

A LEVEL SOCIOLOGY
at
The Polesworth School



Student Handbook

WELCOME TO SOCIOLOGY

First of all a very warm welcome to sociology at The Polesworth School! You have chosen to study a modern and challenging A-Level Level course and we hope that for you it will be both enjoyable and successful.

This short guide has been provided both as an introduction to the subject and a brief guide to how it is organised.

Congratulations on getting over the first great educational hurdle - your GCSEs! The fact that you are here to embark upon A-Level means that you have met the required standard - so well done! However, be under no illusions that the transition to A-level is easy. Not only is the course content harder to understand than anything you have experienced at GCSE level but many of the questions involve more interpretation and evaluation - skills which are a little more difficult to develop. The important thing to remember is that past students have faced the same initial situation and go on to be extremely successful!

Time-management and **communication** are crucial to your success here. You will need to listen to and act upon advice. Successful communication, however, implies a two-way process. **If you are having difficulties or need help in any way, please do not hesitate to ask.**

You can email Mr. Lewis (Head of Sociology) on s.lewis@thepolesworthschool.com or Miss. Harding on k.harding@thepolesworthschool.com

Self-assessment will be an important aspect of your course. You will be asked to think about your own achievement throughout the year. In addition, you will be given a chance to **discuss your predicted grade** and your progression to A-Level sociology.

This booklet should now be placed at the beginning of your file.

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WHAT IS SOCIOLOGY?

Everybody is part of society. Importantly, this society has helped to shape who you are and your experiences in life so far. But how much about it do you understand? There is, perhaps, more of a need than ever to understand the world we live in. Just think about the endless public debate there is on issues such as gang violence, 'binge drinking' teenagers, boys' underachievement in school, the effects of single-parenthood and births outside of marriage, questions of racial and sexual equality, the impact of new education policies. and so many more. They are the subject matter of countless views and opinions, many of which may be ill-informed or prejudiced. Many views are expressed simply from personal (and often very limited) experience.



This is where Sociology comes in - because they are all **SOCIAL** issues. The literal meaning of the word 'Sociology' is the 'science of society'. The interaction of people, ourselves, as members of society is what Sociology is about. Social events and changes do not occur by accident. Sociology attempts to bring a systematic understanding to our knowledge of what goes on around us - locally, nationally and even internationally. Using a variety of models and theories and applying recognised research methods the Sociologist sets off to try and understand our human condition a little better. This can be a demanding task - but an interesting and rewarding one!

In a sense 'doing' Sociology is a continuous series of debates with and by Sociologists! We spend most of our time studying what sociologists have found out and how their conclusions are debated, argued and disagreed with by other people who may have other ideas and see things quite differently. Throughout the course we will debate, among other things, questions such as:

- Why do some people commit more crime than others?
- Why are girls now out-performing boys in school?
- Will divorce continue to rise? If so, what are the consequences?
- Do children need fathers?
- Does the media cause violence?
- Are the police racist?
- Is society less religious?
- Does your IQ determine how well you will do in school?



Sociology, then, is the study of people in society. It is concerned with human associations and relationships in the institutions that affect our lives. Such institutions include the family, education, the police/judiciary, the media, religion and politics.

In particular, Sociology is often characterised with describing and explaining patterns of inequality, deprivation and conflict, which are a feature of almost all societies.

AQA SOCIOLOGY COURSE STRUCTURE AT A GLANCE

A-LEVEL EXAMINATIONS

EXAM 1: EDUCATION WITH THEORY AND METHODS

- 33% of the A-Level
- Written paper, 2 hours
- 80 marks



EXAM 2: FAMILIES AND HOUSEHOLDS AND BELIEFS IN SOCIETY

- 33% of A level
- Written paper, 2 hours
- 80 marks

EXAM 3: CRIME AND DEVIANCE WITH THEORY AND METHODS

- 33% of A level
- Written paper, 2 hours
- 80 marks

What about AS exams?

There are currently no plans to enter anyone for the AS exam. However, if your chosen university requires that you take the AS (or if you simply wish to do it), it is very easy to arrange this. The AS course content is identical to the full A-Level content; the only difference between the papers is the question types (AS has generally shorter questions).

However, in the absence of AS exams at the end of Y12, you will sit an internally assessed exam within school known as a PPE (pre-public exam). This will be used in the same way that actual AS exam are: **failing to pass this internal exam will result in removal from the course**. It is therefore extremely important that you treat this seriously and complete a sufficient amount of revision to do it justice.

