What if good institutions were in fact the product of good intentions? What if the cynicism that is supposed to be rigor and the acquisitiveness that is supposed to be realism are making us forget the origins of the greatness we lay claim to.

Marilynne Robinson
A social institution is a complex, integrated set of social norms organized around the preservation of basic societal values.

They support the society's survival.

While societies may differ in how they establish these institutions and in how simple or complex they are, we find the same five basic social institutions among all human groups.
Although all sociologists agree on the big five, many consider other segments of society to be social institutions as well – aging, the media, health care, social welfare, work, gender and others.
General Functions of Social Institutions

- Simplify social behavior for the individual
- Provide ready-made forms of social relations and social roles for the individual
- Act as agencies of coordination and stability for the total culture
- Control behavior
SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS: EDUCATION
A society’s future largely depends on the successful socialization of new members.

Every society develops a system of education consisting of the roles and norms that ensure the transmission of knowledge, values and patterns of behavior from one generation to the next.

In some preindustrial societies, education is largely informal and occurs mainly within the family.

Schooling is formal education, which involves instruction by specially trained teachers who follow officially recognized policies.
Defining Education

- Functionalist view: Studies the ways in which education aids society
- Conflict view: Studies the ways in which education maintains the imbalance of power in society
- Interactions view: Studies the face-to-face interaction of the classroom.
Education and Religion

The Purpose of Education

to transmit the knowledge, skills, behavior patterns and values necessary for people to become functioning members of society
The Functionalist Perspective on Education

- **Teaching Knowledge and Skills**
  - Children must learn the knowledge and skills they will need as adults.
  - Education generates new knowledge, which is useful in adapting to changing conditions.

- **Transmission of Culture**
  - For societies to survive, they must pass on core values of their culture.
  - Societies use education to support their communities’ social and political system.
The Functionalist Perspective on Education

- Social Integration
  - Education serves to produce a society of individuals who share a common national identity.
  - Schools foster social integration and national unity by teaching a core set of skills and values.

- Occupational Placement
  - Education screens and selects the members of society for the work they will do as adults.
  - Schools in industrialized countries identify students who show special talents and abilities at an early age.
The Conflict Perspective on Education

- Reinforce inequality
  - Education serves to sort students into social ranks and to limit the potential of certain individuals and groups to gain power and social rewards.
  - Students’ achievement or failure tend to reflect existing inequalities.

- Tracking
  - **Tracking** -- Involves the assignment of students to different types of educational programs
  - Classroom instructions used in the different tracks serve to reproduce the status quo.
The Conflict Perspective on Education

- **Social Control**
  - Schools produce unquestioning citizens who accept the basic inequalities of the social system.
- **Hidden curriculum** -- Schools’ transmission of cultural goals that are not openly acknowledged.

- **Education and Socioeconomic Status**
  - Opportunities for educational success are distributed unequally.
  - Higher-status college students outnumber lower-status college students.
The Conflict Perspective on Education

U.S. HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE GRADUATES, BY RACE

- High school graduate
- College graduate

Percent of population 25 years or over

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, 2006

U.S. HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUTS, BY RACE

- Total population
- White
- African American
- Hispanic

Percent dropouts

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports

Percent of population aged 18 to 24 who have not completed high school and are not enrolled
Student-Teacher Interaction

Students labeled fast learners or slow learners without any data eventually took on the characteristics of the label.

A self-fulfilling prophecy is a prediction that leads to behavior that makes the prediction come true.

When teachers treat students as if they are bright and capable, students begin to think of themselves in this way and vice versa.
The Interactionist Perspective on Education

- Interactions among Students
  - The Coleman Report found that the socioeconomic status of fellow students was the most significant factor in explaining student success.
  - Peer pressure may be a factor in this dynamic.
Students tend to accept the labels teachers place on them and behave accordingly. The students’ behavior then confirms the teachers’ original expectations.
How do we learn what it means to be American?
Under which perspective do you think Pink Floyd’s *Just Another Brick in the Wall* would fit?

**Functionalist Perspective**  
Education maintains social stability by transmitting culture, teaching knowledge and skills, and preparing individuals for the world of work.

**Conflict Perspective**  
Education perpetuates a social system that limits the potential of certain individuals and groups to gain social rewards and power.

