

Yea r1 Sociology

An introduction to Sociology



Student workbook

Name:

Teacher:

Introducing Sociology A Level

Welcome to Sociology A Level! You've made an excellent choice... in studying Sociology you will begin to gain a deeper insight into the world around you, and why society functions the way that it does. This bridging booklet will allow you to gain a deeper understanding of what sociology is, how to be an outstanding sociology and the research process. It will help you build the skills needed for A Level.



Task 1 - What is Sociology?

Read through the article below and complete the activities below.

What is sociology?

Think about the major questions that we ask about our social world. Are men and women really that different? Why do we have problems such as racism? What motivates people to have social status and respect? These questions are hugely important to life as a human being, and they are studied by the field of sociology. A general definition of sociology is the systematic study of human society, culture, and relationships on a group level.

One way to think about sociology is to contrast it with different, but similar fields. For example, social psychology asks many of the same questions as sociology but uses different research methodology and studies people on an individual level instead of the group level. While sociology studies group patterns, such as why one culture believes in men having multiple wives while another culture does not, social psychology would study how the individual people within a marriage feel about their partner. So basically sociology looks at the 'big picture' on the group level, while social psychology studies the attitudes or feelings of each individual person.

Another field that's similar is anthropology. Anthropology also examines human society just like sociology, but anthropology focuses more on how human society has changed over time. It includes the sub-field of archaeology, which examines ancient tools, pottery, and so on to see how ancient cultures compare to modern culture.



What are the major themes and questions in sociology?

First, sociology studies different ideas for what might create an ideal society. Some people believe that society should focus on making sure everyone is treated equally, including from an economic perspective. However, other people believe that an ideal society includes different social classes, because wanting to be rich motivates people to invent things and work harder. These questions include the study of how economics, politics, and culture combine in different ways.

Other questions sociology asks are, 'How is culture created, and how is it passed down from one generation to the next?' For example, what foods come from your country? If you're from the United States, our culture includes hamburgers and hot dogs. These food items are incorporated into other aspects of American culture, like when you eat a hot dog at a baseball game. So, how are children influenced by these cultural images, and how do different cultures result in different kinds of people and ideas?

Sociology also studies the similarities and differences among different types of people. Remember at the beginning of this lesson, we talked about whether men and women are really different. What about people of different races or ethnicities? How about rich people versus poor people? How is a grandmother different from a granddaughter?



Finally, sociology studies social institutions. Social institutions are major structures made up of groups or ideas that influence people's daily lives, views of the world, or integration into society. Examples include religious organisations, your family and educational institutions such as schools and colleges. How have these institutions shaped your behaviour? For example, did you have a large or a small family? Are your family religious? Did you go to a private school or a comprehensive school? All of these institutions shape the person you become, and the world in which we live in.

Sociology is an exciting and illuminating field of study that analyses and explains important matters in our personal lives, our communities, and the world. At the personal level, sociology investigates the social causes and consequences of such things as romantic love, racial and gender identity, family conflict, deviant behaviour, aging, and religious faith. At the societal level, sociology examines and explains matters like crime and law, poverty and wealth, prejudice and discrimination, schools and education, business firms, urban community, and social movements. At the global level, sociology studies such phenomena as population growth and migration, war and peace, and economic development.

How do sociologists research society?

Sociologists emphasise the careful gathering and analysis of evidence about social life to develop and enrich our understanding of key social processes. The research methods sociologists use are varied. Sociologists observe the everyday life of groups, conduct large-scale surveys, interpret historical documents, analyse census data, study video-taped interactions, interview participants of groups, and conduct laboratory experiments. The research methods and theories of sociology yield powerful insights into the social processes shaping human lives and social problems and prospects in the contemporary world. By better understanding those social processes, we also come to understand more clearly the forces shaping the personal experiences and outcomes of our own lives.



The ability to see and understand this connection between broad social forces and personal experiences — what C. Wright Mills called “the sociological imagination” — is extremely valuable academic preparation for living effective and rewarding personal and professional lives in a changing and complex society.

How will sociology help my future career?

Students who have been well trained in sociology know how to think critically about human social life, and how to ask important research questions. They know how to design good social research projects, carefully collect and analyse empirical data, and formulate and present their research findings. Students trained in sociology also know how to help others understand the way the social world works and how it might be changed for the better. Most generally, they have learned how to think, evaluate, and communicate clearly, creatively, and effectively. These are all abilities of tremendous value in a wide variety of vocational callings and professions.