SUBJECT CONTENT

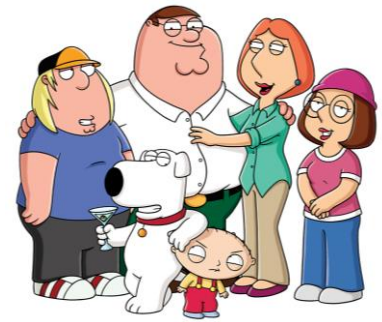
FAMILIES AND HOUSEHOLDS

Candidates should examine two core themes:

- **Socialisation, culture and identity**
- **Social differentiation, power and stratification**

In addition, candidates should examine:

- ❖ The relationship of the family to the social structure and social change, with particular reference to the economy and to state policies.
- ❖ Changing patterns of marriage cohabitation, separation, divorce, childbearing and the life-course and the diversity of contemporary family and household structures.
- ❖ The nature and extent of changes within the family with reference to gender roles, domestic labour and power relationships.
- ❖ The nature of childhood and changes in the status of children in the family and society.
- ❖ Demographic trends in the UK since 1900; reasons for changes in birth rates, death rates and family size.
- ❖ Theoretical perspectives relating to the nature and function of the family



EDUCATION AND SOCIOLOGICAL METHODS IN CONTEXT

Throughout this unit, candidates should be encouraged to use examples drawn from their own experience of small-scale social research.

EDUCATION



- ❖ The role and purpose of education, including vocational education and training in contemporary society.
- ❖ Differential educational achievement of social groups by social class, gender and ethnicity in contemporary society.
- ❖ Relationships and processes within schools, with particular reference to teacher/ pupil relationship, pupil subcultures, the hidden curriculum, and the organisation of teaching and learning.
- ❖ The significance of educational policies, including selection, comprehensivisation, privatisation and marketisation for an understanding of the structure, role, impact and experience of education.
- ❖ The role of education in the formation of personal and sexual identity
- ❖ The application of sociological research methods to the study of education



METHODS

- ❖ Quantitative and qualitative methods of research, their strengths and limitations; research design.
- ❖ Sources of data, including questionnaires, interviews, participant and non-participant observation, experiments, documents, and official statistics; the strengths and limitations of these sources.
- ❖ The distinction between primary and secondary data and between quantitative and qualitative data.
- ❖ The relationship between positivism, interpretivism and sociological methods, the nature of 'social facts'.
- ❖ The theoretical, practical and ethical considerations influencing choice of topic, choice of methods and the conduct of research.

BELIEFS IN SOCIETY

- ❖ Different theories of ideology, science and religion, including both Christian and non-Christian religious traditions.
- ❖ The relationship between religious beliefs and social change and stability.
- ❖ Religious organisations, including cults, sects, denominations, churches and New Age movements, and their relationship to religious and spiritual belief and practice.
- ❖ The relationship between different social groups and religious/spiritual organisations and movements, beliefs and practices.
- ❖ The significance of religion and religiosity in the contemporary world, including the nature and extent of secularisation in a global context.



CRIME AND DEVIANCE



In their study of this unit, candidates should examine both the evidence of and the sociological explanation for:

- ❖ Different theories of crime, deviance, social order and social control.
- ❖ The social distribution of crime and deviance by age, ethnicity, gender, locality and social class, including recent patterns and trends in crime.
- ❖ Globalisation and crime in contemporary society; the mass media and crime; green crime; human rights and state crimes.
- ❖ Crime control, prevention and punishment, victims and the role of the criminal justice system and other agencies.
- ❖ The connections between sociological theory and methods and the study of crime and deviance.

THEORY AND METHODS

Candidates should examine all the areas covered at AS. In addition, candidates should:

- ❖ Demonstrate a wider range and greater depth of knowledge and understanding than at AS level.
- ❖ Study the nature of sociological thought and methods of sociological enquiry in greater range and depth and demonstrate more highly developed skills of application, analysis, interpretation and evaluation than at AS level.

In addition, A-Level candidates should examine:

- ❖ Consensus, conflict, structural and social action theories.
- ❖ The concepts of modernity and post-modernity in relation to sociological theory.
- ❖ The nature of science and the extent to which sociology can be regarded as scientific.
- ❖ The relationship between theory and methods.
- ❖ Debates about subjectivity, objectivity and value freedom.
- ❖ The relationship between sociology and social policy

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Sociology is an extremely valued subject for higher education entry and future careers. It is a popular combination for students who do History, English, Philosophy, Psychology, Media, Business Studies and Politics AS/A-Levels, although we have also had very successful results from science students who wish to study something a little 'different'.