**Interactionist Perspective**  
Face-to-face interactions between students and teachers profoundly affect student educational achievement.
Educational Reform

- History of Reform
  - In the early part of the 1900s education concerns centered on the assimilation of immigrants.
  - In the mid-1900s Americans looked to education to win the space race.
  - After 1983 education focused on comparing American students to those in other nations.
  - Although many overhauls occurred, reforms brought little progress.
  - The improvement goals originally planned for 2000 were not met.
No Child Left Behind

• 2001 law with benchmarks for improving schools.
• Provided money for schools to improve teaching.
• Made standardized test scores the measure of how a school was performing.
• Extra emphasis on early reading instruction and teacher preparation.
• Although test scores have risen, some claim that higher-order thinking skills have been neglected.
“My teacher said the school has tough new standards and I need to improve my vocabulary. What’s ‘vocabulary’?”
The Purposes Behind Education Reform Since the 1980s

improve student achievement, preparation for jobs in the age of information technology
Charter schools: Funded with public money but privately operated and run. The charter establishes the amount of public funding the school receives.

School choice: Parents may receive a voucher equal to the amount their state spends on education for their child that they can put toward the tuition at a private, charter or religious school.

Homeschooling: A system in which a child’s main education is by parents at home. Critics of homeschooling claim that it may not provide a broad enough curriculum or necessary social interaction.
A 2006 survey showed that only 75% of parents believed their public schools were “very” or “somewhat” safe.

Such fears are generated by violent incidents such as the Columbine High School shootings.

In 2005 about 10% of boys and 3% of girls were threatened or injured by a weapon at school.

Schools seem to be safer for students than being off campus.

Zero tolerance policies involve set punishments—often expulsion—and no leniency for serious offenses such as carrying a weapon, committing a violent act or possessing drugs or alcohol.

Some educators believe that the best way to curb school violence is to teach young people how to resolve disputes peacefully.
Making Schools Safe

- 14% of grades 9-12 students have been involved in a physical fight at school.
- 28% of students have experienced verbal or physical bullying at school in the last 6 months.
- 86% of high schools reported a theft in the last school year.
- 85% of public schools control access to school buildings.
- 43% of public schools use security cameras.
- 2% of public schools require students to pass through metal detectors daily.
Bilingual education -- a system in which non-English-speaking students study science, math and other subjects in their native languages until they gain fluency in English.

Bilingual education has had the support of many educators, but the plan has been opposed by those who believe that it interferes with cultural assimilation.

In 1998 a citizens’ initiative made bilingual education illegal in California.

As of 2008, 30 states have laws making English their officially recognized language.
Interest in alternative schooling methods has led to three distinctive styles of alternative schooling: the free school movement, magnet schools and back-to-basics curricula.
Alternative Education

- **Free school:** Schools should encourage creativity by allowing students to learn through exploration and experimentation.
- **Magnet school:** Schools with distinct features intended to attract students from across a district.
- **Back-to-basics curricula:** Programs are designed to prepare failing or at-risk students for their return to mainstream schools.
- **First two types designed as a way to change schooling,** third type designed as a substitute.
- **Some longtime supporters are concerned that the third style has become dominant.**
Parents have the primary responsibility of caring for their children and they often share religious worship with their children.

By common belief, failing to educate a child to fully participate in society constitutes harm, so the government requires children to attend school.

What happens when the government attempts to teach lessons that parents or students object to on religious grounds? The First Amendment clearly states that the government will not create a state religion but court judges are in charge of the interpretation in specific cases. Court cases have resulted in the banning of voluntary prayer times.
# US Supreme Court Rulings on Prayer in Public Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Study</th>
<th>Ruling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Engel v. Vitale (1962)</strong></td>
<td>A public school may not conduct a voluntary, “nondenominational” prayer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School District of Abington Township v. Schempp (1963)</strong></td>
<td>A public school may not conduct public Bible readings, even if student participation is optional.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wallace v. Jaffree (1985)</strong></td>
<td>A public school may not conduct a silent meditation or voluntary prayer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lee v. Weisman (1992)</strong></td>
<td>A public school may not conduct a prayer at a graduation ceremony, even if attendance is voluntary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Santa Fe Independent School Dist. v. Doe (2000)</strong></td>
<td>A public school may not permit individual students to conduct public prayers at extracurricular events.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*An entire classroom prays together at Boys Town, a private organization that cares for and educates at-risk youth.*
SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS: RELIGION
Religion—A Sociological Definition

- Societies make distinctions between the sacred (anything that is considered to be part of the supernatural world and that inspires awe, respect, and reverence) and the profane (anything considered to be part of the ordinary world and, thus, commonplace and familiar).

- This distinction is the basis for all religions (systems of roles and norms that are organized around the sacred realm and that bind people together in social groups).

