

Sociology

Exam Board: AQA

Qualification: A Level Sociology

Course code: 601/3995/X, 601/3994/8



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In September, you will be starting the Sociology course

- 1) If you were in for the transition day, you should have a copy of the **Transition Work**
- 2) What should be completed before the beginning of term:
 - a. The Sociology transition work
 - b. Organise a folder ready for the first topic, Education with Theories and Methods
- 3) You are encouraged to start reading the following books for insight and background
 - a. The Spirit Level: Why Equality is Better for Everyone by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett
 - b. Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race by Reni Eddo-Lodge
 - c. Natives by Akala
 - d. Invisible Women: Exposing Data Bias in a World Designed for Men by Caroline Criado-Perez

4) There are also Netflix and other programmes that will be of interest

- a. Black Mirror (Netflix)
- b. The Circle movie (Netflix)
- c. The Platform (Netflix)
- d. Hidden Figures (Disney+)
- e. No More Boy and Girls series (youtube)
- f. Flint Town (Netflix)
- g. Trial by Media (Netflix)
- h. How Did Your Parents Mess You Up? Fiona Douglas TED talk (youtube)



Please come to the course with an open and inquisitive mind set and look forward to the delights of Sociology.

See you in September.

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Perspectives in Sociology

What is structuralism?

Structuralism relates to everything concerned with the overall structure of society, and the way social institutions, like the family, the education system, mass media and work act as a constraint on, or limit and control, individual behaviour.

The behaviour of an individuals and the creation of their identities are seen as a result of social forces which are external to the individual. The individual is moulded and shaped by society through socialisation, positive and negative sanctions, and material resources like income and jobs.

Human behaviour is largely determined by society (a good way to see it is that an individual is like a puppet, whose strings are pulled by society)

There are two main varieties of structuralism. Define them and write the definition below: Consensus structuralism:

Conflict structuralism:

What is social action theory?

This theory is concerned with discovering and understanding the processes by which interactions take place between individuals and small groups. It is also interested into how they define their identities, and how the reactions of others can affect their view of things and the sense of their own identity. For example, labelling.

They see society as a product of human activity. Human behaviour is seen as critical for development of society.

Symbolic interaction is an important part of social action theory. Use the space below to define it:

Sociology

Exam Board: AQA

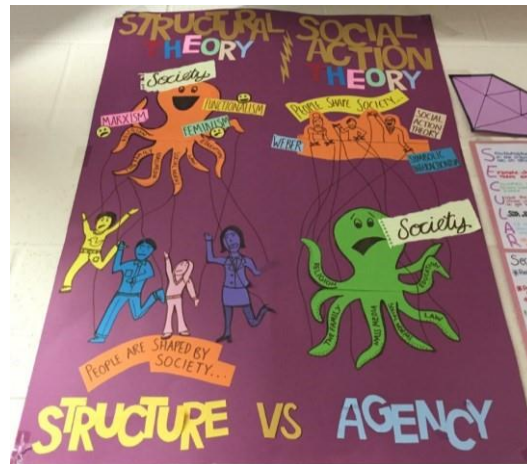
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Course code: 601/3995/X, 601/3994/8



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This image should help you understand the differences between a structural theory and a social action theory.



In Sociology there are key perspectives that relate to every topic in during the A level. These are: Functionalism, Marxism, Feminism and New Right.

What is Functionalism?

Functionalism is a structural theory, which argues that society plays a powerful role in shaping the individual. Below are the concepts which are central to this theoretical perspective.

