

# Session 11 – Society and the state

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53882 (Monday, 3.30 – 5.30 p.m.)

53883 (Monday, 5.40 – 7.40 p.m.)

21/01/2023 – 24/04/2023

## Overview of the session

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- 1) Presentation of a classical excerpt in sociology (20 min)
- 2) Discussion by the designated discussants (10-15 min)
- 3) Opening of the discussion to the whole class (15 min)
- 4) Short break (10 min)
- 4) Brief overview of the second mandatory excerpt (15 min)
- 5) Elements of correction of the midterm exam (45 min)





Don't forget the final exam!

## Allocation of presentations and discussions

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Date	Session	Text excerpt
24/01	Sociological approaches	
31/01	The individual in social context	Douglas (Mary). Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo. 2003.
07/02	Norms and deviance	Becker (Howard). Outsiders. 1963.
14/02	Stratification and inequality	Marx (Karl) and Engels (Friedrich). The Communist Manifesto. 1848.
21/02	Identity and identification	Brubaker (Rogers). Trans. Gender and Race in an Age of Unsettled Identities. 2016.
07/03	Urban sociology	Venkatesh (Sudhir) and Levitt (Steven). History and disjuncture in the urban American street gang. 2000.

## Allocation of presentations and discussions

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Date	Session	Text excerpt
14/03	The family	Edin (Kathryn) and Kefalas (Maria). Promises I Can Keep: Why poor women put motherhood before marriage. 2005.
21/03	Religion	Snow (David) and Machalek (Richard). "The convert as a social type". 1976.
28/03	Education	Khan (Shamus). Privilege: The Making of an Adolescent Elite at St Paul's School. 2001.
04/04	Economic sociology	Esping-Andersen (Gøsta). 'Hybrid or Unique?: The Japanese welfare state between Europe and America'. 1997
11/04	Society and the state	Dubois (Vincent). The bureaucrat and the poor. Encounters in French Welfare Offices. 1999.
18/04	Movements and revolutions	McAdam (Douglas). The Biographical Consequences of Activism. 1989.

## Presentation of a classical excerpt in sociology

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Today's presentation is on:

Dubois V., 2016 [1999]. The bureaucrat and the poor. Encounters in French Welfare Offices, Farnham, Ashgate, Part III ("Questioning the Institutional Order"): pp. 137-139; 150-154; 176-182









## Scott (James). Seeing Like a State. 1998.

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The state as we know it has a legal definition, which was set at the Pan-American Convention of Montevideo in 1933.

A state is defined by four criteria:

- A defined territory;
- A permanent population;
- A government;
- The ability to enter into relations with other states.

The state is thus not a given reality. It is a historical construction.

## Scott (James). Seeing Like a State. 1998.

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States appeared with the first agricultural civilizations in Mesopotamia around 9,000 BC.

The first states were therefore contemporary with the first large-scale irrigation systems, which were the first public goods. In Mexico and China, the same phenomenon can be observed. To finance these public goods, the states levied a tribute that was to become a regular tax. These states set up the first censuses of people and goods that would allow them to evaluate tax revenues.

Until the 19th century, a large part of the world was not organized into states, but into clans (hierarchical kinship groups).

## Scott (James). Seeing Like a State. 1998.

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Nonetheless, premodern states were partially blind. They knew very little about their subjects, their wealth, their location, their identity etc. They lacked a detailed map of its terrain and its people.

As a result, their interventions were often crude and self-defeating.

## Scott (James). *Seeing Like a State*. 1998.

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In *Seeing Like a State* (1998), James Scott aimed to uncover the reason why states often appear to be at odds with nomadic groups (gypsies, vagrants, homeless individuals, serfs, etc.). The attempt to settle these mobile populations (through sedentarisation) has been a persistent goal for states in history, even though it has rarely been successful.

As he studied the attempts at sedentarisation, James Scott realised that they were actually the state's efforts to organise society in a way that made it easier for the state to perform its basic functions, such as taxation. He then came to view legibility as a crucial aspect of state governance.

Scott (James). Cities, People and Language. 1998.

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« An **illegible** society is a hindrance to any effective intervention by the state, whether the purpose of that public intervention is plunder or public welfare. » (Scott, 1998).

