

A Level Sociology FAQs



What is sociology?

Sociology is the study of society – how people interact in groups. A level sociology examines social behaviour from a variety of perspectives: how it originates and then develops, and the ways people are organised into groups according to distinctions such as class, gender and race. A level sociology also looks at the institutions and forces which shape and are shaped by groups within a society, such as the media, the family and education.

Through studying A level sociology you will learn to think critically and independently about society and the diversity which its citizens experience. You will also developed an informed understanding of our rapidly chaging world, as well as your palce within it.

What topics do you study?

Topic area	Areas explored
Education	Differences in educational achievement of social groups by social class, gender and ethnicity in contemporary society. Teacher/pupil relationships, pupil identities and subcultures, the hidden curriculum, and the organisation of teaching and learning.
Families and Households	Theories of the family. The changing patterns of marriage, cohabitation, separation & divorce. Gender roles, domestic labour and power relationships within the family in contemporary society. The nature of childhood.
Theories	Marxism, functionalism, the New Right, feminism, postmodernism.
Research methods	Quantitative and qualitative methods of research. Sources of data, including questionnaires, interviews, participant and non-participant observation, experiments, documents and official statistics. Ethical considerations.

Topic area	Areas explored
The media	The new media. The relationship between ownership and control of the media. Media representations of age, social class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and disability
Crime and deviance	the social distribution of crime and deviance by ethnicity, gender and social class. The media and crime, green crime, human rights and state crimes. Crime control, surveillance, prevention and punishment.
Theories	Consensus, conflict, structural and social action theories. The concepts of modernity and post-modernity in relation to sociological theory
Research methods	The relationship between positivism, interpretivism and sociological methods. The nature of science and the extent to which Sociology can be regarded as scientific

What is the exam board?

The exam board is AQA. The specification can be found here <https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/sociology/as-and-a-level/sociology-7191-7192>

How many exams are there?

At A level there are three exams, each accounts for one third of your A level. The three exams last 2 hours and are worth 80 marks each.

What type of questions will I be expected to answer within the exams?

The exam consists of a mixture of short answer and extended essay writing questions. The greatest number of marks for any one question is 30 marks which is an extended essay question.

Is there any coursework?

No, there is no coursework element in A level sociology.

What kind of classwork and homework will we do?

The classroom provides us with a good opportunity to open up discussion about the topics we look at, relating the theories we examine to our experiences or ideas. However, sociology is ultimately an academic subject where we use the theories of the sociologists who have conducted research in society to answer questions, rather than our own opinions, therefore after learning about and discussing theories, we will work on putting them together to construct essay answers. Homework will involve revising lesson content, some wider reading and preparing for in class timed assessments.

How is sociology different to psychology?

Sociology explores the institutions that make up society, that is, the education system, family, crime and deviance and the media. Sociology examines bigger patterns in society, such as why there is more divorce, or less religion in society today. Psychology studies the influences on the individual behaviour, such as why someone may have depression, or why some people are more aggressive, or how what happens in childhood may affect a persons development for example. Many students study both subjects as there are some common themes of research methods, where you learn about how social scientists study people and society.

Where will A level sociology take me?

Possible degree options – According to bestcourseforme.com, the top six degree courses taken by students who have an A-level in sociology are:

- Sociology
- Psychology
- English
- Business Studies
- Law
- Teaching

Possible career options - Studying sociology at university can give you a whole host of exciting career options, including:

- Social work
- Human resources
- Advertising
- Policing
- Marketing
- Journalism
- Law
- Teaching

Do I need to have studied sociology before?

No, you do not need any prior knowledge, just enthusiasm. Sociology is not offered as a GCSE at Plymstock School and no one has studied it before so you will not be at a disadvantage if you have not studied it previously. GCSEs in English, history and religious studies would all help you to prepare for the essay writing on the course. You need to appreciate the importance of analysis and balance in tackling conflicting points of view.

Are there other subjects that would be suitable to study alongside sociology?

We do not have a 'typical' A Level sociology student. Our students study a range of other subjects. There are some overlaps with psychology in the research methods element of the course, criminology in the theories section of the course and in the topic of crime and deviance and typically students who also take history find that helpful for the course.

Can I get in touch if I have any other questions?

Of course, my email address is richardson@plymstockschool.org.uk

What else can I do if I am interested in sociology?



Watch the following clip to see if you think sociology is right for you.