

Course introduction

Sociology is the 'study of society'. The term 'society' refers to the world around you, your community, your country, and all the different people and groups that exist, with their different cultures, beliefs, values, languages, religions etc. It gives students the chance to study and understand why things are the way they are, and why people behave in certain ways.

Examples of issues that students look at include:

- Why do some people commit crime?
- Why do girls do much better at school than boys?
- Can the media have an effect on the way we act?
- Why is there so much inequality and poverty in the country?

Sociology gives students with an interest in social issues, social justice and current affairs the opportunity to gain a valuable understanding and insight into how society works and how the structures and processes in society, inevitably shape who we are, how we behave and many other aspects of our lives and life chances. Students develop an understanding of how individuals, groups, institutions and societies are interdependent; the way in which they cooperate and conflict with each other, and the potential causes for the social differences between individuals.

Students are encouraged to think critically and analytically, and to make informed judgements and arguments based on evidence and theories. Students are asked to reflect on their own experiences of the world in which they live and to develop an increased awareness and understanding of the world they live in and role they play in it.

How the course is taught

Lessons will be structured around learning sociological theory and research, class discussions, analysing TV documentaries and newspaper articles and also student presentations. Regular essays and reading tasks will be set.

Career opportunities

University courses in social sciences, humanities, groups (class, gender, ethnicity). Social work, media law.

Vocational courses in social work, journalism media, police, law.

Past students have gone on to study sociology at university or into local government work, nursing, police or social work.



Entrance requirements

Students who wish to study Sociology must have acquired a minimum of 5 GCSEs 4-9 including Maths and English Language.

How the course is assessed

A Level:

Paper 1: The Education System with Research Methods.
2 hour exam; one-third of A level marks.

Paper 2: Culture and Identity and the Mass Media.
2 hour exam; one-third of A level marks.

Paper 3: Crime and Deviance with Research Methods.
2 hour exam; one-third of A level marks.

The A level is designed as a two year course – students would be expected to sit all of the exams at the end of Year 13.

Areas covered by the course

The Education System: theories explaining the role of education; differences in achievement between social groups (class, gender, ethnicity).

Research Methods: analyzing the strength and limitations of research methods – social experiments, questionnaires, interviews, observations, official statistics, documents.

Culture and Identity: the process of socialization, different forms of culture in society, forms of identity – class, gender, ethnicity, nationality, age, disability.

Mass Media: ownership of the media, theories of media power, the effect of the media on audiences, the representation of different groups by the media, moral panics.

Crime and Deviance: theories explaining why crime happens, investigating which groups in society commit crimes, punishment in society, solutions to crime.