« A project of **legibility** is immanent in any statecraft that aims at manipulating society, but it is undermined by intra-state rivalries, technical obstacles, and, above all, the resistance of its subjects. » (Scott, 1998).

Scott (James). Cities, People and Language. 1998.

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« Historically, the relative illegibility to outsiders of some urban neighborhoods (or of their rural analogues, such as hills, marshes and forests) has provided a vital margin of political safety from control by outside elites. » (Scott, 1998).



BRVGÆ FLANDRICARVM  
VRBIVM ORNAMENTA.

BRVGÆ, vulgo Brugæ, Teuto-  
nicæ Flandriæ urbs omnium,  
pulcherrima, nitidissimaque publi-  
cærum siquidem, privatærumque  
ædium in hac urbe splendor et  
magnificentia, omnem ratio-  
nem, omnem dicendi facultate  
tem superat. Optimam urbi-  
um formam, hoc est, orbiculâ-  
rem, sibi obtrinet; aquis pro-  
be instructa, duplici fossa  
ambitur; florentissimum quo-  
dam emporium fuit. *Quæ*





Scott (James). Cities, People and Language. 1998.

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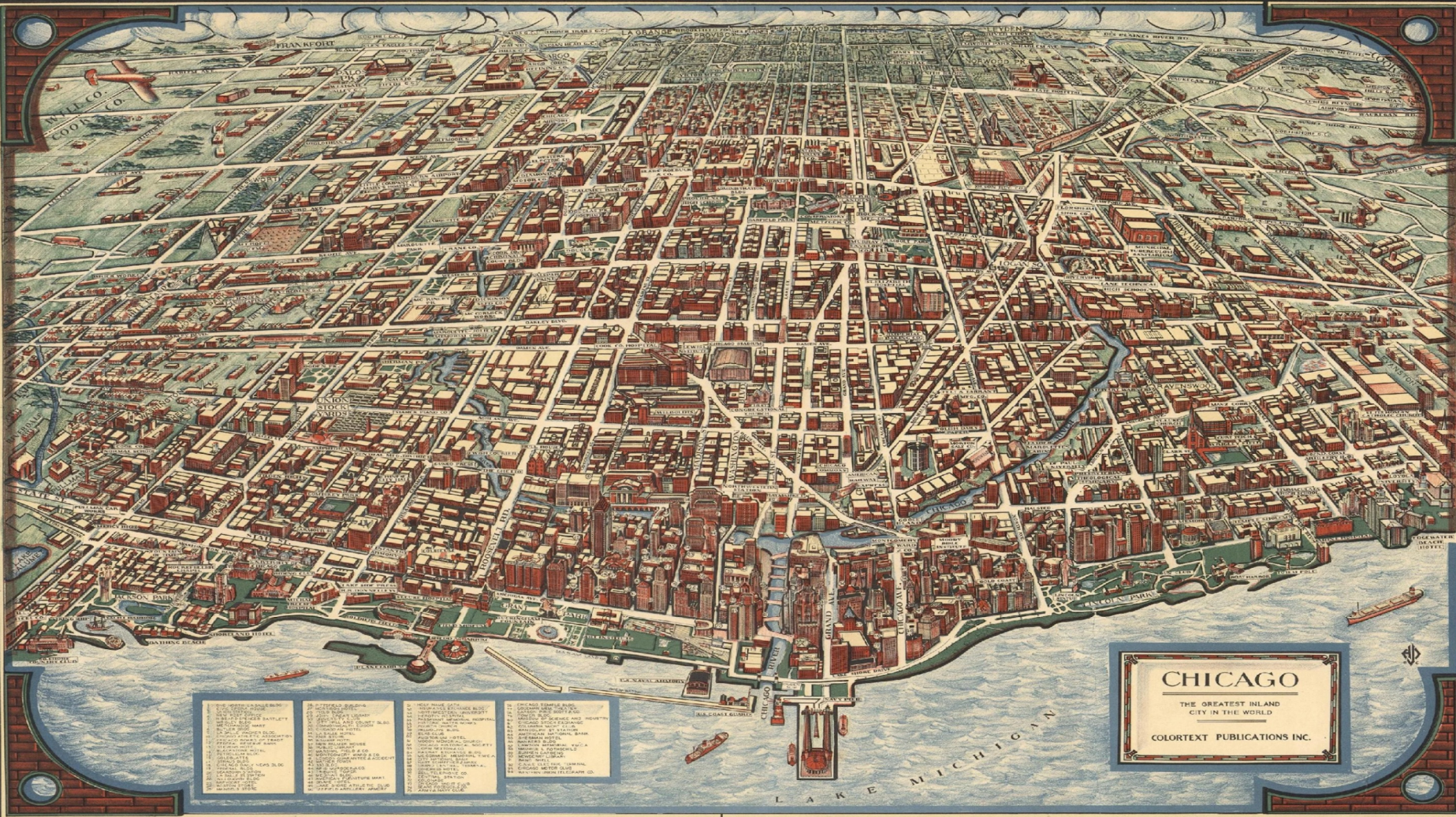
« The fact that the layout of the city, having developed without any overall design, lacks a consistent geometric logic does not mean that it was at all confusing to its inhabitants. One imagines that many of its cobbled streets were nothing more than surfaced footpaths traced by repeated use. For those who grew up in its various quarters, Bruges would have been perfectly familiar, perfectly legible. » (Scott, 1998).

