

## Study Questions, Week 11

**Topic for the Week:** Social Institutions: Economy and Governance

**Readings for the Week:**

*Society: The Basics*, Chapter 12

*Sociological Footprints*, Chapters 38 (Zuckerman) and 41 (Meyer)

**Questions:**

- (1) What is a *social institution*? Provide examples of several important social institutions. Provide a concise definition for two important social institutions: *economy* and *politics*.
- (2) Describe how economic systems have transformed since the days of preindustrial societies. According to Macdonald, what has been the driving force in these transformations? What have been some of the social outcomes? Describe characteristics of *industrial* societies, and how these change as societies move to *post-industrial* systems of economic organization.
- (3) What is the difference between the *primary*, *secondary* and *tertiary* sectors of the economy?
- (4) Macdonald says: "Every society's economy makes a statement about justice by determining who gets what." What is the nature of justice under *capitalist* and *socialist* economic systems? What are the defining characteristics of each system? Identify advantages and weaknesses of each system.
- (5) What do *work* and *workplaces* look like in a post-industrial economy? How does this differ from other economic arrangements? What role do *corporations* play in a post-industrial economy? In what ways have corporations changed economic organization?
- (6) What is meant by *power*? What is meant by *authority*? What is the basis of *traditional authority*? Of *rational-legal authority*? Of *charismatic authority*? Provide examples of each system of authority and describe how they work.
- (7) Identify key characteristics of *monarchies*, *democracies*, *authoritarian* and *totalitarian regimes*. Which is the most stable form of government? The least stable? Why?
- (8) What is meant by the *welfare state*? What are some of the consequences of living in a society with a strong welfare state?
- (9) What role do *political parties* and *special interests* play in U.S. politics? Do either of these entities contribute to voter apathy? How?
- (10) Distinguish the *pluralist*, *power elite* and *Marxist* models of political power. How is *power* characterized and distributed under each model? How is power exercised *outside the system* – through *revolution* or *terrorism*, for example?

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(11) What are some reasons why human societies resort to violence and war to settle disputes? Do all wars share particular characteristics, or is each war unique in its causes and consequences? Describe some of the effects that *war* and *militarism* have on society.