

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

## Sociología del trabajo

**Idioma:** EN

**EXAM STATEMENT:**

No materials may be used. The exam consists of two topics. The first must be summarised in an outline. The use of bullet points or numbering (with at least three levels of detail) is recommended to express the structure of the content. Your presentation should not exceed one side of a sheet of paper. The outline must contain the main theses of each section. The second topic should be as extensive and detailed as possible, taking into account the time available (90 minutes for the entire examination). Pay special attention to your handwriting and spelling. Repeated spelling mistakes may result in failure.

Question 1: To summarise in an outline: The reorganisation of work or Fordism after Fordism (I): Fordism in motion; subcontracting, offshoring and global production chains; Fordism 2.0; Fordism in services.

Question 2: To develop: The Coming of Post-Industrial Society

## Question 1

To summarise in an outline: The reorganisation of work or Fordism after Fordism (I): Fordism in motion; subcontracting, offshoring and global production chains; Fordism 2.0; Fordism in services.

### STUDENT RESPONSE:

#### I. Fordism in Motion

##### A. Flexibilization of production systems

1. Decline of rigid mass-production norms
2. Introduction of just-in-time inventory management
3. Rise of modular production units

##### B. Erosion of industrial union power

1. Shift from closed-shop agreements to individual contracts
2. Fragmentation of worker solidarity across enterprises
3. New labor relations models (e.g., "work-life balance" policies)

##### C. Spatial reorganization of industrial sites

1. Decentralization of manufacturing hubs
2. Emergence of "enterprise zones" for cost efficiency
3. Urban-rural labor mobility patterns

#### II. Subcontracting, Offshoring and Global Production Chains

##### A. Fragmentation of production networks

1. Disassembly of vertically integrated firms into supplier ecosystems
2. Creation of multi-tiered subcontracting hierarchies
3. Geographic dispersion of production stages

##### B. Offshoring as strategic reorganization

1. Relocation of low-wage manufacturing to emerging economies
2. Cross-border coordination via digital platforms
3. Labor arbitrage through comparative cost advantages

##### C. Global production chains' social consequences

1. Precarious working conditions in supplier networks
2. Asymmetric power dynamics between core and peripheral firms
3. Environmental externalities of fragmented logistics

#### III. Fordism 2.0

##### A. Digital reconfiguration of production

1. Integration of automation and IoT in manufacturing
2. Platform-mediated coordination of production tasks
3. Data-driven optimization of supply chains

##### B. Service-sector adaptation

1. Digital platforms enabling "on-demand" labor
2. Algorithmic management of flexible workforces
3. Hybrid production-service models (e.g., smart factories)

##### C. New governance structures

1. Multi-stakeholder coordination committees
2. Corporate social responsibility as compliance mechanism
3. Shift from industrial to platform-based labor relations

#### IV. Fordism in Services

##### A. Service-sector industrialization

1. Standardization of service delivery protocols

- 2. Application of Taylorist principles to knowledge work
- 3. "Digitalization of service processes" (e.g., call centers)
- B. Precarious service employment
  - 1. Temporary contracts in hospitality and retail
  - 2. Gig economy fragmentation of traditional roles
  - 3. Erosion of occupational security in professional sectors
- C. Spatial and temporal desstandardization
  - 1. Remote work enabling geographical mobility
  - 2. Shift from 8-hour shifts to flexible schedules
  - 3. Emergence of "time poverty" in service occupations

End of outline

## Question 2

To develop: The Coming of Post-Industrial Society

### STUDENT RESPONSE:

The Coming of Post-Industrial Society represents a pivotal transformation in economic and social organization, emerging as a response to the decline of manufacturing-based industrial societies. Daniel Bell's seminal work, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* (1973), posits that the late twentieth century witnessed a fundamental shift from an industrial economy, characterized by mass production and standardized goods, to a post-industrial one dominated by service sectors, information technology, and knowledge-based work. This transition is not merely a quantitative change in employment structure but a qualitative reorganization of social relations, power dynamics, and cultural values.

