

General Certificate of Education  
Ordinary Level

**Syllabus**

SOCIOLOGY 2251

For examination in June and November 2009

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# **SOCIOLOGY**

## **Ordinary Level/School Certificate**

### **Subject 2251**

Subject 2251 is available in **June and November**.

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### **Exclusions**

This syllabus must not be offered in the same session with any of the following syllabuses:

0495 Sociology  
0585 Social Studies (Botswana)



## AIMS

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The aims of this syllabus are the same for all students. These are set out below and describe the educational purposes of a course in Sociology for the O Level examination. They are not listed in order of priority.

The aims are to:

1. promote candidates' awareness, knowledge and understanding of human societies.
2. develop an understanding of sociological method, including the collection, analysis and interpretation of data.
3. provide an introduction to sociological concepts, theories and research findings.
4. stimulate awareness of the range and limitations of sociological theory and research.
5. promote candidates' understanding of continuity and change in social life.
6. encourage a critical awareness of social, economic and political processes, and their effects.
7. develop the capacity for the critical evaluation of different forms of information and evidence.
8. promote an appreciation and understanding of individual, social and cultural diversity.
9. enhance candidates' ability to apply sociological knowledge and understanding to their own lives and participation within society.

## ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES

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An assessment objective is an intended area of competence within the subject. Three are identified for the purposes of this syllabus:

- A Knowledge and understanding*
- B Interpretation of evidence*
- C Analysis and evaluation*

A description of each assessment objective follows.

### **A Knowledge and Understanding**

Candidates should be able to:

1. demonstrate knowledge and understanding of appropriate sociological topics;
2. understand the theoretical and practical considerations influencing the design and execution of sociological enquiry;
3. understand and apply sociological terminology and concepts.

### **B Interpretation of Evidence**

Candidates should be able to:

4. demonstrate an awareness of the main methods of sociological enquiry and their uses;
5. interpret and apply relevant evidence and data;
6. show an awareness of different types and sources of evidence.

### **C Analysis and Evaluation**

Candidates should be able to:

7. evaluate the strengths and limitations of particular sociological studies and methods;
8. recognise limitations and bias in evidence and to distinguish between fact, opinion and value;
9. reach conclusions based on a reasoned consideration of available evidence;
10. organise and present sociological evidence and arguments in a coherent and purposeful form.

### Specification Grid

The relationship between the assessment objectives and the scheme of assessment is described below.

| Paper | Assessment Objective          |                              |                           |
|-------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
|       | A Knowledge and Understanding | B Interpretation of Evidence | C Analysis and Evaluation |
| 1     | 40%                           | 30%                          | 30%                       |
| 2     | 40%                           | 30%                          | 30%                       |

The assessment objectives are weighted to give an indication of their relative importance. They are not intended to provide a precise statement of the number of marks allocated to particular assessment objectives.

# ASSESSMENT

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## Scheme of Assessment

All candidates will take Papers 1 and 2.

(i) *Paper 1* (2½ hours)

Candidates will answer *one* compulsory question on sociological research methods from Section A and *three* questions from Sections B to D.

The compulsory question in Section A will be based on source material. The question will carry one third of the marks for the paper. Candidates are advised to spend approximately three-quarters of an hour answering this question.

Sections B to D will consist of structured questions based on stimulus material. The stimulus will take the form of a short quotation or statement from a sociological source. Sections B to D will test Syllabus Units 2 to 4. There will be two questions related to each of these units.

(ii) *Paper 2* (1¾ hours)

This will consist of structured questions based on stimulus material. The stimulus will take the form of a short quotation or statement from a sociological source. Candidates will answer three questions from Sections A to D.

Paper 2 will test Syllabus Units 5 to 8. There will be two questions related to each of these units.

Marks will be allocated between the papers on the following basis:

| Paper | Weighting |
|-------|-----------|
| 1     | 60%       |
| 2     | 40%       |

# SYLLABUS CONTENT

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The content is organised into eight study units. These are used to explore the nature of social relationships, processes and structures. The first unit provides a foundation for the other parts of the syllabus by considering the methods and procedures employed in sociological research. An understanding of research methods and their limitations is a key component of the syllabus and it underpins each of the other study units.