Scott (James). Cities, People and Language. 1998.

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« For a stranger or trader arriving for the first time, however, the town was almost certainly confusing, simply because it lacked a repetitive, abstract logic that would allow a newcomer to orient herself. The cityscape of Bruges in 1500 could be said to privilege local knowledge over outside knowledge, including that of external political authorities. »  
(Scott, 1998).







Scott (James). Cities, People and Language. 1998.

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« From an administrator's vantage point, the ground plan of Chicago is nearly utopian. It offers a quick appreciation of the ensemble, since the entirety is made up of straight lines, right angles, and repetitions. » (Scott, 1998).

Scott (James). Cities, People and Language. 1998.

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« Delivering mail, collecting taxes, conducting a census, moving supplies and people in and out of the city, putting down a riot or insurrection, digging for pipes and sewer lines, finding a felon or conscript (providing he is at the address given), and planning public transportation, water supply, and trash removal are all made vastly simpler by the logic of the grid. » (Scott, 1998).

**How and why do states make cities legible ?**

Scott (James). Cities, People and Language. 1998.

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« Coupled with patterns of local solidarity, [...] insulation has proven politically valuable in such disparate contexts as eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century urban riots over bread prices in Europe, the Front de Liberation Nationale's tenacious resistance to the French in the Casbah of Algiers, and the politics of the bazaar that helped to bring down the Shah of Iran. Illegibility, then, has been and remains a reliable resource for political autonomy. » (Scott, 1998).





## Surnames and identification

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Identification of individuals is a decisive part of the legibility projects. It serves as a means to rationalize tax collection, conscription, production...

Identification is a major theme of research in social sciences since the 2000s:

- Noiriél (Gérard), *L'identification. Genèse d'un travail d'État*. Paris : Belin. (2007)
- Shearer (David), « Elements near and alien : passportization, policing and identity in the Stalinist State, 1932-1952 » (2004)
- Spire (Alexis), *Étrangers à la carte. L'administration de l'immigration en France, 1945-1975* (2005)

## Language

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The French state seized language as a tool to its power.

« The campaign of linguistic centralization was assured of some success since it went hand in hand with the expansion of state power. By the late 19th century, dealing with the state was unavoidable for all but a small minority of the population. Petitions, court cases, school documents, applications and correspondence with officials were all of necessity written in French. » (Scott, 1998).

