

sociology

A Level

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Exam board: AQA



What is this subject about?

Sociology is the study of human society and the social relationships and institutions within it. Sociology's subject matter is diverse, ranging from crime, religion, the family to education, and from social stability to radical change in whole societies. Unifying the study of these diverse areas of study is Sociology's purpose – to understand how human action and thinking both shape, and are shaped, by surrounding cultural and social structures. You will also study the techniques that sociologists use in order to conduct their research, and sociological theories that seek to explain and understand the nature and development of contemporary Britain. Throughout the course you will acquire the essential knowledge and understanding of the central aspects of sociological thought and the core themes of socialisation, culture and identity, social differentiation, power and stratification and research methods.

What will I study over the two years?

In the first year you begin by studying 'Families and Households'. This topic includes: the relationship of the family to the social structure; reasons for demographic changes; changing patterns of marriage, cohabitation, separation, divorce and childbearing; the diversity of contemporary family and household structures; gender, domestic labour and power relationships and childhood.

You will then study 'Education' where the focus is on: the functions of the education system; educational policies; the differential educational achievement of social groups and how relationships and processes within the school system and external factors affect achievement. Also for this topic you will look at sociological research methods.

In the second year the first area of study is 'Crime and Deviance', learning about the range of sociological perspectives on crime prevention, control and punishment. You will consider the links between crime and different social groups as well as the relationship of crime to the media, globalisation and new forms of criminality such as cyber-crime. In this topic there is also an in-depth study of sociological perspectives, sociology and science, values and links to policy and research methods.

Secondly you will study 'Beliefs in Society' which involves looking at the definitions of religion and the role of religious secularisation in the UK and in the global context. You will learn about the wide range of different types of religious organisations and the impact of globalisation.

How is the course assessed?

Assessment is by three written exam papers. Each paper is 2 hours long, consisting of a range of short and extended writing questions.

What skills will I need and develop in this course?

In order to achieve this understanding of our society to an appropriate level or depth, detail and sophistication you must be able to debate, evaluate, interpret and apply a wide range of sociological knowledge, theories and research evidence about late 20th and early 21st Century Britain and its institutions, issues and problems. Reading articles and texts, writing essays and individual study form substantial features of the course.

What can the course lead to in terms of higher education and future careers?

Sociology is recognised for entry to all universities and by employers for a wide variety of jobs and careers. Sociology trains you to answer the 'what', 'how' and 'why' questions about human societies, giving you a competitive edge in the job market and providing a strong intellectual background for students considering careers in the professions or business, health and welfare, administration, education, journalism, public relations, police or research.

What are the formal entry requirements for this course?

Aside from the general entry criteria that the College requires, you will also need to achieve a minimum of:

- Grade 4 in GCSE English Language

Will it matter if I have not studied Sociology at school?

No, not at all. Sociology is not often taught in schools and we do not assume any previous knowledge.

What extra support/enrichment activities are on offer?

The department offers subject tutorials to support students on a one to one basis as well as end of topic revision sessions throughout the year. Towards the exams more extensive revision sessions are offered which include skills based sessions. The department enjoys talks from visiting speakers on contemporary topics and in previous years we have had university lecturers and young people speaking about their experiences within the criminal justice system. The department is currently exploring running trips to the Old Bailey, London and also New York.

Subject combination advice:

A subject that helps us understand the world in which we live clearly will combine with a wide range of other academic subjects, particularly those in the humanities area. It is particularly appropriate to those subjects with a similar skills base and related knowledge such as English, Drama, History, Politics, Economics, Geography, Business Studies, Film and Media Studies, Psychology, and Health and Social Care. Although not directly related to science subjects it can still be an appropriate and useful contrasting subject that would develop communication skills.