Teachers should emphasise how different levels of social life (macro and micro) are interconnected and encourage candidates' awareness of the interrelated nature of the social structure. Candidates will also be expected to recognise the significance of class, gender, ethnic and age differences within societies. Cross-cultural and historical comparisons, analysis and examples are to be encouraged.

The syllabus has been designed so that teachers in any society can apply their students' own experience, local case studies and sociological work relating to their own way of life to an understanding of the central ideas and themes of the course.

## Paper 1

### *Unit 1. Methodology*

Candidates are expected to develop an awareness of how information and data are collected in Sociology and be able to evaluate that information. Awareness of methodological issues and a critical approach to sociological evidence, including primary and secondary data, will support understanding of other sections of the Sociology curriculum. Candidates will be expected to be familiar with the concepts of generalisation, objectivity, reliability and validity.

(a) How do sociologists study society?

The main methods of investigation: participant and non-participant observation, questionnaires, interviews, experiments, case studies, longitudinal studies and content analysis. Research strategies, for example the use of pilot studies. Sampling and sampling methods. The stages in devising and implementing a research strategy and the problems that may be encountered. The distinction between positivist and interactionist perspectives.

(b) What information and data do sociologists use?

Different sources of information; primary and secondary data; official and other statistics; published studies; different forms of evidence.

(c) What factors should be considered when evaluating a piece of sociological research?

Candidates should recognise that the method of data collection and the form of presentation may influence the information given and the conclusions reached. The distinction between reliability and validity. The potential influence of researcher bias and values in distorting sociological data.

### *Unit 2. Culture and Socialisation*

This section considers the relationship between culture, society and the individual. This involves a consideration of the processes and agencies of socialisation.

(a) What is the relationship between individual and society?

Structuralist and interactionist views of the relationship between individuals and society.

The distinction between biological, psychological and social explanations of human behaviour.

The diversity of human behaviour and cultural variation. For example, cultural differences in conceptions of childhood and adolescence and cultural differences in conceptions of normal gender-role behaviour and gender characteristics.

(b) How do we learn to be human?

The processes of learning and socialisation; primary and secondary socialisation. Conformity and non-conformity; the agencies and processes of social control. Culture and sub-culture; norms, values, beliefs and ideology. Role, age, gender, ethnic group and class as categories in the social construction of differences.



*Unit 3. Social Stratification and Inequality*

This section explores the relationship between social, economic and political processes and patterns of stratification.

## (a) What is social stratification?

Patterns of social stratification with particular reference to differences based on wealth, income, status, power, ethnic group or gender. The main forms of stratification: slavery, estate, caste, class, age, ethnicity, sex. The distinction between ascribed and achieved status. Changes in patterns of social stratification that accompanied industrialisation.

## (b) How are social inequalities created? What are the main features of social inequality?

- (i) Wealth and income: the evidence and reasons for the distribution of wealth and income in different societies. The problems of defining wealth and poverty and the consequences of being rich or poor.
- (ii) Ethnic grouping: a general knowledge of the nature, size and distribution of different ethnic groups in any one society. Prejudice and discrimination: evidence concerning discrimination in education, employment and life chances. The concept of scape-goating.
- (iii) Gender: the differences between sex and gender. The consequences of gender role socialisation. The reasons for and nature of the changing role of women in terms of occupation and social roles.
- (iv) Social class: evidence pointing to social class differences. The nature, extent and significance of social mobility. An appreciation of the implications of social class for chances in employment, health and life style. The changing nature of the working class, middle class and upper class.

*Unit 4. Power and Authority*

This section considers power, authority and decision-making in society.

## (a) What is power? What are the sources of power and authority?

The various forms of power, control and authority: charismatic, coercive, economic, bureaucratic and the control of ideas and beliefs. Aristocracy, oligarchy, democracy, dictatorship. Different theories of power: pluralist, Marxist, elite theory. Differing interpretations of the role of the State in contemporary societies.

## (b) How are political decisions made? Who influences and makes political decisions?

Decision making: the various forms – democratic and authoritarian. Some knowledge of the political processes in the candidate's own and at least one other contrasting society.

The role of political parties and pressure groups. Political socialisation and the media. Elections and the factors that influence voting behaviour. Freedom and censorship of ideas.

## Paper 2

### *Unit 5. Family*

This section considers the functions the family performs, variations in family structures and the changing nature and roles performed within the family.

(a) Why families?