## Traffic patterns

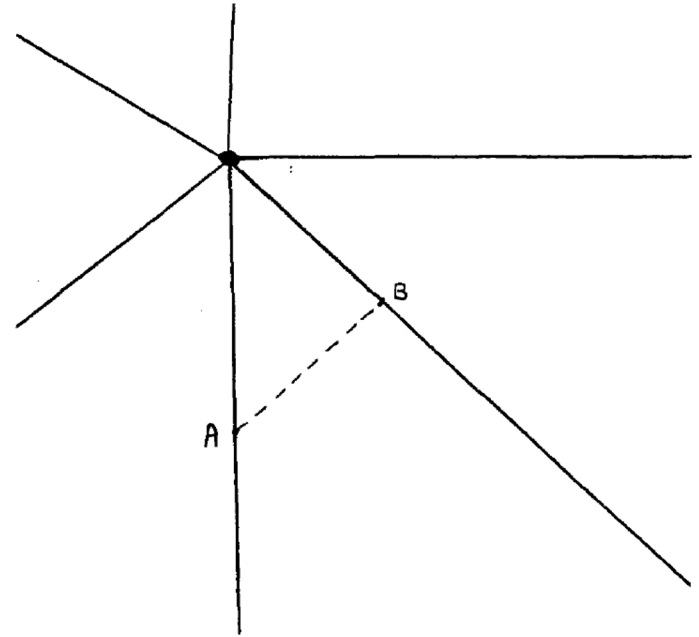
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Centralization of traffic patterns (such as French rails and road system) also serves the legibility of a state.

Can you give examples?

What vision of the territory does it give?

What are alternative visions?



12. Centralized traffic hub

## Conclusion

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Typification is thus essential to statecraft and led to an enormous leap in the state capacity and techniques of directing rules.

Categories that may have begun as the artificial inventions of cadastral surveyors, census takers, judges, or police officers can end by becoming categories that organize people's daily experience precisely because they are embedded in state-created institutions that structure that experience.

The categories used by state agents are not merely means to make their environment legible; they are an authoritative tune to which most of the population must dance.

## Elements of correction on the midterm exam

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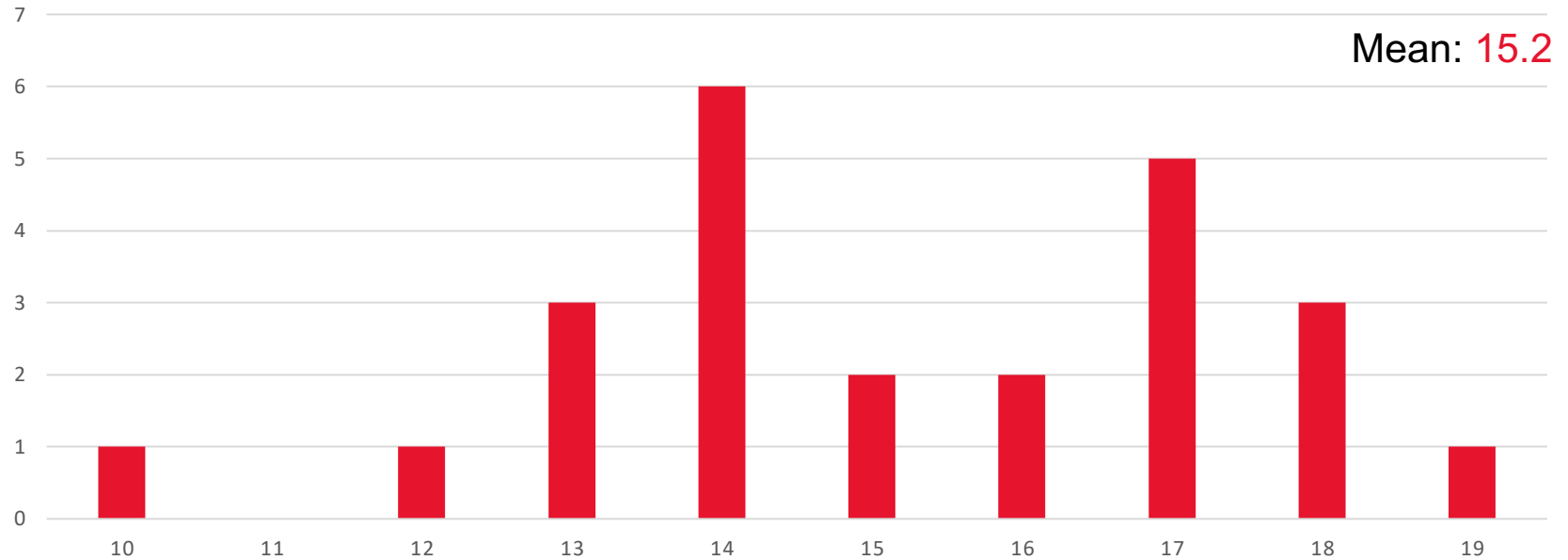
A problématique must identify a tension point rather than rewrite the essay question.