Sociology

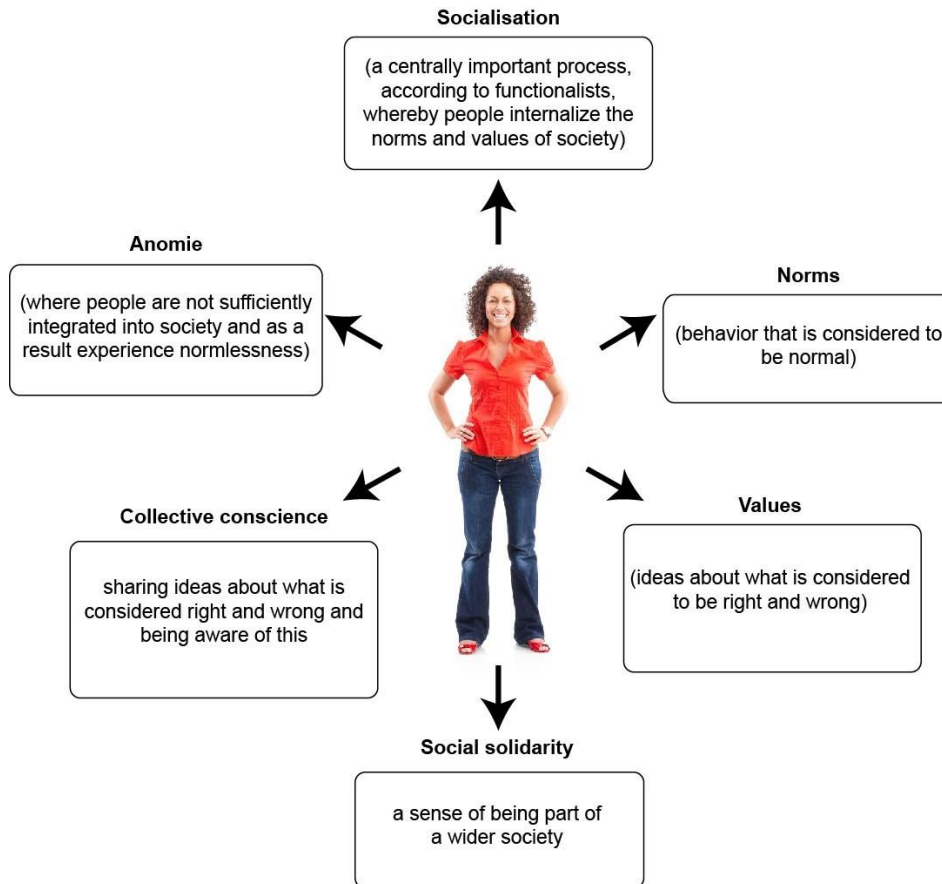
Exam Board: AQA

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Functionalist concepts

- Look at each of the concepts above (socialisation, norms, values, social solidarity, collective conscience, anomie) and give an example of each concept, this might relate to your own experience.
- Then look at the following images. Link each image to a Functionalist concept, explaining the link.



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What is Marxism?

Marx argued that the relationship that people have with the economy shapes everything else; ideas, relationships, belief systems, culture. Marx argued that throughout history, society has transformed from feudal society into Capitalist society, which is based on two social classes, the ruling class (bourgeoisie) who own the means of production (EG, factories) and the working class (proletariat) who are exploited for their wage labour. This means that the ruling class uses the working class to produce goods and services and keep the profit for themselves. Capitalism is based on the idea of private ownership of property, which encourages the individual pursuit of profit. Marxists argue that this system creates great inequalities in societies between the two social classes.

Sociology

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Marx said there were two basic social classes in capitalist societies. Define these two social classes below:

1) Bourgeoisie:

2) Proletariat:

Watch the following video and answer the questions below (don't rush to answer the questions, watch the video once, then watch again and answer the questions): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W0GFSUu5UzA>

- 1) Why is Marxism also known as a 'conflict theory'?
- 2) Why does Marx see communism as positive?
- 3) Why do we mean by 'private ownership' of production? Why does Marx argue this is a bad thing?
- 4) What two groups of people came about because of industrialisation?
- 5) Why does Marx argue that capitalist society creates inequality?
- 6) Define the word 'exploitation' and explain how it links to Marxism.

A Marxist understanding of culture- using the diagram below, make notes/ answer the questions on each box and explain them from a Marxist perspective.

Sociology

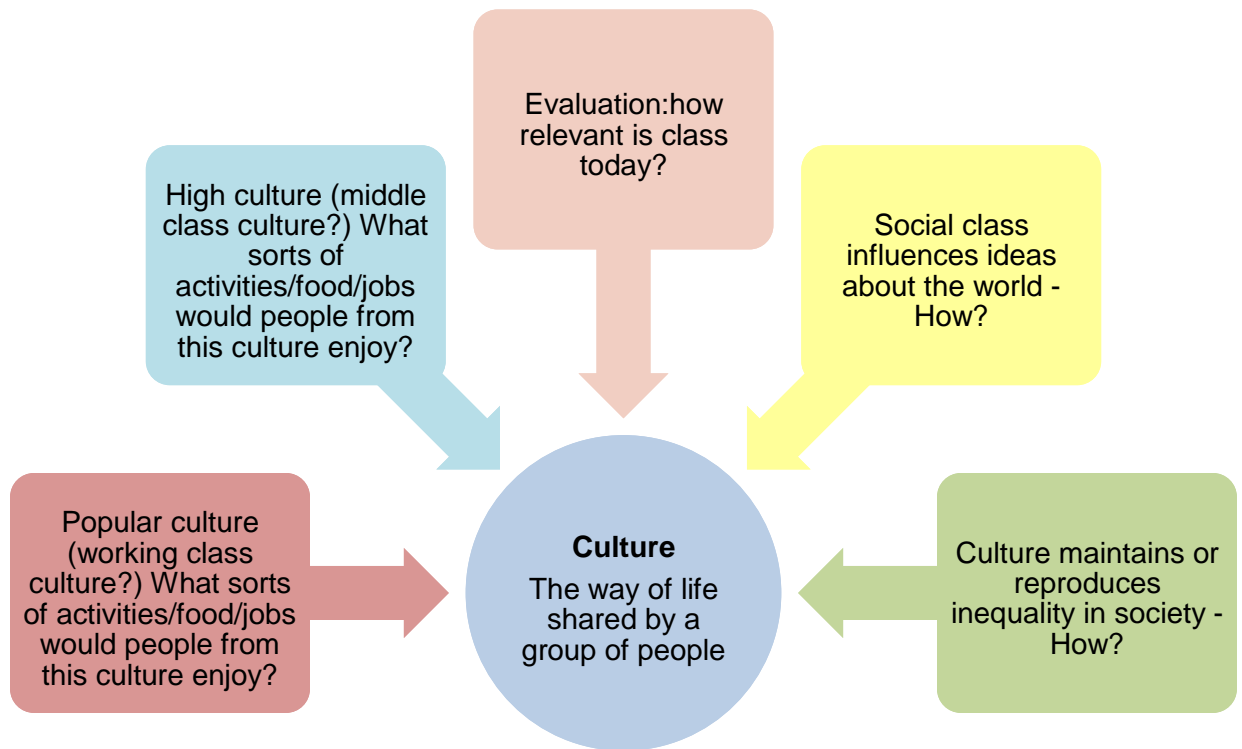
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What is Feminism?

