



# Annotated models of disciplinary essays

## 7. Annotated Sociology essay

### The essay question

The first year sociology essay on the following pages was written in response to this question:

*Critically compare the views of Marx and Weber on the nature of class.*

### Essay outline

This outline forms the basis of the Sociology essay

#### Thesis

Orientation: class is an important concept in sociology.

Thesis statement: Marx argues that class is determined by economic factors, whereas Weber argues that social stratification cannot be defined solely in terms of class.

#### Argument

Marx's perception of class is primarily economical

1. there are two major social classes, definable in terms of ownership and non-ownership of property.
2. power of ruling class leads to exploitation of subject class

#### Argument

Marx's perception of the relationship between the classes is one of dependence and inequality.

1. these features are a cause of conflict

#### Argument

Marx argues that because the ruling class has economic power, they have political power

1. ruling class dominate social institutions through economic power
2. dominance of ruling class will result in class struggle, and ultimately will lead to social change

#### Argument (transition to Weber)

Weber's theory of class differs partly to Marx's theory: it includes stratification along the lines of status and party.

1. similarities: notion of class in regards to ownership
2. difference: Weber identifies 4 main classes

#### Argument

According to Weber class is distinct from status

1. consideration of status for a social theory of class, and party allegiance

#### Argument and pre-conclusion

comparison of Marx and Weber's notion of class: focus on differences



1. Annotated History essay



2. Annotated Modern Languages essay



3. Annotated Philosophy essay



4. Annotated Creative Arts essay



5. Annotated Management essay



6. Annotated Engineering essay



7. Annotated Sociology essay

## Learning objectives

This module will help you to:

- understand how a well written essay is structured
- understand what a well written essay in your discipline is
- use evidence to support and develop arguments
- incorporate references in an essay
- use academic language



**Conclusion**

summing up of the similarities and differences of the theoretical perspectives

**Essay annotations**

Annotations are provided in the right hand column. These annotations highlight significant features of the essay, such as structure and how evidence for the argument is built up and incorporated. The annotations in 'text boxes' provide further comment on features such as academic language and referencing conventions. For further information on these features see the relevant self access modules.

Student essay	Comments
<p>Class is an important concept in sociology, and the views of Karl Marx and Max Weber in regard to the issue thus provide a source for endless debate. This essay will attempt to critically compare the views of Marx and Weber, by examining the main ideas of each theorist about the notion of class. <u>Marx's main argument is that class is determined by economic factors alone, whereas in contrast, Weber argues that social stratification cannot be defined solely in terms of class and the economic factors which affect class relationships.</u> The two theories will then be compared so as to examine where the main differences between the two schools of thought lie.</p> <p>Marx sees class as a social group whose members share the same relationships to the means of production (Haralambos, 1985; Giddens, 1971). He proposes that in all stratified societies there are two major social classes: the ruling class and the subject class, which are definable in terms of ownership and non-ownership of resources. The power of the ruling class is chiefly derived from the ownership and control of the forces of production, and this power leads the ruling class to exploit and subject class, which in turn creates a basic conflict of interest between the two groups (Haralambos, 1985: 39). In modern capitalist society these two classes comprise the capitalists, who own the means of production, and wage labourers, who sell their labour to the capitalists in return for wages (Haralambos, 1985: p. 39). According to both Swingewood (1984: p. 86) and Giddens (1993: p. 217), however, Marx acknowledges that class development produces a more complex structure of classes and class relations than this model would suggest, and that within each class there exists a number of groups or factions with different interests and values.</p>	<p><i>thesis orientation to topic</i></p> <p><i>thesis statement (also functions as outline of essay)</i></p> <p><i>argument paragraph's argument: Marx's perception of class is primarily economical explanation of argument</i></p> <p><i>further exemplification</i></p> <p><i>draws on other sources to expand on Marx's notion of class. Likewise transition to next paragraph (class development, class struggles)</i></p>
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p><b>LANGUAGE FEATURES OF ACADEMIC WRITING:</b>  <i>discipline specific language:</i> e.g. class, social stratification, capitalist society, capitalists  <i>evaluative and interpretative language:</i> absence of personal, subjective language. Rather evaluation and interpretation is expressed in an impersonal way. e.g class is an <u>important</u> concept in sociology, class development produces a more <u>complex</u> structure ... than this model would <u>suggest</u>  <i>discussing the ideas of others:</i> verbs of saying and perception to report the ideas of others. e.g. Marx <u>sees</u>; He <u>proposes</u>; <u>According to</u> both Swingewood ...; Weber <u>argues</u></p> </div>	

