COURSE: Sociology (Honours)   TIME: 3 HOURS

PAPER: Methodology of the Social Sciences   MARKS: 300

SUBJECT CODE: SOC8X03

EXAMINER: Me Letitia Smuts

SECOND EXAMINER: Dr Martin Mendelsohn

(THIS PAPER CONSISTS OF THREE (3) PAGES)

THIS EXAMINATION PAPER CONSISTS OF ONE SECTION. THERE ARE THREE QUESTIONS.

YOU HAVE TO CHOOSE AND ANSWER TWO OF THE QUESTIONS.
QUESTION 1

According to Colin Marsh, there are three general methodological issues that all researchers need to consider before embarking on a research project – sampling, gaining access and ethics. Discuss these issues in full. (30 marks)

Thereafter, critically discuss the following: (120 marks)

a.) The ethical guidelines that need to be considered during the social research process, according to Bless, Higson-Smith and Sithole (2013);
b.) The responsibilities of social researchers towards their research participants and the research process, especially within developing countries; and
c.) How power operates on each level of the research process.

QUESTION 2

‘Methods are not simply neutral tools: they are linked with the ways in which social scientists envision the connection between different viewpoints about the nature of social reality and how it should be examined’ (Bryman 2008: 4).

Based on the quote above, critically compare positivism and interpretivism. In your argument, address the following issues:

a.) The ontological and epistemological qualities of each of these traditions;
b.) The methodological philosophies that underlie the collection and analysis of data for each tradition; and
c.) The criticisms against each of the traditions.

End your argument with a brief discussion on how the ‘postmodern turn’ can impact on our conceptions of these traditions and their notions of ‘truth’.
QUESTION 3

Within the realm of the so-called ‘Science Wars’, a number of theorists have deliberated on how knowledge should be produced within the social sciences. In this module, the focus has specifically been on two qualities of mind or intellectual virtues, namely the sociological imagination and phronesis.

Formulate an argument where you discuss what C. Wright Mills suggested for the social sciences in his discussion of the sociological imagination, as well as Bent Flyvbjerg’s conception of phronesis and how it can make the social sciences matter again.

In your answer, critically discuss the methodological guidelines proposed by each approach.

[150]

TOTAL / TOTAAL: 300

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