

# A-Level Spec Breakdown:

## Paper 1 ( Education with Theory and Methods):

Specification:	Key Thinkers:	Indicative Content:
1. The role and functions of the education system, including its relationship to the economy and to class structure	Althusser, Bowles and Davis and Moore, Parsons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Functionalist and New Right explanations of the role and functions of the education system, e.g. in relation to social solidarity, skills teaching, meritocracy, selection and role allocation.</li> <li>Marxist explanations of the role and functions of the education system, e.g. in relation to ideological state apparatuses, reproduction of social class inequality, legitimisation of social class inequality.</li> </ul>
2. Differential educational achievement of social groups by social class, gender and ethnicity in contemporary society.	Archer; Bhopal; Bourdieu; Mackay; Reay.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Patterns and trends in differential educational achievement by social class, ethnicity and gender, eg in relation to GCSE results.</li> <li>Different sociological explanations of social class differences in educational achievement in relation to external factors (outside the education system), eg material deprivation, social and cultural capital.</li> <li>Different sociological explanations of gender differences in educational achievement in relation to external factors, e.g. changes in the family and labour market affecting women and men and the influence of feminist ideas.</li> <li>Different sociological explanations of ethnic differences in educational achievement in relation to external factors, eg material deprivation and racism in wider society.</li> </ul>
3. Relationships and processes within schools, with particular reference to teacher/pupil relationships, pupil identities and subcultures, the hidden curriculum, and the organisation of teaching and learning.	Ball; Becker; Francis; Gillborn and Youdel; Mac an Ghail.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Different sociological explanations of social class differences in educational achievement in relation to internal factors and processes within schools, eg teacher labelling, the self-fulfilling prophecy, pupil subcultures and pupils' class identities.</li> <li>Different sociological explanations of gender differences in educational achievement in relation to internal factors, eg the curriculum, selection and marketisation, feminisation of education, pupil subcultures and gender identities.</li> <li>Patterns and trends in subject choice by gender. Different sociological explanations of gender differences in subject choice, eg in relation to subject image, teaching and learning styles and primary socialisation.</li> <li>Different sociological explanations of ethnic differences in educational achievement in relation to internal factors, eg racist labelling, the self-fulfilling prophecy, pupil subcultural responses, ethnic identities, institutional racism and the ethnocentric curriculum.</li> </ul>
The significance of educational policies, including policies of selection, marketisation and privatisation, and policies to achieve greater equality of opportunity or outcome, for an understanding of	Bartlett; Mirza; Sewell; Tough and Brooks; Whitty.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The impact of educational policies of selection, marketisation and privatisation, such as the tripartite system and the post-1988 education system, in relation to educational standards and class differences of outcome; the globalisation of educational policy.</li> <li>The impact of educational policies aimed at achieving greater</li> </ul>

the structure, role, impact and experience of and access to education; the impact of globalisation on educational policy.		<p>equality of opportunity or outcome, e.g. pupil premium.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education policies in relation to gender and ethnic differences and their impact.</li> <li>• Different sociological explanations of the impact of educational policies, eg in relation to parentocracy and differences in economic and cultural capital.</li> </ul>
Methods in Context:		
Specification:	Indicative Content:	
Students must be able to apply sociological research methods to the study of education.	The application of the range of primary and secondary methods and sources of data (as covered below in AS level Research Methods and in A-level Theory and Methods) to the particular topics studied in education, with specific reference to the strengths and limitations of the different methods and sources of data in different educational contexts.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quantitative and qualitative methods of research; research design.</li> <li>• Sources of data, including questionnaires, interviews, participant and non-participant observation, experiments, documents and official statistics.</li> <li>• The distinction between primary and secondary data, and between quantitative and qualitative data.</li> <li>• The relationship between positivism, interpretivism and sociological methods; the nature of 'social facts.'</li> <li>• The theoretical, practical and ethical considerations influencing choice of topic, choice of method(s) and the conduct of research.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Types of research method and data sources: the differences between quantitative and qualitative data, and between primary and secondary sources of data; the strengths and limitations of each of these.</li> <li>• Primary methods of data collection: questionnaires, interviews, observation and experiments; the main variants of each, eg structured and unstructured interviews, participant and non-participant observation, laboratory and field experiments.</li> <li>• Secondary sources of data: documents, official statistics; different types of document, eg personal, public and historical; different sources of official statistics.</li> <li>• Research design, eg in relation to pilot studies and sampling techniques; main stages of the research process in relation to these methods.</li> <li>• Practical issues affecting choice of methods and sources, eg time, cost, access and researcher's characteristics; strengths and limitations of different methods and sources in relation to these issues.</li> <li>• Ethical issues affecting choice of methods and sources, eg informed consent, deceit and vulnerable groups; strengths and limitations of different methods and sources in relation to these issues.</li> <li>• Theoretical issues affecting choice of methods and sources, eg reliability, validity, representativeness, positivism, interpretivism; strengths and limitations of different methods and sources in relation to these issues.</li> <li>• Practical, ethical and theoretical factors influencing choice of research topic, eg personal experience and policy concerns.</li> </ul>	
Specification:	Key Thinkers:	Indicative Content:
Consensus, conflict, structural and	Althusser; Crenshaw;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The difference between consensus and conflict theories of society, including consensus theories such as functionalism,</li> </ul>