Marx argues that the ordering of classes and the nature of class conflict is historically variable, changing with the emergence of successive forms of society (Giddens, 1971: p. 39). Marx sees the relationship between the two major classes as one of mutual dependence and conflict. Thus in capitalist society the bourgeoisie (the owning class) and the proletariat (the working class) are dependent upon each other, since wage labourers must sell their labour in order to survive, as they do not own or have control over the means of production, and therefore lack the means to produce goods independently, which subsequently makes them dependent on the capitalist class for their livelihoods (Haralambos, 1985: p. 40). **At the same time**, however, the capitalists are dependent on the working class for the provision of labour power, without which there would be no production. Yet according to Marx this mutual dependency is obviously not an equal relationship but rather a relationship between “exploiter and exploited, oppressor and oppressed” (Haralambos, 1985: p. 40).

(link to previous paragraph) Class development and class conflict are variable argument: Marx’s perception of the relationship between the classes: dependence and inequality – features which are a cause of conflict

**REFERENCING**  
Examples of in text referencing including author, year and page number where necessary.

Marx argues that political power derives from the economic power of the ruling class (Giddens, 1971: p. 39), that is, from the ownership and control of the means of production. He suggests that social institutions are also shaped by economic factors and that the ruling class thus dominates these institutions, or social ‘superstructure’ (Haralambos, 1985: p. 41). Therefore, these social institutions provide the tools for ruling class domination and the oppression of the subject class. Marx argues that the ongoing process of oppression and exploitation inevitably leads to conflict between social classes, and it is this class struggle which is the driving force behind social change. Marx himself suggests that “history of all societies up to the present is the history of class struggles” (cited in Haralambos, 1985: p. 42). Marx suggests that the basic contradictions of capitalist society will lead to the eventual destruction of this society, as an inevitable working class revolution will take place to overthrow the bourgeoisie and seize the forces of production (Haralambos, 1985: p. 42).

argument: Marx argues that because the ruling class have economic power, they have political power supportive evidence: ruling class dominate social institutions through their economic power paragraph conclusion: this dominance of the subject class leads to conflict and class struggle. Further, it will result in social change

Weber’s theory of class, although built partly on the analysis developed by Marx, differs somewhat to that of his predecessor. Weber argues that class is only one form of stratification, the other dimensions being status and party (Giddens, 1971: p. 163). Weber, like Marx, states that main class divisions are caused by economic factors, suggesting situations, in terms of possession of goods and services, and for income, as a result of the working of a commodity or labour market (Weber, 1909-1920: p. 126). Weber agrees with Marx that ownership versus non-ownership provides the main basis of class division (Giddens, 1971: p. 165), however, Weber identifies four main classes as opposed to Marx’s two. These classes are: the manual working class, the petty bourgeoisie, the property-less white collar workers, and the dominant entrepreneurial and propertied groups (Giddens, 1971: p. 165).

transition to discussion of Weber’s theory of class (link to essay question requirement to compare the theories is the use of ‘differs’) arguments: Weber’s notion of social structure includes points out similarities between Marx and Weber’s notion of class status and party Weber’s differences to Marx in terms of class

Weber argues that class is distinct from status. Status is referred to as the evaluations made by others regarding social positions which result in the attribution of positive or negative social esteem (Giddens, 1971: p. 167). According to Haralambos (1985: p. 46), class is different to status in

argument: Why Weber considers status distinct from class (another difference between Marx and Weber’s

