Teaching notes

Using this issue

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This document briefly describes the resources provided as SociologyReview Extras for this issue, and then offers suggestions for using each of the articles in this issue.

This issue has the regular features of suggestions for using the articles and some links to useful sites for various topics. In addition, there is a practice question for Theory and methods with some guidance on how to answer it. There is also a worksheet based on the article on the Marxist view of social class. The PowerPoint presentation looks at children’s viewing habits and use of social media.

Models of media analysis (p. 2)

First, make sure that you have a good understanding of the concept of ‘hegemony’. Second, familiarise yourself with the ‘circuits of communication model’ as explained in Box 1. Third, look at how the author applies this model to the issue of climate change. Then, either as a class or in small groups, use the ‘circuits of communication’ model and apply it to a different social issue. A good one would be the so-called ‘migrant crisis’ in Europe — specifically how it applies, or is thought to apply, to the UK. Ideally working in a small group and using the climate-change model to guide you, work through the four elements of the model. You will almost certainly need to do a little research, for example looking at how the issue has been reported in different newspapers and different social media platforms, and seeing what decision have been made, and who appears to have influenced them. You will obviously not be able to cover this complex issue in any great depth, but in trying to apply it to a current issue, you will develop a much better understanding of how the new model works, and should be able to discuss it in exam questions.

A new Marxist theory of social class? (p. 8)

This article needs careful reading, but is very important to virtually all topics you will study in your course, where social class is often an important issue. If you work your way through the article and answer the following questions, you will end up with a useful summary of the main points.

Questions

- Why do Marx’s ideas require modification?
- Scambler refers to the post-1970s phase of capitalism as ‘financial capitalism’. What does he mean by this?
- What have many contemporary sociologists used as a ‘proxy’ for class?
- How did Marx see class?
- How do class schemes based on occupation see class?
• According to the NS-SEC schema and the 2011 Census (Figure 1), what percentage of the population falls into the top group?
• Briefly explain the difference between objective and subjective views of class (you will have to think for yourself a bit here).
• Which three things were measured by the Great British Class Survey (GBCS)?
• What is Scambler’s main concern about the GBCS?
• What important point does Scambler make about the possession of different amounts of social, economic and cultural capital?
• What point about social class is emphasised by Clement and Myles?
• What does Scambler consider to be a crucial fault with the Clement and Myles model?
• According to Scambler, which two groups currently form a ‘governing oligarchy’?
• According to Scambler’s proposed model of class, what percentage of the population is in the top group?
• What connection does this have to the Occupy movement?
• What ‘basic distinction’ does the proposed model make?
• To what are ‘globalised’ capital owners personally committed?
• How does this group exercise its will?
• Why does Scambler refer to the governing oligarchy’s personnel as ‘players’?
• On what (or whom) does the less-than-1% critically rely?
• Why will people employed by the governing oligarchy identify with their interests?
• Why does Scambler reject the idea of the ‘precariat’ as a new class?
• To which important links did Marx draw attention?

The growth of secular Britain (p. 18)

This article contains a lot of statistical information. Practise the skill of understanding numerical data by finding the answers to the following questions. Compare your answers with those of a classmate.

Questions

1. According to Figure 1, what percentage of people were raised in a ‘non-religious’ family in 2010?
2. According to Table 2, by how many percentage points had the proportion of women saying they had ‘no religion’ changed between 1983–2013?
3. According to Table 2, which age group in 2013 had the highest proportion of those saying that they had ‘no religion’?
4. According to Table 2, in 2013 which UK country had the highest percentage of ‘religious nones’?
5 According to Table 2, in 2013, what percentage of 16-year-olds claimed to be ‘religious nones’?

6 According to Table 3, in 2013, what was the overall age range of men among whom over half claimed to be ‘religious nones’?

7 Looking at the figures in Table 4, suggest two reasons why those from ethnic groups other than ‘white’ might have lower proportions of religious nones.

**The media and violent crime (p. 26)**

This article lends itself to a class discussion on the ways in which the media report violent crimes. Take an example that is fairly recent at the time you are having the discussion, and use the following questions to guide the debate. (You will probably have had to do a little research in advance.)

1. Was there anything particularly unusual or dramatic about the crime — what made it ‘newsworthy’?

2. Did any accounts of the crime (or any subsequent trial) attribute reasons, or causes?

3. Was there any suggestion of ‘victim blaming’?

4. If you had read any discussions of the crime and/or trial on social media, were there any differences between social media comments and reports in the press or on TV?

5. At the end of your discussion, note down any sociological concepts or theories that you used, or could have used, in your discussion.

In what ways might the discussion you have had be useful to answer exam questions on crime and deviance?

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