In terms of higher education entry, you gain the advantage of writing on your university entry forms how you've developed valuable analytical and practical skills, particularly through managing your time and presenting your ideas to your peers.

Sociology students are particularly in demand for 'people centred occupations' and professions that demand a rigorous analytical approach based upon weighing up evidence and arguments to reach considered conclusions.

Hence sociology students have gone on to careers as wide ranging as **media research, law, journalism, teaching, social and welfare work, personnel work, business analysts, civil service and local government policy making, advertising, nursing, medicine and market research.**



WHAT MAKES A SUCCESSFUL SOCIOLOGY STUDENT?

- ❖ **AN INTEREST IN SOCIAL ISSUES.** A general awareness of what is happening socially and politically can help to motivate you throughout the course.
- ❖ **AN ABILITY TO WRITE COHERENTLY AND ACCURATELY.** The basic rules of grammar and sentence construction, reasonable spelling, and well-organised work are required. This is especially important in a subject that relies upon coherent and logical argument.
- ❖ **A WILLINGNESS TO DEBATE AND ENGAGE IN GROUPWORK.** Good quality discussion helps to improve your evaluation skills as well as developing confidence in your own ability to express yourself.

ORGANISATION

- ❖ From the start, get a wide **RINGBINDER** file and **keep all your work in order**. Then **you must bring this file with you to all lessons**, otherwise you will not be coming prepared to the class and may not be able to do the work planned for that lesson. Folders should be stored in the sociology workroom.
- ❖ You will be given **homework** every week. These will involve a range of tasks from essay writing to conducting some research. **This must be done to the deadline set by your teacher.**
- ❖ **If you have missed a class, it is your responsibility to find out what work you have missed.** If you do not do this, you may well find questions appearing in your exams which cover work done in class when you were absent!

ATTENDANCE

- ❖ You are required to attend all classes.
- ❖ If you know you are to be absent, you must arrange this beforehand and find out what work you will be missing.
- ❖ You will be expected to attend all revision sessions organised by your teachers in the run up to your exams

PUNCTUALITY

- ❖ To be late for a lesson means that you miss the important re-cap of the previous lesson and the introduction to the day's learning objectives. It is simply disrupting to the majority of the rest of the students who have had the organisation to arrive on time.

ASSESSMENT

- ❖ Your homework will be marked using AQA mark schemes.
- ❖ We will use skills marking to help you progress.
- ❖ All assessment will include an action statement which gives information on what you need to do to improve the work. You will be given time within lesson to complete this.
- ❖ You will be given a progress file to put in your sociology folder. This will help you assess your learning and keep track of your progress
- ❖ You will be given the opportunity to discuss your progress one to one with your teacher every half term and to set your own predicted grade during these discussions.
- ❖ You are expected to be performing broadly in line with the minimum expected grades issued at the start of the year
- ❖ All assessments should be your own work. You are encouraged to work with others in planning essays and revising, but copying from others or the booklets is not permitted and will result in you having to repeat the work during your free time.

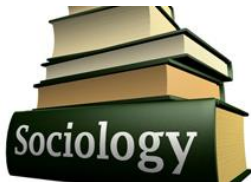
SOCIOLOGY INTERNET RESOURCES

Many of the booklets that you will be given over the two years will highlight useful sites for you to visit to **extend your own learning**. Remember that if you are searching for articles yourself, that you must **make sure you are reading research from the UK not USA as this is not relevant**.



You should join our **Polesworth Sociology Twitter Feed** group as soon as possible. Here you will find a range of relevant articles for the areas you study.

READING & RESOURCES



Sociology is an open-ended subject - there is always something new being written about any topic area within the subject. The best thing you can do to keep up to date is read a quality newspaper.

Visit the Study Centre and familiarise yourself with the sociology books on offer. These include key textbooks as well as Sociology word dictionaries and study guides for AS/A-Level.

