

A Level Sociology

Why Study Sociology?

Is there a link between violence in the media and violent behaviour in society? Are the police institutionally racist? Why are girls outperforming boys in education? How can we explain rising divorce rates? If these are questions that you want answers for, then this is the course for you. Sociology provides an opportunity to develop a better understanding of the social world around you. You will examine a range of contemporary sociological debates and will learn about the methods used by sociological researchers in their search for a better understanding of the social world.

Sociology A Level is a thought-provoking and engaging subject and complements the study of many other A Level subjects, such as Government & Politics, History and Economics.

Entry Criteria

Standard entry requirements for COLAI sixth form, plus a minimum of a grade 5 in English GCSE. You do not need to have studied Sociology at GCSE and most of our Year 12 students will be taking the subject for the first time.

What Will I Be Studying?

Year 12:

This is completed in the first year of study.

Paper one: Education with Methods in Context

This involves the study of the role or functions of the education system – functionalist, Marxist, New Right and social democratic theories on the role of the education system. We also examine: class differences, ethnic differences and gender differences in educational achievement – reasons for girls' improvement, reasons for boys' underachievement.

As part of this unit we also examine how sociologists study society. Their choice of research methods and topics, the types of data and their uses, research methods (e.g. surveys, questionnaires, interviews and observation) and secondary sources of data (e.g. official statistics, historical and personal documents etc).

We also study how a sociologist might go about researching education by applying different research methods to various educational contexts.

Paper two (part one): Families and Households

This involves the study of how families have changed over time and contemporary issues relating to families and family life, including: functions of the family, marriage, divorce and family diversity, power and control within the family, the 'dark side' of family life, childhood and the changing nature of childhood etc.

Year 13

The A Level course recaps on and adds depth to the topics studied in year 12 and introduces new topics and debates.

Paper two (part two): The Mass Media

The media topic involves the study of the influence of the mass media, the relationship between violence in the media and violence in society, the social construction of the news and the role of the media in creating moral panics and stereotypes in the media i.e. the role of the media in creating gender, class and ethnic stereotypes.

Paper three: Crime and Deviance & Theory and Methods

In this unit, we examine how societies define deviance and why some groups are more likely to be criminalised than others. We study Marxist and functionalist theories of crime and examine patterns of offending amongst different social classes, ethnic groups and genders. We also study sociological theory and debates such as whether or not sociology can and should be considered scientific.

How will I be assessed?

This course is entirely exam-based assessment. You will sit three external examinations, which are all taken at the end of Year 13. In preparation for this, there will be regular formal assessment opportunities throughout years 12 and 13 to track your progress on the course, including two assessments in exam conditions at the end of year 12. These assessment opportunities are taken very seriously and are used by Sixth Form leadership to determine which students will be permitted to complete the course.

Routes for Progression

This is a well respected course that will prepare you well for further study of the social and political sciences and/or careers such as journalism, social work, youth work, social policy, local government, education etc.