the most common solutions are as follows:

- 1) Close the existing enterprises and change the economic specialization of the monotown.
- 2) Temporarily suspend operations at the existing enterprises and make sure that they undergo a radical modernization, thereby improving their competitive standing.
- 3) Request short-term assistance without proposing any changes in hope that favourable market conditions will return.

Task. Answer the following questions:

- 1) *In your opinion, what are the key strong and weak points of each of the proposed solutions?*
 - 2) *In your opinion, which option is better in terms of long-term planning, and which one can prove more risky? Provide your arguments in support of your viewpoint.*
 - 3) *Suggest other possible solutions to the monotowns issue.*
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