- Religion is a basic institution, yet it exists in many different forms because different societies give sacred meaning to a wide variety of objects, events, and experiences.
The Functions of Religion

- **Social Cohesion**
  - Strengthens bonds between people.
  - Can lead to conflict between adherents of different religions.

- **Social Control**
  - Encourages conformity to norms.
  - Provides a divine purpose for conformity.
  - May inhibit innovation, freedom of thought and social reform.

- **Emotional Support**
  - Helps people endure disappointment and suffering by providing a comfort in believing that harsh circumstances have a special purpose.
  - Attempts to provide answers to the questions concerning life and death.
Rituals and Symbols

R ritual -- An established pattern of behavior through which a group of believers experiences the sacred.

Often used to mark changes in status such as birth, marriage and death.

Also used to unite believers and reinforce faith.

Often includes sacred symbolic objects—such as clothing, herbs, chalices, or books.
Belief Systems

- **Animism**: Belief that spirits actively influence human life; two kinds: shamanism and totemism
- **Theism**: Belief in god or gods; two kinds: monotheism and polytheism
- **Monotheism**: The belief in one god, who is usually seen as the creator and moral authority
- **Polytheism**: Belief in a number of gods
- **Ethicalism**: The idea that moral principles have a sacred quality
Organizational Structures

- **Ecclesia** -- Structured bureaucratic organization, closely allied with the government, whose officials are highly trained and wield considerable power.

- **Denomination** -- Well-established religious organization in which a substantial number of the population are members.

- **Sect** -- Relatively small religious organization that typically has split off from a denomination because of differences concerning beliefs.

- **Cult** -- New religion whose beliefs differ markedly from those of the society’s major religions.
Religious organizations in a Western society can be ranked according to how well they are accepted and integrated within that society.
Freedom of religion is protected by law and supported by popular opinion.

- The United States is home to hundreds of religious denominations, sects and cults.
- Immigrants often bring new religions.
- Separation of church and state means the US has no national religion.

Most Americans belong to one of the major faiths, with the majority being Protestant Christians. Demographic differences among religious groups exist.

The general opinion in the US is that all people should hold some religious beliefs.

Rise of fundamentalist Christianity has become a topic of study.
Religion in the United States

Religious affiliation has a strong regional basis. Baptists dominate the South, while Methodists are strong through the Midwest. Lutherans are found mostly in the upper Midwest, and Catholics are numerous in the Northeast and Southwest.

Skills Focus

Interpreting Maps

Why do you think Catholicism is the dominant religion in much of the southwestern United States?

Legend:
- Catholic
- Latter-day Saints
- Lutheran
- Baptist
- Methodist
- No dominant group

Source: Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies
Although the majority of Americans claim a religious preference, only about one-third of people attend religious services on a regular basis.

Secular refers to the non-religious aspects of society:
- Decisions based equally on religious teaching and own beliefs.

Religiosity is the depth of people’s religious feelings:
- Hard to measure
- Depth of feeling does not correlate with participation in services.
Religious **fundamentalism** refers to a set of associated beliefs including strict adherence to the religion’s rules and practices and the belief that religion should be the primary force in one’s life.

A variety of fundamentalist Christian groups exist in the United States, but they share the beliefs that:

- the Christian Bible is completely and literally true.
- Jesus Christ is divine.
- their faith will bring personal salvation—the “born-again” experience.
- they are obligated to bring Jesus Christ into the lives of all nonbelievers.

26% of Americans describe themselves as “born-again” or evangelical Christians.

These Americans have become politically organized around certain issues such as opposition to abortion and homosexuality.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Christianity</strong>:</td>
<td>Protestants first arrived in the 1600s and the country is today predominantly Christian.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Buddhism</strong>:</td>
<td>Chinese immigrants brought Buddhism during the mid-1800s and many non-Asian Americans have adopted it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hinduism</strong>:</td>
<td>Born in the ancient Indus Valley, today there are more than one million Hindus in the United States.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Judaism</strong>:</td>
<td>Founded about 2000 BC and practiced by 5 million Americans, a number comparable to the Jewish population of Israel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Islam</strong>:</td>
<td>The religion of Muslims; there are more than 4.7 million Muslims in the United States.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other Religions</strong>:</td>
<td>Sikhism, Baha’i, Taoism, Spiritualism and diverse Native American and New Age faiths; 34 million claim no religion and more than 1 million are atheists.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Daily prayer is an important part of life for Muslims in the United States.

Hasidic Jews participate in popular culture but retain a degree of separation.

People of various religions join Catholics in celebrating the blessing of the fleet.
What effect has immigration had on religious diversity in the United States?

In what ways does the religious diversity of the United States affect society?