**A-level Sociology**

**Bridging Course – Week 1**

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****St Mary’s Catholic School

A-level Sociology

**This bridging course will provide you with a mixture of information about A-level Sociology, and what to expect from the course, as well as work to complete. All of the work in this booklet should be completed fully and thoroughly. You should complete all work on paper and keep it in a file, in an ordered way. It should be submitted to your teacher in September. All of the work will be reviewed and selected work will be assessed. This work will be signalled in this pack. If you do not have access to the internet, please contact the school and appropriate resources will be sent to you. This work should be completed after you have read and completed the Study Skills work that all of Year 12 should complete. Sociology will be a new subject to you, so this course will help you decide whether or not it is the right course for you. If you are thinking about studying Sociology, you should attempt some of the tasks to gauge whether the subject is right for you. If you decide it is a course you want to study in the Sixth Form, you must make sure you complete the bridging course fully, so you are in the best possible starting point from September.**

**Who should study A-level Sociology?**

* Students who are expected to achieve at least a grade 5 in GCSE English Language or Literature
* Students who love a lively debate and discussion in lessons, and who are willing, and able, to share their ideas.
* Students who are interested in the ways societies function and current affairs.
* Students who enjoy planning and writing essays.
* Students who enjoy interpreting and analysing data.

**What to expect from A-level Sociology.**

Throughout the A-level you'll learn about the different ways of looking at society, also known as perspectives. Some, like functionalism, look at society a positive light, whilst others, like Marxism, see might see society in a negative and critical way. Also, sociology is a subject that allows constant analysis of the world around us. Your lessons will be relevant to current affairs, and you'll be able to discuss events in relation to what you're learning about. In terms of what Sociology can lead to, it can be great for going into careers such as the police, the military, HR, marketing, business management, research, journalism, mental health work, social work, politics, charity sector and more. Sociology equips you with a core knowledge of society, how it works and how it changes. As a sociologist, you will also be able to communicate critically and clearly. Critical analysis is also a key skill you will develop through Sociology. This is the careful assessment of an idea, theory or policy, and its strengths and weaknesses.

***Likely* Course Outline**

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| **Paper 1** | **Paper 2** | **Paper 3** |
| * 2 hour exam
* Education with Theory and Methods.
* An exam requiring a mix of shorter answers and extended writing / essays.
* Worth 33.3% of the A-level
 | * 2 hour exam
* Topics in Sociology
* Your teacher will choose appropriate topics offered by the exam board. Amongst others, these include family, health, the media, beliefs in society. Answers will be essays/ extended writing.
* Worth 33.3% of the A-level.
 | * 2 hour exam
* Crime and Deviance with Theory and Methods.
* An exam requiring shorter answers and some extended writing / essays.
* Worth 33.3% of the A-level
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**Task 1 – Is Sociology the right course for you?**

Read the following summary of what Sociology is. In the margin, summarise the ideas. Then, at the end, in brief, note down what interests you about the subject. The make notes appropriately, you should have completed the note taking section of your Study Skills booklet.

Sociology is the study of human social relationships and institutions. Sociology’s subject matter is diverse, ranging from crime to religion, from the family to the state, from the divisions of race and social class to the shared beliefs of a common culture, and from social stability to radical change in whole societies. Unifying the study of these diverse subjects of study is sociology’s purpose of understanding how human action and consciousness both shape and are shaped by surrounding cultural and social structures.

Sociology is an exciting and illuminating field of study that analyzes 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 behavior, 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.

Sociologists emphasize 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, analyze 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.

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 analyze 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.

Sociology offers a distinctive and enlightening way of seeing and understanding the social world in which we live and which shapes our lives. Sociology looks beyond normal, taken-for-granted views of reality, to provide deeper, more illuminating and challenging understandings of social life. Through its particular analytical perspective, social theories, and research methods, sociology is a discipline that expands our awareness and analysis of the human social relationships, cultures, and institutions that profoundly shape both our lives and human history.