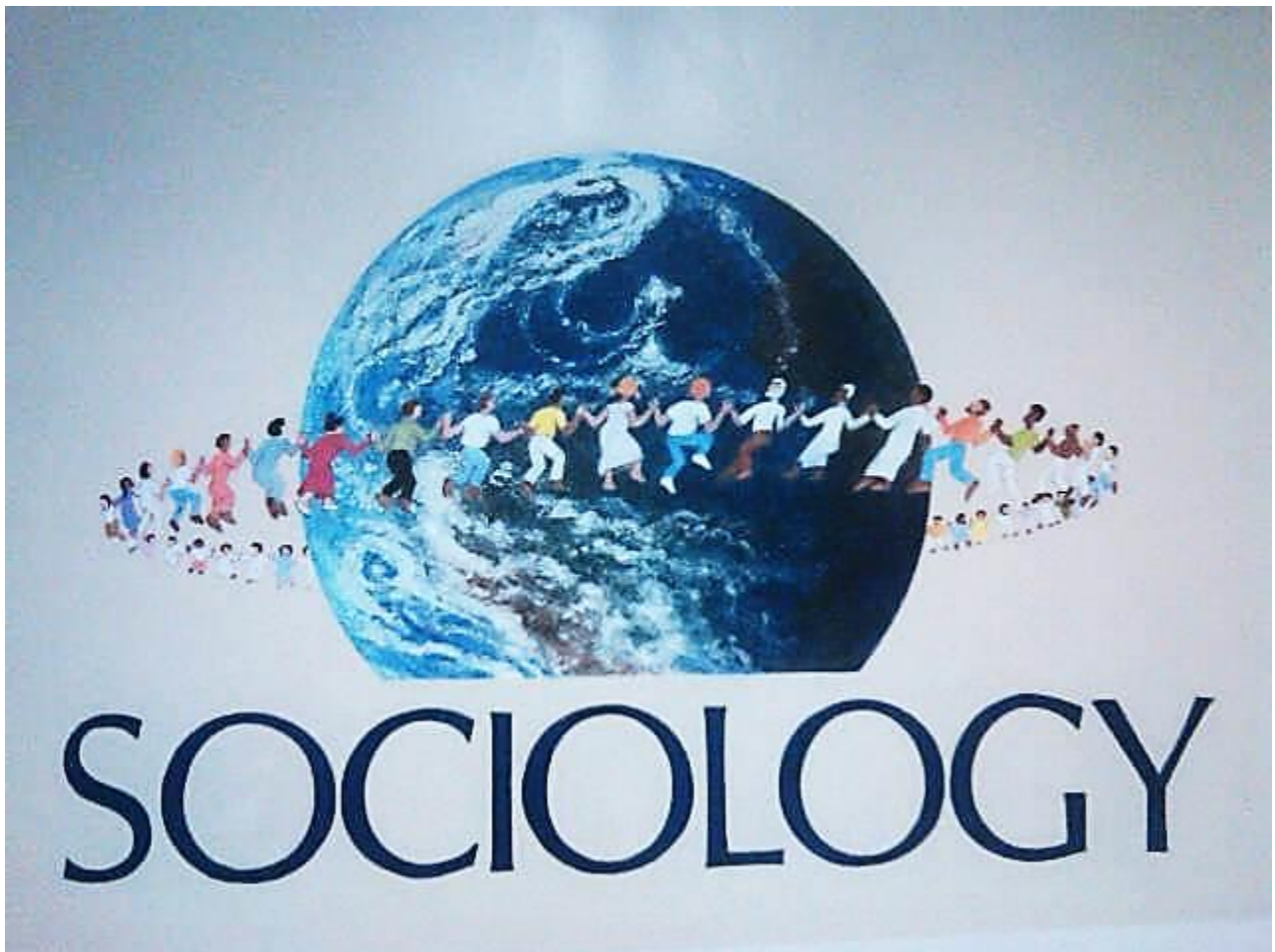
The following are particularly interesting:

- ❖ Webb et al. '**AS level Sociology**'.
- ❖ Haralambos and Langley '**Sociology in Focus AQA AS level**'
- ❖ Haralambos and Holborn '**Sociology: Themes and Perspectives**' (8th edition)
- ❖ Carolyn Jackson '**Lads and Ladettes**'.
- ❖ O'Donnell and Sharpe '**Uncertain Masculinities**'
- ❖ Clive Gifford '**Gangs**'
- ❖ Kaye Stearman '**Life on the streets**'
- ❖ Sarah Medina '**Abuse and neglect**'
- ❖ Natasha Walter '**Living dolls: the return of sexism**'
- ❖ Venkatesh '**The rogue sociologist: Gang leader for a day**'
- ❖ Meera Nanda '**God and globalisation**'

Sociology Magazine

Finally, you are encouraged to read the **Sociology Review Magazine** in the Sociology workroom - a quarterly magazine aimed at A Level Sociology students.

**And finally,
GOOD LUCK WITH YOUR STUDIES!
We hope that you enjoy learning A Level Sociology with us!
Mr. Simon Lewis & Miss. Kristy Harding**



“It is not literacy or learning which makes a man, but education of real life”

Mahatma Gandhi 1869-1948

The Art of Living