Beware of oversimplification of the authors' ideas: name-dropping does not serve your dissertation, but rather sheds doubt over your understanding of the work cited.

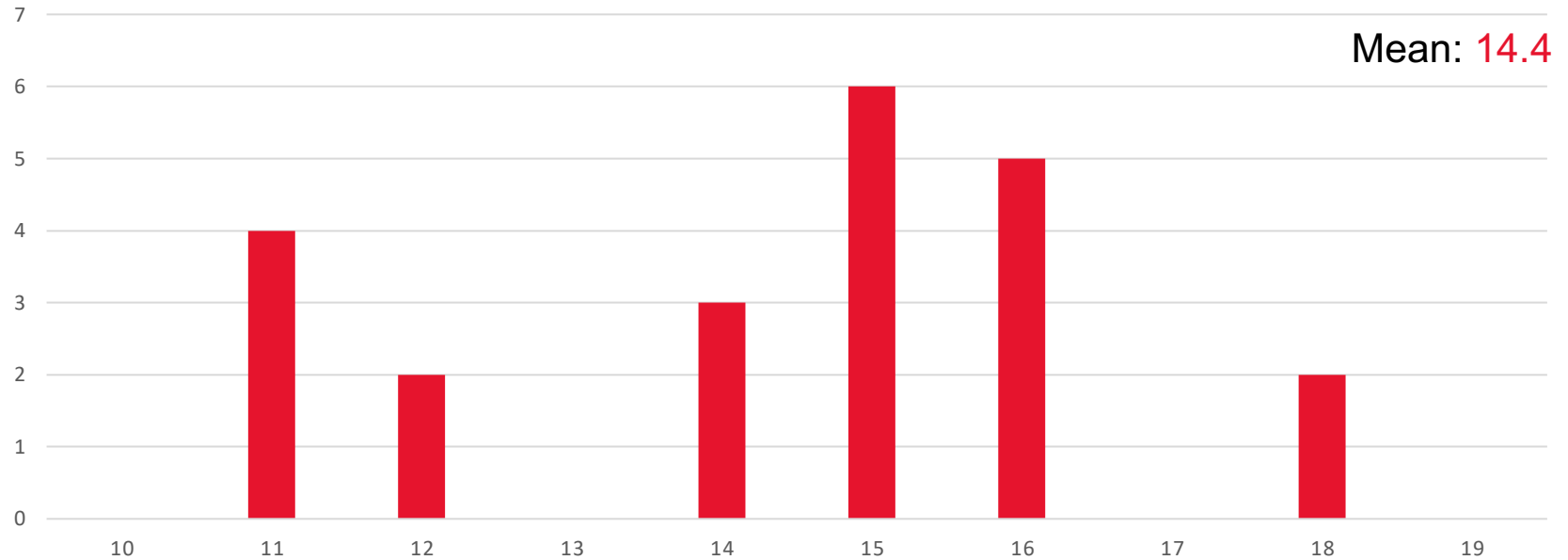
Even when not written in French dissertation style, your dissertation should feel structured and should not be a list of different ideas you had.

Your arguments must adhere to the subject at hand and not copy a pre-defined plan that follows closely the course's outline.

## Grades distribution – 53882



## Grades distribution – 53883





## How to construct a problématique

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Define the concepts of social norms and deviance and explain how they work in practice on the campus of Sciences Po Le Havre.

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Define the concepts of social norms and deviance and explain how they **work in practice** on the campus of Sciences Po Le Havre.

Who is setting the norms?

How are norms different here when compared to other universities?

How are norms evolving over time on the campus?

## How to construct a problématique

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Define the concepts of social norms and deviance and explain how they **work in practice** on the campus of Sciences Po Le Havre.