The nature of the family with cross cultural comparisons, including monogamy, polygyny and polyandry. The extended and nuclear family. The functions of the family. The family as an agency of social control and of social stability. Alternatives to the family. Industrialisation and family change.

(b) What are the main roles within the family?

The maternal and paternal roles; the role of the child and of members of the extended family.

(c) What changes are affecting the family?

Demographic trends; marriage and divorce; single parent families. Changes in family role relationships. Cross-cultural variations. The 'loss of functions' debate.

### *Unit 6. Education*

This section considers the influence of education on the individual and changing patterns and practices within the educational process.

(a) What is education?

Informal and formal educational processes. Intelligence and its relationship to educational achievement. The relative effect of heredity and environment. The aims and functions of education. The relationship between education, social mobility and social stratification. Education as an agency of social control and social stability. Education as an influence for social changes. Alternatives to schools and schooling.

(b) What factors help to explain differences in educational achievement?

Differences in educational achievement and experience in relation to gender, ethnic group and class. The influence of the home and community background on differences in educational achievement. The curriculum and the hidden curriculum. The culture of schools and social interaction in the classroom. Language and culture as dimensions of social inequality in education systems. The influence of peer groups.

### *Unit 7. Crime, Deviance and Social Control*

This section considers the nature of 'normal' and 'deviant' behaviour in different social contexts.

(a) What is normal behaviour and deviance? Why are there rules in society?

Deviance: the relative nature of conformity, normality and deviance. The influences, both formal and informal, which help to maintain order in society: socialisation, the media, religion, the police and courts. The development of sub-cultures, with particular reference to youth cultures.

(b) Why are society's rules broken? What are the consequences of breaking the rules?

Crime: the difference between deviance and crime, law and law-breaking. Explanations of deviant and criminal behaviour: biological, environmental, economic, psychological and sociological. The role of formal agencies, the media and others in defining deviance and crime: stereotyping, labelling and deviance amplification. The nature and extent of crime. An examination of official statistics of crime and their interpretation.

*Unit 8. The Mass Media*

This section examines contemporary culture and communication through reference to the influence of the mass media.

## (a) What are the mass media?

The various forms of the mass media. The process of mass communication. Ownership and control of the mass media. Media cultures. Patterns of media use, for example by social class, age and gender. Freedom and censorship in the media. The stratification of forms of cultural expression: 'high culture', 'mass culture', 'popular culture', etc. Pluralist and Marxist perspectives on the nature and role of the media. The role of advertising.

## (b) What is the impact and influence of the mass media?

The process of communication and the media's role in shaping values, attitudes and behaviour with reference to, for example, television and violence; political beliefs and voting; patterns of consumption. The media's role in agenda setting and in creating images and stereotyping, for example, news broadcasting and newspapers. The issues of selection, distribution and bias in the media. The idea of repressive and manipulative forms of communication: indoctrination, propaganda, bias, distortion.

## READING LIST

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This list was checked and revised in 2006 for the 2009 syllabus. Browne's 'An Introduction to Sociology' and Moore's 'Sociology Alive!' are both suitable as a class text for this syllabus.

**Books for Students**

| AUTHOR                   | TITLE   | PUBLISHED | PUBLISHER               | ISBN NUMBER |
|--------------------------|---|-----------|-------------------------|-------------|
| Blundell, J.             | Active Sociology for GCSE                         | 2001      | Longman                 | 05382434432 |
| Browne, K.               | An Introduction to Sociology, 3 <sup>rd</sup> Ed. | 2005      | Blackwell               | 0745632580  |
| Bruce, S.                | Sociology: A Very Short Introduction              | 2000      | Oxford University Press | 0192853805  |
| Harris, S.               | Longman GCSE Study Guide: Sociology               | 1994      | Longman                 | 0582226511  |
| Moore, S.                | Sociology Alive!, 3 <sup>rd</sup> Ed.             | 2001      | Nelson Thornes          | 0748754644  |
| O'Donnell, G.            | Mastering Sociology                               | 2001      | Palgrave                | 0333919564  |
| Townroe, C.<br>Yates, G. | Sociology   | 1995      | Longman                 | 0582257301  |
| Wilson, P.<br>Kidd, A.   | Sociology for GCSE                                | 1998      | HarperCollins           | 0003224449  |

