Sociology - Key topics studied

Component 1:

- Key Concepts: key terms and ideas that shape our understanding of the entire course
- Families: changes in family regarding functions and importance
- Education: focusing on what factors affect how students achieve in school
- Research Methods: ways in which sociologists conduct research

Component 2:

- Social Stratification: reasons for inequality in society and how that may affect Life-Chances
- Crime and Deviance: why people commit crime and who might commit crime
- Sociological Enquiry: ways in which sociologists conduct research

Pathway through the subject:

Two Written Examinations- both 1 hour 45 minutes

Each paper is worth 50% and 100 marks each

Students will be expected to complete a range of questions- knowledge retrieval, explanation and evaluation questions.

Component 1: Understanding Social Processes Written examination: 1 hour 45 minutes 50% of qualification 100 marks

1. Key concepts and processes of cultural transmission

1.1 Key sociological concepts • culture, norms, values, roles, status, identity, sanctions, cultural diversity

1.2 Debates over the acquisition of identity • nature/nurture including examples of feral children and cultural diversity

1.3 The process of socialisation • agents of socialisation: family, education, media, peer group • how agents of socialisation pass on culture and identity, for example: gender, class and ethnic identity • informal and formal social control

2 Families

2.1 Family diversity and different family forms in the UK and within a global context • what is a family? • nuclear family, extended family, reconstituted family, lone parent family, single sex family, cohabiting family, beanpole family • ethnic minority family forms • global family forms including polygamy, arranged marriages • one-child family policy in China

2.2 Social changes and family structures • changes in social norms, secularisation, values and laws, feminism, economic factors, technology and immigration and their impact on: family diversity, including the work of Rapoports; divorce rates and serial monogamy; cohabitation, single parent families, later age of marriage; singlehood; family size

2.3 Social changes and family relationships • changes in social norms, secularisation, values and laws, feminism • economic factors, technology and their impact on: segregated and joint conjugal roles; symmetrical families; domestic division of labour; New Man; making / money management; dual career families; leisure activities; theory of symmetrical family and principle of stratified diffusion,

developed from the functionalist perspective of Willmott and Young • child-rearing patterns and child-centred families • 'boomerang' children • 'sandwich' generation

2.4 Sociological theories of the role of the family • conflict versus consensus debate on the role of the family • consensus view of Functionalism • Functionalist theory of the role and functions of family, such as Parsons and primary socialisation and stabilisation of adult personalities • conflict view of Marxism • Marxist theory of families serving the interests of capitalism, including the work of Zaretsky • conflict view of Feminism • Feminist critique of family as a patriarchal institution, including the work of Delphy and Leonard and Oakley and the conventional family • New Right views of family

2.5 Criticisms of family • loss of traditional functions • lack of contact with wider kinship network • dysfunctional families • status and role of women • isolation and unrealistic expectations • marital breakdown and divorce • the dark side of family life including domestic violence • decline of the traditional family

3 Education
3.1 Sociological theories of the role of education • conflict versus consensus debate on the role of education • consensus view of Functionalism • Functionalist theory of education o serving the needs of society and the economy facilitating social mobility and fostering social cohesion including:
the work of Durkheim on education as the transmission of norms and values
achieved status and education operating on meritocratic principles, with reference to the work of Parsons • conflict view of Marxism • Marxist theory of education serving the needs of capitalism o education maintaining inequality, including the work of Bowles and Gintis on the correspondence theory • conflict view of Feminism • Feminist theory of education perpetuating patriarchy, including the work of Becky Francis on the patriarchal nature of schools

3.2 Processes inside schools. • processes within schools affecting educational achievement labelling, including: the work of Hargreaves; hidden curriculum; streaming, banding; anti-school sub-cultures including the work of Willis; teacher expectations, including the work of Ball
self-fulfilling prophecy

3.3 Patterns of educational achievement • patterns of attainment by gender, social class and ethnicity

3.4 Factors affecting educational achievement • social class o contribution of material factors, including the work of Halsey on class based inequalities - cultural factors, labelling, catchment areas, types of school, including the work of Ball on streaming, choice and competition between schools - counter school cultures, including the work of Willis • ethnicity, contribution of material and cultural factors, curriculum, labelling and racism

3.5 Factors affecting educational achievement • gender: contribution of more employment opportunities for females; feminism; feminisation of schools; crisis of masculinity; peer pressure and subcultures