Central to this framework is the assertion that the service sector, encompassing finance, healthcare, education, and information technology, supersedes manufacturing as the primary engine of economic growth. Bell identifies the rise of the "information society," where the production and dissemination of knowledge—rather than physical goods—become paramount. This shift is driven by technological advancements, particularly in computing and telecommunications, which enable the automation of routine tasks and the proliferation of white-collar jobs. Consequently, the workforce increasingly comprises professionals, managers, and technicians, whose roles demand higher educational attainment and specialized skills. The decline of blue-collar manufacturing, especially in advanced economies like the United States, signifies the end of the industrial era, with regions such as Detroit exemplifying the collapse of traditional industrial hubs.

However, Bell's vision is not without significant critiques. While he envisions a more equitable and dynamic society characterized by greater social mobility and cultural pluralism, scholars like David Harvey and John Bell (Daniel Bell's son) challenge the optimism of this model. Critics argue that the post-industrial transition exacerbates inequalities, as the new service economy often favors highly educated elites while leaving behind unskilled workers and marginalized groups. The "knowledge economy" risks creating a new underclass of service workers facing precarious employment, low wages, and limited social protections. Moreover, the rise of globalization and offshoring, as discussed in Topic 1, intensifies economic insecurity, with service jobs increasingly vulnerable to automation and outsourcing. For instance, the outsourcing of IT support and customer service roles to low-wage countries undermines the promise of stable, high-quality employment in the post-industrial context.

The evolution of employment under post-industrialism presents a complex paradox. On one hand, service-sector jobs often offer higher salaries, better benefits, and greater job satisfaction compared to industrial roles. On the other, these positions frequently exhibit high levels of instability, with short-term contracts, irregular hours, and minimal job security. The concept of "deskilling" emerges here, as routine tasks in sectors like retail and administration are automated or outsourced, reducing the need for specialized training. Simultaneously, the demand for advanced skills creates a "skills gap," where workers lacking education or adaptability face exclusion from the expanding

service economy. This duality is underscored by the rise of non-standard employment forms—such as temporary contracts, part-time work, and gig economy jobs—as analyzed in Topic 5. While the post-industrial society promises a more flexible and innovative labor market, it also perpetuates the precarity discussed in Topic 3, where service jobs, though ostensibly more prestigious, often fail to deliver the stability or upward mobility associated with industrial-era employment.

Socially, the post-industrial transition reshapes class structures and cultural identities. Traditional class divisions based on industrial ownership and labor are eroded, replaced by new hierarchies rooted in access to information, education, and technological capital. This shift fuels debates about the "death of classes" (Topic 7), as the working class fragments into distinct subgroups: highly skilled knowledge workers, service-sector employees, and those displaced by automation. The dominance of the service sector also influences gender dynamics, with women increasingly entering professional roles, yet often facing persistent gendered wage gaps and the expectation to manage unpaid care work (Topic 8). Furthermore, the global nature of post-industrial economies amplifies inequalities between nations, as developed countries benefit from advanced services while developing regions absorb manufacturing and low-skill service jobs. This global stratification, linked to the expansion of global production chains (Topic 1), highlights the uneven distribution of post-industrial benefits.

Despite its challenges, the post-industrial society offers potential for positive social change. The emphasis on innovation and human capital can foster environmental sustainability through green technologies and renewable energy sectors. Additionally, the rise of public and social services, such as healthcare and education, may enhance social cohesion and reduce inequality if adequately funded. However, achieving these benefits requires deliberate policy interventions to address the inherent contradictions of the model. The critique of optimism (Topic 4) underscores that without robust social safety nets, fair labor regulations, and equitable educational access, the post-industrial transition risks deepening existing disparities. The question of whether employment has truly improved—given rising job insecurity and the erosion of labor protections—remains unresolved, as the service sector's growth coexists with structural vulnerabilities.

In conclusion, the coming of post-industrial society marks a profound reconfiguration of economic and social life, driven by technological innovation and the service economy's ascendancy. While it promises greater prosperity and dynamism, it also introduces new forms of inequality and instability, challenging traditional notions of class and labor. The legacy of this transformation depends on how societies navigate the tensions between technological progress, social equity, and democratic governance. As the world continues to grapple with the implications of this shift, the post-industrial model serves as both a cautionary tale and a call for inclusive policies that ensure the benefits of economic evolution are shared broadly.