Achieved status
A social position that a person attains largely through his or her own efforts.

Agrarian society
The most technologically advanced form of preindustrial society. Members are engaged primarily in the production of food but increase their crop yield through technological innovations such as the plow.
Alienation. A condition of estrangement or dissociation from the surrounding society.

Ascribed status. A social position that is assigned to a person by society without regard for the person’s unique talents or characteristics.

Avatar. A three-dimensional model, two-dimensional icon, or constructed personality that is assumed by the user of an Internet site.
Bureaucracy

A component of formal organization that uses rules and hierarchical ranking to achieve efficiency.

Bureaucratization

The process by which a group, organization, or social movement becomes increasingly bureaucratic.

Classical theory

An approach to the study of formal organizations that views workers as being motivated almost entirely by economic rewards.
Coalition

A temporary or permanent alliance geared toward a common goal.

Formal organization

A group designed for a special purpose and structured for maximum efficiency.

Gemeinschaft

A close-knit community, often found in rural areas, in which strong personal bonds unite members.
**Gesellschaft**

A community, often urban, that is large and impersonal, with little commitment to the group or consensus on values.

**Goal displacement**

Overzealous conformity to official regulations of a bureaucracy.

**Group**

Any number of people with similar norms, values, and expectations who interact with one another on a regular basis.
Horticultural society

A preindustrial society in which people plant seeds and crops rather than merely subsist on available foods.

Human relations approach

An approach to the study of formal organizations that emphasizes the role of people, communication, and participation in a bureaucracy and tends to focus on the informal structure of the organization.

Hunting-and-gathering society

A preindustrial society in which people rely on whatever foods and fibers are readily available in order to survive.
Ideal type

A construct or model for evaluating specific cases.

Industrial society

A society that depends on mechanization to produce its goods and services.

In-group

Any group or category to which people feel they belong.
Iron law of oligarchy

A principle of organizational life under which even a democratic organization will eventually develop into a bureaucracy ruled by a few individuals.

Master status

A status that dominates others and thereby determines a person’s general position in society.

McDonaldization

The process by which the principles of the fast-food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as the rest of the world.
Mechanical solidarity

A collective consciousness that emphasizes group solidarity, characteristic of societies with minimal division of labor.

Net neutrality

The principle that the government should remain non-selective on neutral toward online content.

Organic solidarity

A collective consciousness that rests on mutual interdependence, characteristic of societies with a complex division of labor.
Out-group

A group or category to which people feel they do not belong.

Peter principle

A principle of organizational life according to which every employee within a hierarchy tends to rise to his or her level of incompetence.

Postindustrial society

A society whose economic system is engaged primarily in the processing and control of information.
Postmodern society

A technologically sophisticated society that is preoccupied with consumer goods and media images.

Primary group

A small group characterized by intimate, face-to-face association and cooperation.

Reference group

Any group that individuals use as a standard for evaluating themselves and their own behavior.
Role conflict

The situation that occurs when incompatible expectations arise from two or more social positions held by the same person.

Role exit

The process of disengagement from a role that is central to one’s self-identity in order to establish a new role and identity.

Role strain

The difficulty that arises when the same social position imposes conflicting demands and expectations.
Scientific management approach

Another name for the classical theory of formal organizations.

Secondary group

A formal, impersonal group in which there is little social intimacy or mutual understanding.

Social institution

An organized pattern of beliefs and behavior centered on basic social needs.
Social interaction

The ways in which people respond to one another.

Social network

A series of social relationships that links a person directly to others, and through them indirectly to still more people.

Social role

A set of expectations for people who occupy a given social position or status.
Social structure

The way in which a society is organized into predictable relationships.

Sociocultural evolution

Long-term trends in societies resulting from the interplay of continuity, innovation, and selection.

Status

A term used by sociologists to refer to any of the full range of socially defined positions within a large group or society.
Technology

Cultural information about the ways in which the material resources of the environment may be used to satisfy human needs and desires.

Trained incapacity

The tendency of workers in a bureaucracy to become so specialized that they develop blind spots and fail to notice obvious problems.