

SOCIOLOGY

Course Length: Studied over two years
Examination Board: AQA
Course Leader: Mrs J Eaton (eaton@queenelizabeths.derbyshire.sch.uk)

Course Content

A-Level Sociology has a strong focus on contemporary UK society and our place in a global context. At the heart of Sociological research lies the desire to understand how society works and to explore possibilities for change. What issues inspire you? What would you change? We are living in exciting times. Controversial social questions form part of the fabric of our lives and the world around us.

Education and Methods in Context

'Compulsory education will get young pickpockets off the streets.' W.E. Gladstone, 1868. What is the purpose of education today? Is education a human right? What do you learn in school - skills, facts or how to agree with authority? Some sociologists see education as turning pupils into model citizens while others say that it suppresses revolution. What do you think? Students will understand and use surveys, questionnaires, interviews, such as those conducted by Mac an Ghail into sub-groups among secondary school pupils. They will also analyse Government statistics, such as the data showing that White and African Caribbean working class boys are failing at school. Students will examine the ethics of experimenting in the classroom and ask - "Can it ever be acceptable to lie about a pupil's intelligence for the sake of research?".

Culture and Identity

What does it mean to be human? Two infants were lost in India in 1918; years later they were found and returned to their families, but they had been brought up by wolves and they growled, lapped water from puddles and ran on all fours. At birth, we are faced with a social world that already exists. Joining this world involves rapidly learning how things are done in it. 'In the Shirbit culture men daily engage in a barbaric act of self mutilation by scraping their faces.' Recognise this? Where might the 'shirbits' live? Sociologists seek to understand their own culture and enter other cultures and understand them too.

The Media

Developments over the past 30 years have led to a dramatic increase in the types of mass media available to people and the effects of this are still unclear. Does the age of new personalised media mean more consumer choice, resulting in a wide range of opinions? Or are they dominated by media conglomerates that use them for their own purposes? The Leveson Inquiry was set up to investigate the relationship between press and politicians. Which is the more powerful? Has YouTube beaten TV? Should the Government be able to control the film industry? Do the media shape your opinions... or are you, the audience, in control?

Crime & Deviance

'I was pushing my baby through a subway the other day and about 14 lads were behind me. They were being threatening, waving bicycle chains around. They were chasing a boy in front.' 'Barclays bank fined £290 million for trying to manipulate interest rates.' What is crime and how does society deal with it? Students will understand the major theoretical approaches to crime including Functionalism, Marxism and Interactionism.

Theory and Methods

Students will become familiar with a wide range of original research, such as official crime statistics, self-report studies and Durkheim's comparative analysis of the reasons for suicide. This will include the process involved in sociological research including sampling, practical, ethical and theoretical issues. Students will also examine the role of social policy in addressing social problems, such as racism and youth offending.

Assessment

Paper	Title	Assessment	A Level
1	Education with Theory and Methods	Written Exam: 2hr	33.3%
2	Topics in Sociology <i>Culture and Identity, The Media</i>	Written Exam: 2hr	33.3%
3	Crime and Deviance with Theory and Methods	Written Exam: 2hr	33.3%