Questions

1. What is Sociology?

2. How is Sociology similar to Psychology?

3. How is Sociology different from Psychology?

4. How is Sociology similar to Anthropology?

5. How is Sociology different from Anthropology?

6. What are the major themes that sociologists study? Give at least 5.

7. What types of research methods do sociologists use to study society?

8. What can you do with a sociological degree?



Task 2: Create your own society.

So sociology is the study of society. Let's now try and create our own society by answering the questions below.

Imagine you are on a jumbo jet flight. There are 380 people on board - a mixture of women, children and men of various races, nationalities and religions. Some children are travelling without their parents, and some adults without their husbands/ wives/ partners. Most, however, speak English. The jet gets into difficulties and is forced to land on a remote island. Extensive search operations fail to discover the plane; it is given up as lost and the search is called off. Meanwhile, the passengers and crew on the plane have survived the first problems of being wrecked and begin to build a society for the long term. There is some food and water on the plane, but it obviously won't last long.



1. How will you survive - what is needed?
2. How will the various survival tasks and everyday work will be organized - who will do what? Why?
3. How decisions are going to be made - will there be a leader? If so, who? Will everybody have an equal say? What happens if people cannot agree?

4. How children are going to be looked after - including any new babies who might be born?

5. How will family life and sexual relationships will be organised? Are you allowed more than one wife? Can couples have sex before marriage

6. How will you share the things that people need and want - equal shares or will some people get more than others? If so, who and why?

7. Do you think that people will be able to get on with each other? Which groups might come into conflict? How would you deal with this?

8. How will you deal with people who break the rules? Will you have a prison? Will you have capital punishment?



Task 3: Key sociological theories and perspectives

1. As the article above explained, there are various different sociological theories and perspectives. Each sociological perspective is different. For example, the functionalists believe that society is fair and every institution works together to make society function, whereas the Marxists believe that society is unfair and that institutions such as the education and judicial system oppress the poor and stop them from becoming successful.



Research each theory mentioned below. In the boxes summarise their key ideas. A good place to start is <http://www.sociology.org.uk/revgper1.pdf>

Functionalism

Marxism

Liberal feminism

Radical feminism

Interactionism

Task 4- Do we live in a postmodern society?

Another theory is Postmodernism.. Postmodernism believes that all old theories are no longer relevant because they were only relevant in a modern society, but they believe we are in a whole new society... a postmodern society.

Read up on post modernity and brainstorm what a postmodern society looks like. Use images to illustrate your ideas.



Task 5: Debates in sociology

In sociology we have lots of debates. There is no right or wrong answer, but as a sociologist it is your job to look for evidence for both sides of the argument and then make a judgement.

"Men and women are equal in society today". Find evidence for and against this statement today. Use newspapers, the internet, films and books as evidence.



Arguments for	Arguments against

From the evidence you have gathered, do you agree with this statement? Fully justify your answers.

Task 5: Key terms



Below are some key terms that you must know when you start Sociology in September. Define the key terms below. Make sure you explain your definitions and give examples to strengthen where possible.

Term	Definition
Theory	
Social institution	
Consensus	
Conflict	
Organic analogy	
Primary socialisation	
Secondary socialisation	
Culture	
Patriarchy	
Capitalism	
Communism	

Task 6: Optional additional activities to develop sociological understanding

As you now know, psychology is all around us. That means that there is lots you can do to develop your psychological understanding.

The tasks below are optional- I do not expect you to complete these but they will help you with your studies and you may wish to complete some of the tasks below over the summer.

Have a look in a sociology review magazine and write a summary of an article you have read.
Watch a film with a sociological theme (e.g. Elysium, Prayers for Bobby, Selma, Girlhood, Kidhood, Mean Girls, Jesus Camp, and Catfish) and make a simple fact sheet on it (story, actors, opinion on film).
Watch a TV programme with sociological content. Record channel and date and main topics discussed (e.g. family, education, crime and deviance, gender, religion, science)
Construct a model using recyclable material, to demonstrate a theory, model or process (Marxism, functionalism, feminism etc)
Produce a power point about a psychological explanation of an aspect of psychology, e.g. Marxism, feminism, functionalism
Research a key sociologists and find out 10 facts about them e.g. Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, Ann Oakley, Max Weber

Useful websites:

<http://www.s-cool.co.uk/a-level/sociology>

<https://revisesociology.wordpress.com/>

<http://www.socresonline.org.uk/welcome.html>