**Task 2 – A Crash Course in Sociology**

Watch the following. It is a very accessible ‘crash course’ in Sociology. Using what you learn from this, make notes on paper that answer the following question: What is Sociology? What is society? What does the ‘sociological perspective’ mean?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YnCJU6PaCio>

Once again, after you have completed this task, ask yourself: is this a subject that is appealing to your interests?

**Task 3 –** **Key Terminology**

As you begin this bridging course, keep a glossary of terms and vocabulary that you encounter. Be clear on what the words mean, but also the concepts and ideas behind them. Add to this glossary every time you complete Sociology work and keep it to hand for easy reference. Start your glossary by making a note of the definition of the following:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Marginalised | Society | Perspective |
| Social class | Ethnicity | Gender |
| Culture | Values | Economy |

**Task 4 – Beginning to Study Education from a Sociological Perspective**

One of the key topics you need to explore in detail, from a sociological perspective is *Education*. This is a great place to start with your study of Sociology, because education is something you have a lot of experience of.

So, starting with *you*, what do you think is the purpose of education? Why do children go to school? Note your ideas here:

**Task 5 – What is our Education system?**

To evaluate different perspectives and views on the Education system, you need to be clear on what the Education system is.

Research the UK Education system, making notes on paper under the following headings:

1. Types of schools
2. What are children taught
3. How are children taught: how are classes organised at different phases? How is the curriculum organised?
4. How are children assessed?
5. Who leads schools? What is the hierarchy of power and responsibility within schools?
6. What qualifications are required to teach in a school?

**Task 6 – Positive and negatives of the Education system.**

Different theories try to explain the role of Education in society. Some of them look at really positive functions, others have a negative view of Education systems. Staying with your views and experiences, think about the education system you have experienced up until this point: when you started school, what classes you were in, how you were taught, what subjects you were taught, how you were assessed, who you were in lessons with, and anything else you can think of, connected to the education system you have been a part of. In note form, bullet point what you think are the positives of the system you have experienced, and the negatives. Notice that this task is about the *system* you have been in, and **not** about the school specifically.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Positives of education system in your view | Negatives of education system in your view |
|  |  |

The first Sociological perspective you are going to learn about, is the **Functionalist** perspective. Functionalists take a positive view of things, as they believe that everything exists in society for reason. Things have a ‘function’, hence ‘functionalist’. Functionalists believe that Education has three key functions in society:

1. It teaches the **skills needed in work** and by the economy
2. Education helps to **sift and sort people** for the appropriate jobs – Education helps to allocate or place people in the most appropriate jobs.
3. Education plays a role is **passing on core values**.

Functionalists believe that Education is **meritocratic**. A meritocracy is when social rewards are based on talent and effort, rather than being born into a position. Therefore, a functionalist believes that Education facilitates an opportunity for students to put in effort, to develop their talents and then benefit from this by gaining good qualification and therefore a high position in society.

**Task 7 – Researching Functionalist Perspectives**

You are now going to complete some research of your own, exploring three functionalists, and their views on Education. Use the following YouTube clips and any other research you complete, to make notes on what the functionalist views of Education are. There are some prompts and notes later in this pack, but for now try to pick up as many ideas as you can, by yourself, through your own study and research.

*Emile Durkheim’s view of Education*.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FMLFXG5J3KE>

*Davis and Moore (1945) – Functionalist perspective on Education*

[*https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pd4Hky3PUSU*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pd4Hky3PUSU)

*Parsons*

[*https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DCc3GZhyi\_8*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DCc3GZhyi_8)

* Update your glossary of terms, including any key terms you have learnt.

Some notes on the functionalist views you have researched.

Durkheim

* Education passes on values and social norms in order for individuals to be integrated into society.
* Education helps to create cohesion within society because it creates a social order.

Parsons

* Is a ‘bridge’ between family and adult roles of society. School passes on the value of achievement.
* Education is meritocratic and therefore children are selected for most appropriate roles based on what they achieve. Parsons agrees with Durkheim – Education helps people to agree norms and values.

Davis and Moore

* They believe in the principles of stratification
* They believe society sorts people into different positions but there has to be a system of unequal rewards (money or status) in order to motivate people to train for the top positions in society.