Who is setting the norms? **Multiple bodies: administration, students, etc.**

How are norms different here when compared to other universities? **Students from all over the world, studying in a specific environment.**

How are norms evolving over time on the campus? **Differences between norms on freshers' week and after almost a year here.**

## How to construct a problématique

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Like other Sciences Po campuses, the campus of Sciences Po Le Havre has a large international student body when compared to most Universities in France, and its pedagogical curriculum differs widely from the typical French higher education program. These specificities are not without effect on how social norms, and behaviours that stray from these norms, emerge and evolve on campus.

We will see that the social norms on the Sciences Po Le Havre campus are a by-product of both the norms internalised by students before going to University, and a re-negotiation process of these norms.

## Examples of problématiques (from students)

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« How is deviance controlled and how are social norms enforced in the academic environment of **an international, diverse** campus? »

« Are social norms at Sciences Po Le Havre the result of the campus environment or the result of interactions between students which are imbued in prenotions? »

« To what extent do social norms contribute to the establishment of social order within our college environment? »



## Example of problématique

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We will see that the social norms on the Sciences Po Le Havre campus are a by-product of both the norms internalised by students before going to University, and a re-negotiation process of these norms.

## Example of plan for the essay

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### Introduction

- I. Students from the Sciences Po Le Havre campus share diverse norms due to different primary and secondary socialisation processes – Mary Douglas (social construction of pollution), Pierre Bourdieu (distinction), Howard Becker (deviance)
- II. Student life on the Sciences Po Le Havre campus leads to a re-negotiation of these norms – Émile Durkheim (mechanical and organic solidarity), Erving Goffman (the world as a stage), Howard Becker (deviance), Pierre Bourdieu (domination)

### Conclusion

## Example of plan for the essay (detailed)

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### *Introduction*

Catching phrase to get the reader's / grader's attention

Definition of the notions at stake

Identification of a tension point and problématique (preferably as a declarative clause but can also be an interrogative one)

Overview of the outline

## Example of plan for the essay (detailed)

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- 1. Students from the Sciences Po Le Havre campus share diverse norms due to different primary and secondary socialisation processes*

Primary and secondary socialisation lead to behaviours that are imbued by diverse norms – Mary Douglas on pollution (the conception of what is dirty / what pollutes differs across cultures), Pierre Bourdieu on tastes and cultural goods, etc.

These differences can be observed on campus – international student body, students with different social backgrounds, etc...

## Example of plan for the essay (detailed)

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### *II. Student life on the SPLH campus leads to a re-negotiation of these norms*

The environment of the SPLH campus is propitious to the emergence of a tight-knit community with strong ties – Émile Durkheim on solidarity, freshers' week or student parties as moments of collective effervescence

In such environment, inherited norms and pre-notions are being re-negotiated – Erving Goffman on the world as a stage, Howard Becker on deviance and labelling, examples of norms specific to the campus and of deviant behaviours

This process is imbued in domination relationships – Pierre Bourdieu on domination

## Example of plan for the essay (detailed)

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### *Conclusion*

Brief summary of the key arguments in the essay that is not just a repetition of the outline but rather a condensed summary

Overview of a similar essay question that would be interesting or brief mention of a cultural item that sheds light on the essay question

## Example of plan for the article commentary

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### Introduction

- I. The existence and specificity of gay neighbourhoods can be analysed through the lens of inequalities and feeling of insecurity
- II. The specificities of gay neighbourhoods can act as a driving force to gentrification
- III. Nonetheless, the concept of *gaytrification* must not hide the diversity among and varied experiences of LGBTQA+ individuals

### Conclusion

## For next time...

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- Read Skocpol, T. 1994. "France, Russia, China: A Structural Analysis of Social Revolutions", in Jack Goldstone, ed., *Revolutions*, Harcourt Brace, pp.81-99
- Read McAdam, D. 1989. *The Biographical Consequences of Activism*, *American Sociological Review*, 54 (5), 744-760
- When reading, remember to note the important elements of the text: question asked by the author(s), (hypo)theses of the author(s), methods used, references, writing style, argumentative construction, etc.
- Prepare the presentation and discussion (if concerned)