

## A Level Sociology

### **What are the entry requirements?**

GCSE 5 or above in English Language or Literature.

### **About the Course**

Sociology is one of the social sciences, and like History and Psychology, tries to understand human behaviour. Sociology particularly concerns the study of social life, offering different explanations and evidence for what affects our social behaviour. In contrast, psychology tends to concentrate on the workings of individuals' minds, although there is some overlap. Sociologists are also interested in the historical development of societies.

Whilst psychologists emphasise the experimental method, and historians make great use of secondary sources, sociologists use a wider range of research techniques and sources to find out about social life. You will be expected to become familiar with these methods and answer exam questions about them.

We can all see evidence of social influences and factors, and statistically there are correlations between aspects of social life which sociologists debate. For example, it is widely known that poorer people have worse health and life expectancy than wealthier citizens – but why? It is clear that females commit fewer crimes than males – but why? These would be just two questions you might study, and there will not necessarily be any definitive answers. But there will be a lot of evidence to consider, and a lot of arguments about the topics! Sociology will make you look at everyday life in lots of new ways, so be prepared to be challenged! And be prepared to contribute, too.

The AS topics you will study are Education and Families and Households. These will give you a good basis of understanding in Sociology with areas that you are already familiar with. You will also be studying the Research Methods that Sociologists use to gather information and come to conclusions.

The A Level topics build on your knowledge from AS. The two topics we study are Crime and Deviance, and The Media. These two topics are both highly relevant in our society and will involve you looking at recent and current affairs and linking them to existing theories. The other element of the A Level course is Theory and Research Methods which builds upon the AS Research Methods section but looks at the theoretical reasoning behind sociologist's choice of research and method.

The traditional A level focus on thinking and analysis ensures that you will approach these topics from a number of different angles, or perspectives, with increasing emphasis on the skill of evaluation in Year 2.

### **Will this subject suit me?**

The ideal student will be interested in current affairs, social, political and contemporary culture, in short, the world around us. You will enjoy the intellectual challenge of debating ideas, enjoy reading about and researching social issues, and be prepared to construct clear, written arguments.

## **Personal Study Time**

All students are expected to devote as much time outside the classroom to their studies as in lectures. Homework will regularly be set, but students are expected to routinely manage their self-directed study, consolidating work set or undertaken in class.

The exam board, AQA, specifically likes to see students apply their knowledge of theories to the real world, by referencing actual events. So you will need to keep abreast of the news, watch TV documentaries and analyse contemporary developments, both to make your study of social life much more interesting and also to gain extra credit.

## **Assessment**

Examinations will be in the Summer of Year 1 for the AS Qualification. Students can at this point either 'cash-in' the stand alone AS qualification or continue studying for a second year, where they will be assessed on the full content of the course; these examinations will be assessing the units studied in both Y12 and Y13 and will gain an A-Level qualification. There is no coursework.

## **Where can it lead?**

You will be assessed by written exams, which does mean that any student who 'can do' Sociology will also be capable of handling evidence, constructing and presenting quite sophisticated arguments, which are excellent skills for any university and professional career.

Many students go on to university, where Sociology is a long-established subject with strong links to the other social sciences. If, for example, you wished to train as a lawyer, journalist, doctor, teacher, social worker, police officer, public administrator, or architect, then you would study some sociology as part of your professional training. Most careers which involve working with people have some sociological content within their professional training.

## **Where can I find out more?**

Miss Shea and Mr Cooper