4 Sociological research methods

4.1 Usefulness of different types of data • primary and secondary data • qualitative and quantitative data • sources of secondary data, including diaries, journals, official and non-official statistics • usefulness of these types of data to sociologists

4.2 Methods of research • qualitative and quantitative methods including o questionnaires o structured and unstructured interviews: different types of observations • the value, practical application and strengths and weaknesses of different methods in terms of validity, reliability, ethics and representativeness • mixed methods approach

4.3 Sampling processes • representative and non-representative sampling techniques

4.4 Practical issues affecting research • access to subjects of research • gatekeeper to allow access • time and cost of research

4.5 Ethical issues affecting research • informed consent • confidentiality • harm to participants • deception • strategies used by sociologists to address issues

Component 2 – Understanding Social Structures

5.1 Sociological theories of stratification • conflict versus consensus debate on stratification • consensus view of Functionalism • Functionalist theory of stratification o Davis and Moore's theory on the role of stratification in terms of effective role allocation and performances linked to the promise of rewards o meritocracy • conflict view of Marxism • Marxist theory of social stratification: socio-economic classifications and two class system; power of bourgeoisie to exploit the proletariat and to maintain their position; false class consciousness • conflict view of Weber • Weberian theory of stratification; socio-economic classifications; theory of class, status and party • conflict view of Feminism: Feminist views on patriarchy and stratification

5.2 Different forms and sources of power and authority • formal and informal sources of power • agencies of social control • Weberian theory of authority: traditional; charismatic and rational-legal

5.3 Equality/inequality in relation to class, gender, ethnicity, age, disability and sexuality • evidence and examples should be used to demonstrate equality/inequality in contemporary UK drawn from the following areas: education; crime; income and wealth; health; family; work; media

5.4 Factors which may influence access to life chances and power • factors which may influence class, gender, ethnicity, age, disability and sexuality; social construction of identity/roles, status; prejudice, discrimination; stereotyping, labelling; scapegoating; media representation; legislation; moral panic; sub-cultures • with specific reference to social class: private schooling; old boys' network; affluent worker, including the work of Devine • with specific reference to gender: sexism; glass ceiling; patriarchy, including the work of Walby; crisis of masculinity • with specific reference to ethnicity: racism, institutional racism • with specific reference to age: ageism • with specific reference to disability: medical and social models of disability • with specific reference to sexuality: homophobia • religion and belief

5.5 Poverty as a social issue • absolute and relative poverty, including the work of Townsend on relative deprivation • material deprivation • groups prone to poverty • culture of poverty, including

the work of Murray on the underclass • cycle of deprivation • social exclusion and inclusion • impact of globalisation

6 Crime and deviance

6.1 Social construction of concepts of crime and deviance • what is crime? • what is deviance? • historical and cultural variations • social construction of crime and deviance

6.2 Social control • informal and formal social control and unwritten rules • agencies of informal social control: family; peer group; education; religion; media • sanctions • formal social control o role of the police and courts

6.3 Patterns of criminal and deviant behaviour • patterns of criminal behaviour by: social class; ethnicity; age; gender

6.4 Sociological theories and explanations of deviance and criminal behaviour (structural, subcultural, interactionist and feminist) • conflict versus consensus debate • consensus view of Functionalism: functions of crime; anomie, including the work of Merton and strain theory • Subcultural theory: Albert Cohen and delinquent sub-cultures • conflict view of Marxism: Chambliss and differential enforcement of the law; white collar and corporate crime • Interactionism: notion of the typical offender; labelling; self-fulfilling prophecy, including the work of Becker and the deviant career; moral panics • conflict view of Feminism: social control, including the work of Heidensohn on female conformity in a male dominated society; women and poverty including the work of Carlen; chivalry thesis • ethnicity and crime: racism; institutional racism; scapegoating

6.5 Sources of data on crime • patterns and trends of criminal behaviour • official statistics • victim and self-report studies • usefulness of sources of data on crime: dark figure of crime; unreported and unrecorded crime; police bias and labelling; moral panics; invisible crime

7 Applied methods of sociological enquiry

7.1 The process of research design • choosing a research area • establishing an aim and/or hypothesis • choosing a method • use of pilot study • selection of sampling techniques • analysis of data • usefulness of mixed methods approach

7.2 Interpreting data • how to interpret graphs, diagrams, charts and tables in order to discern patterns and trends