



A- Level Sociology



Welcome to Sociology!

Sociology is an exciting social science that allows you to consider the world around you like you never have done before!

Sociologists seek to discover how the institutions around us affect the way we behave both as individuals and within communities. Through a variety of research methods and theories, sociologists are able to provide explanations to some of the most important questions in modern society. This includes;

'Why are working class children less likely to get good GCSE grades?'

'Why does anyone believe in God when science claims to have all the answers?'

'Why are there more men in prison than women?'

How to Prepare for September

Although the course doesn't require you to have ever picked up a sociology book before you start in September, it is a really good idea to get a head start and do some background reading and research over the summer holidays. One of the great things about sociology is that it can be found everywhere and you may already be reading and watching some of the key materials below.

Recommended Reading

You should be reading newspapers on a regular basis throughout the year to ensure you are up to date on current social affairs. The Guardian is particularly useful and can be accessed online as well as The Times Educational Supplement. There are also a list of books below you may want to dip into:-

Micheal Haralambos, Haralambos and Holborn, Sociology themes and perspectives (2008).

Ann Oakley, The Sociology of Housework, (1984).

Eric Hobsbawn, How to Change the World: Tales of Marx and Marxism, (2012).

Thomas Boronski, Sociology of Education, (2015).

Documentaries and Films

Louis Theroux, America's Most Hated Family. Available on Netflix.

Question Time. Available on BBC IPlayer.

Up Series. Available on BBC IPlayer.

The Stanford Prison Experiment. Available on YouTube.

Frontline: Merchants of Cool. Available on YouTube.



A-Level Sociology



It is vital that you complete all the tasks below in order to study Sociology in September. This will be your first assessed work and therefore needs to be completed to a high standard. It should be handed in on your first lesson.

Task 1

Sociology is a fairly new discipline and there are lots of different ideas about how we should define it.

- Read through the 5 definitions provided.
- What similarities can you find between these definitions? Make a list.
- What differences can you find between these definitions? Make a list.
- Using no more than 200 words create your own definition of sociology.

A. Ginsberg ("The Study of Society", 1939):

"Sociology may be defined as the study of society; that is of the web of human interactions and relationships".

B. Sugarman ("Sociology", 1968):

"Sociology is the objective study of human behaviour in so far as it is affected by the fact that people live in groups".

C. Giner ("Sociology", 1972):

"The purpose of Sociology is the scientific study of human society through the investigation of people's social behaviour".

D. Giddens ("Sociology", 1989):

"Sociology is the study of human social life, groups and societies. It is a dazzling and compelling enterprise, having as its subject matter our own behaviour as social beings. The scope of sociology is extremely wide, ranging from the analysis of passing encounters between individuals in the street up to the investigation of world-wide social processes".

E. Lawson and Garrod ("The Complete A-Z Sociology Handbook", 1996):

"Sociology is the study of individuals in groups in a systematic way, which grew out of the search for understanding associated with the industrial and scientific revolutions of the 18th and 19th centuries".



A- Level Sociology



Task 2- Key Concepts

Sociology has its own language! Here are a list of the kind of terms you will need to learn and understand. You need to research the following terms and create a neat glossary.

Norms	Labelling	Patriarchy
Values	Material Deprivation	Hierarchy
Culture	Meritocracy	Inequality
Consensus	Role	Capitalism
Ideology	Social Class	Social Solidarity

Task 3- What is the purpose of Education? My reflections.

One of the first modules you will consider is the function of education in society. Before we consider sociological theories and explanations about the role and purpose of education, you need to write around 500 words and reflect on your personal experiences and views of education.

Extended writing forms a large part of the course so make sure you structure this like an essay, with an introduction and conclusion and try to use key terms from your glossary. Think about the following questions:-

- ⇒ Did you enjoy school? Why?
- ⇒ Did you learn anything else at school aside from what was taught in the classroom?
- ⇒ How did you behave at school? Why?
- ⇒ Who did you hang around with at school? Why?
- ⇒ What do you think the role and purpose of education is?

Extension - research sociological explanations of education and see if this matches your experiences. You may like to consider Functionalism, Marxism and Feminism. You can include this in your work.

Task 4- Research a Sociologist

Independent research is also something you will be challenged with in year 12 and 13. To demonstrate you already have some research skills you need to research a sociologist of your choice. You should then create a short summary (around 250- 500 words) including information about their key ideas and studies.

Examples include;- Auguste Comte, Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx, Ann Oakley, Anthony Giddens.