Feminism looks at society from the point of view of women. Feminists argue that most of mainstream sociology has been focused on the concerns of men, and has failed to deal with the concerns of women and the unequal position they have traditionally in society.

There are two waves of Feminism:

First wave

- 1918 - the Suffragettes focused on political equality and the right to vote.
- Women over 30 with property got right to vote
- 1928 - Women got universal suffrage (ie equal rights to men, vote once 21) 10yrs later

Sociology

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Second wave

- Women's liberation movement
- Began in the early 1960s and concentrated on equal rights for women in the law and workplace
- Equal Pay Act 1970 was a landmark victory
- However, it was calculated in 2008 that women's pay averaged 2/3 of men's and far less after she is 40. (women do different jobs and often same job but different title)

There are three main types of feminism and what they believe. Research the different three and fill in the boxes.

Radical feminism:	Liberal feminism:	Marxist feminism:

Practical task:

1. Cut out male and female images and make a collage.
2. List stereotypical male and female jobs

Sociology

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3. List negative sexual connotations used by men to describe women

4. List negative connotations used by women to describe men

The New Right

This is more of a political philosophy than a sociological perspective but it has influenced lots of theory. It is mainly associated with the Conservative government in Britain between 1979 and 1997. New Right thinking is made up of four main points:

1. An emphasis on individual freedom - the power of the state, especially state interference, should be reduced to a minimum
2. Reduced spending by the state - individuals should be more self-reliant. For example state benefits should be reduced and people should be encouraged to work
3. The free market - there should be free competition between individuals, companies, schools and other institutions. For example parents should have the choice of where to send their children to school
4. A stress on the importance of traditional institutions and values, such as traditional family life. This has led to lone parent families being viciously attacked by the New Right.

What is postmodernism?

Postmodernists say that because society is changing constantly and rapidly, societies can no longer be understood through general theories (Marxism, Functionalism). Society has fragmented into so many different groups, interests and lifestyles that are constantly changing.

They believe there is a group of individuals making individual choices about their lifestyles. In postmodern societies, the emphasis is on individuals as consumers making their own choices in all areas of life. For example, education, health, their personal relationships and lifestyles. This decision can be made because we are exposed to a number of different platforms to help inform our decision. EG, religion or the media.

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Time to put on your Sociological hats...

Read through the following three scenarios and think about how different Sociological perspectives would explain the issue.

Scenario one: education

There are two schools of either end of a main road, school A have a higher percentage of girls and GCSE grades are higher each year. School B also has a higher percentage of pupils from working class backgrounds.

Scenario two: media

Media outlets have been reporting an increase in violent protests in major cities around the world. A government poll found that 65% of people changed their opinion on the protests from positive to negative after seeing the news reports.

Scenario three: crime

There are two criminals that both have committed the exact same crime. However one is from a lower class background than the other. The criminal from the lower class background has turned up to court in a tracksuit, compared to the criminal from a higher class turning up in a suit. The criminal from a lower class background gets a harsher prison sentence than the one in the higher class.

	Scenario one	Scenario two	Scenario three
Functionalism			
Feminism			
Marxism			

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New Right			
Postmodernism			

Social policy and a link to current life

Outline and explain the way government policies of social isolation/lockdown during the Coronavirus pandemic might have an impact on each of the following. For each bullet point, spend about ten minutes writing, making sure you have a clear chain of reasoning explaining your ideas.

- The way in which household chores are shared
- The experience of childhood
- The structure of families and households
- Domestic violence
- Education