

AS/A Sociology Course Outline

Overview

Sociology is the study of society and individuals. It is suitable for students who have an open, enquiring mind and enjoy debating contemporary issues. A number of theoretical and political perspectives are applied to the study of topics such as education, families and households, mass media and crime and deviance.

A wider knowledge and understanding of the society in which we live is essential and students must be keen on keeping up to date with the news and current affairs. As members of society all students should come to the course equipped with some knowledge of the social world, but through the study of sociology they will develop a deeper understanding and examine issues that directly affect life in Britain and other areas of the World. Students learn how to conduct experimental and non-experimental research, and even carry out and report on their own sociological investigations.

Students will learn through arguing, guided reading, discussing, writing essays, group work, videos, class presentations and Internet research.

Course Structure & Content

AS:

Unit 1 Culture and Identity; Families and Households; Wealth, Poverty and Welfare

This unit includes an examination of different conceptions of culture, including subculture, mass culture, high and low culture, popular culture, global culture. The unit also considers the relationship of the family to the social structure and social change, including topics such as marriage, divorce and childhood. Students also focus on the social indicators of poverty, wealth and income.

Unit 2 Education; Health; Sociological Methods

This unit looks at the role and purpose of education and the issue of social class differences in achievement. It also considers health, illness, disability and the body as social and as biological constructs. Students examine the unequal social distribution of health and illness in the United Kingdom by social class, age, gender, ethnicity and region, and internationally. Data Collection and analysis is also used, including questionnaires, interviews, participant and non-participant observation, experiments, documents, and official statistics; and the students review the strengths and limitations of these sources.

A2:

Unit 3 Beliefs in Society; Global Development; Mass Media; Power and Politics

This unit includes examining different theories of ideology, science and religion. Students analyse theories of development, underdevelopment and global inequality. The unit also considers the relationship between ownership and control of the mass media, globalisation and popular culture. Different theories of the nature and distribution of power are also discussed.

Unit 4

Crime and Deviance; Stratification and Differentiation; Theory and Methods

This unit includes the study of different theories of the nature and distribution of power. Different theories of stratification, including stratification by social class, gender, ethnicity and age are evaluated. Students also look at theory and methods critically, improving their knowledge from AS. The main focus of the unit is a detailed study of crime and deviance, considering explanations of crime including the role of the media in amplifying deviance in society.

Assessment:

All units are externally assessed with the assessments set and marked by the examination board. Modules can be taken in January and June.

Assessment Objectives (AQA):

Having followed the course students should be able to:

- Acquire knowledge and develop a critical understanding of contemporary social processes and social changes
- Appreciate the significance of theoretical and conceptual issues in sociological debate
- Understand and evaluate sociological methodology and a range of research methods through active involvement in the research process
- Develop skills that enable individuals to focus on their personal identity, roles and responsibilities within society

Entry qualifications

There is no requirement for prior knowledge of Sociology when embarking on this course. Success in English and Humanities subjects at GCSE is essential as an entrance requirement for this course.

Career Prospects

The course lays an appropriate foundation for further study of Sociology and related subjects in higher education. In addition, it provides a worthwhile course for candidates of various ages and from diverse backgrounds in terms of general education and lifelong learning. Equally, material studied would be useful for candidates intending to pursue careers in the field of Social Sciences. Sociology can prepare students for careers in the media, education, social work, law, the police and criminology.