

Sociology AS/A level

Introduction

Every one of us is a sociologist. Even though you probably won't have studied Sociology as an academic discipline in school, as a member of society you will be living this subject every day. Sociology is a rigorous and challenging academic discipline.

The course at HNC introduces you to sociological ideas, concepts, evidence and argument by examining key aspects of the contemporary world. By the end of the course, you should have a basic capacity for conceptual analysis and for applying sociological reasoning to examples in the world around you.

In class and through guided study, you will explore debates and issues, develop ideas, and critically evaluate what you find. These are highly important skills valued by both employers and universities alike. As an individual, you will have a greater understanding of the social world around and you may never see the world the same again!

Year 1

The AS course examines the sociological study of families and households, the education system and how sociologists engage in research. We examine debates concerning the perceived moral slide of family life, the increase in divorce and children born outside wedlock as well as questioning whether families are important to us. The new specification also has us examining demographic trends in the UK since 1900 and looking at reasons for changes in birth rates, death rates and family size. This topic is examined in the January series in a one hour exam.

Issues such as why girls are outperforming boys at GCSE along with the debate that the education system is not as fair as it apparently seems are examined in the second module of the AS course in the May series. In this second, two hour exam there is a focus on the methods used to research sociological aspects of the education system such as the pitfalls involved in going undercover in the classroom to observe teacher-pupil interaction.

Year 2

Much of social life focuses on the ideas and beliefs of individuals and social groups. So powerful can beliefs be, they can lead people to take extreme forms of behaviour. This is the focus of the third unit called Beliefs in Society. Following the increase in global conflict since 9/11, religion has become a focus for the clashes in ideology and beliefs between countries and continents and among multi-cultural communities themselves. Aside from this, the third module in the A level course examines theoretical ideas of the role of religion, the extent to which religious ideas are losing their grip on guiding our behaviour and the reasons for the growth of alternative religious organisations. Science is seen as being an important influence in this process. This unit will be examined in a one and a half hour exam in the January series.

The fourth and final module of the A Level Sociology course is perhaps both the most complex and the most interesting to our students. The Sociology of Crime and Deviance examines why some people commit crime, what is deviance and looks for sociological explanations why certain social groups appear more in the criminal statistics. What is the role of the media in defining what is criminal? Again, there is a heavy emphasis on sociological research methods in this two hour exam, where students examine how quantitative and qualitative methods help us to understand why criminal and deviant behaviour occurs.

Assessment

All four modules are formally examined units. Informal assessment through homework happens throughout the year where you can expect to receive constructive and clear feedback.

Specific Entry Criteria

Grade C in English Language.