**Books for Teachers**

| AUTHOR                                  | TITLE                                  | PUBLISHED | PUBLISHER                     | ISBN NUMBER |
|---|--|-----------|-------------------------------|-------------|
| Barnard, A.<br>Burgess, B.<br>Kirby, M. | AS and A Level<br>Sociology            | 2004      | Cambridge<br>University Press | 0521532140  |
| Giddens, A.                             | Sociology, 5 <sup>th</sup> Ed.         | 2006      | Polity Press                  | 074563379X  |
| Lawson, T.<br>Garrod, J.                | The Complete A-Z<br>Sociology Handbook | 2003      | Hodder &<br>Stoughton         | 0340872705  |
| McCoy, T.<br>Mann, A.                   | Supporting Sociology<br>Students       | 1995      | Connect<br>Publications       | 0952068311  |
| Richardson,<br>J. et al.                | Sociology in Focus                     | 2003      | Causeway Press                | 1902796160  |

**Websites**

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|--|---|
| Office for National Statistics                             | <a href="http://www.statistics.gov.uk">www.statistics.gov.uk</a> , e.g. search on 'Social Trends'.                              |
| United States Census Bureau                                | <a href="http://www.census.gov">www.census.gov</a> .  |
| Association for the Teaching of the Social Sciences (ATSS) | <a href="http://www.le.ac.uk/se/centres/ATSS/atss.html">www.le.ac.uk/se/centres/ATSS/atss.html</a> .                            |
| New Internationalist                                       | <a href="http://www.newint.org">www.newint.org</a> , periodical.  |
| Sociology Review   | <a href="http://www.philipallan.co.uk">www.philipallan.co.uk</a> , periodical aimed at schools.                                 |
| Sociology Online   | <a href="http://www.sociologyonline.co.uk">www.sociologyonline.co.uk</a> .  |
| Sixth Sense  | <a href="http://sixthsense.osfc.ac.uk/">http://sixthsense.osfc.ac.uk/</a> , an interactive site for students including quizzes. |

## TEACHER'S NOTES

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The IGCSE syllabus has a number of features, including the following:

- The syllabus content reflects contemporary developments in Sociology.
- The syllabus content is focused and streamlined, with emphasis on themes that stretch across all areas of Sociology, such as research methods, social stratification, culture and socialisation.
- The examination for the syllabus will consist of two written papers.
- There is one compulsory question on research methods as part of Paper 1.
- The syllabus is compatible with the new GCE Advanced Subsidiary and Advanced Level (9699) syllabuses, as it is recognised that studying for the higher qualification will be seen as a logical progression for many of those candidates who are successful in the subject at IGCSE.

Topics that are popular with Centres – e.g. social differentiation and inequality, power and authority, deviance and social control – are included in the syllabus content. Moreover, the importance of studying concepts, theories and evidence, as a key to understanding the purpose and value of sociological investigation, is retained as a central theme in the syllabus. The nature of the skills tested is clearly defined in the syllabus.

The syllabus content is divided into eight study units. The examination consists of two written papers, each covering four study units. Paper 1 includes a compulsory question on research methods and so it is strongly recommended that candidates are encouraged to develop a good understanding of the subject content outlined in unit one (Methodology). Candidates should also study in detail at least **two** of the other three units that are examined in Paper 1.

For Paper 2, it is recommended that candidates study in detail at least **two** of the four units on which questions will be set. Studying fewer than the recommended number of units would almost certainly disadvantage the candidate by restricting his/her choice of questions in the examination.

Each examination paper has its own format and Centres are advised to study the rubric requirements carefully and ensure that candidates are fully aware of these requirements before they sit the examination. Mock examinations based on the format and type of questions set in Papers 1 and 2, would be a useful way of preparing candidates for the examination.

This syllabus document includes a list of recommended reading. Ideally, candidates will have access to at least one of the textbooks listed. Other reading may be regarded as optional, although candidates may benefit from studying a range of research reports and other relevant sociological sources.

Although global processes are an increasingly important theme in Sociology, it remains the case that much of the sociological literature focuses on the highly industrialised countries, the USA and UK in particular. While candidates for this examination are required to demonstrate a sound knowledge of these societies, they may also use relevant sociological examples and sources that relate to other parts of the world, including their own countries. Indeed, the use of more 'localised' sources is to be encouraged, particularly where it complements or supports references to important sociological themes and ideas.