social action theories.	Goffman; Parsons; Marx; Mead; and Phipps.	the New Right, and conflict theories, ie Marxism and feminism; the major variants of such theories, eg scientific and humanistic Marxism; liberal, radical, Marxist etc feminism. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The difference between structural theories such as functionalism and Marxism, and action theories; the main types of action theory, such as social action theory and symbolic interactionism.</li> </ul>
The concepts of modernity and post-modernity in relation to sociological theory	Baudrillard; Beck; Giddens; and Harvey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The concepts of modernity and postmodernity, including variants such as late modernity.</li> <li>Modernist and postmodernist theories of contemporary society.</li> </ul>
The nature of science and the extent to which Sociology can be regarded as scientific.	Kuhn; Popper; and Weber	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Debates about the scientific status of sociology: positivist and interpretivist views.</li> <li>Different views of the natural sciences, eg Popper, Kuhn, realism, and implications for sociology's scientific status.</li> </ul>
The relationship between theories and methods	Atkinson; Douglas; and Durkheim.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The relationship between theoretical perspective and preference for particular research methods and sources of data, eg positivism and quantitative data, interpretivism and qualitative data.</li> </ul>
Debates about subjectivity, objectivity and value freedom.	Comte; Becker; Gouldner; and Murray.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concepts of objectivity, subjectivity, value freedom and ideology.</li> <li>Different views of whether sociology can and should be objective or value free, eg classical sociology, value neutrality and committed sociology; relativism.</li> </ul>
The relationship between Sociology and social policy.	Bauman; Mills; and Worsley.	The difference between social problems and sociological problems; perspectives on social policy and on the role of sociology in relation to policy.

#### Paper 2: Section A (Families and Households):

Specification:	Key Thinkers:	Indicative Content:
The relationship of the family to the social structure and social change, with particular reference to the economy and to state policies.	Murdock; Murray; Parsons; Oakley; and Zaretsky.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Different sociological views, eg functionalist, feminist, Marxist, New Right and postmodernist, on the role of the family and its relationship to wider social structures such as the economy.</li> <li>The impact on families of government legislation (eg on divorce, same-sex marriage, adoption) and policies (eg</li> </ul>

		education, housing, retirement age, childcare, housing and welfare.
Changing patterns of marriage, cohabitation, separation, divorce, childbearing and the life course, including the sociology of personal life, and the diversity of contemporary family and household structures.	Berthoud; Chester; Smart; Stacey; and Weeks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An understanding of the trends in contemporary family and household structures, eg symmetrical family, beanpole families, serial monogamy, lone-parent families, living apart together, same sex couples etc.</li> <li>Different sociological explanations for the reasons and significance of these trends.</li> <li>Including the significance of individual choice in personal relationships and the significance of relationships beyond the traditional family structures.</li> </ul>
Gender roles, domestic labour and power relationships within the family in contemporary society.	Dobash and Dobash; Duncombe and Marsden; Gershuny; Young and Willmott; and Pahl.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Different sociological arguments and evidence on this, including an understanding of the extent of changes and also diversity of experiences.</li> <li>Different aspects of relationships, eg domestic labour, childcare, domestic violence, finance, dual burden, triple shift etc.</li> </ul>
The nature of childhood, and changes in the status of children in the family and society.	Aries; Donzelot; Palmer; Postman; and Punch.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How childhood is socially constructed.</li> <li>Different sociological views on the nature and experience of childhood.</li> <li>How childhood is experienced differently across gender, ethnicity and social class.</li> <li>Cross cultural differences and how the experience of childhood has changed historically.</li> </ul>
Demographic trends in the United Kingdom since 1900: birth rates, death rates, family size, life expectancy, ageing population, and migration and globalisation.	Blaikie; McKeown; Pilcher; Townsend; and Williams.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sociological debates about the nature, causes and significance of these changes.</li> <li>How these changes impact on family and households, and also wider society, including concepts such as net migration, infant mortality rate and fertility rate.</li> </ul>

**Paper 2: Section B (Beliefs in Society):**

Specification:	Key Thinkers:	Indicative Content:
Ideology, science and religion,	Popper; Kuhn;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Science as a social construct. Issues in defining religion</li> </ul>

including both Christian and non-Christian religious traditions.	and Aldridge.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Religion and science as belief systems and ideological influences.</li> <li>Different theoretical views on the role and function of religion, eg functionalist, Marxist (including neo-Marxist), feminisms and postmodernist.</li> </ul>
The relationship between social change and social stability, and religious beliefs, practices and organisations.	Durkheim; Marx; Weber; Bruce; and Wallis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sociological views on religion as a conservative force and, as a force for social change, for stability or conflict.</li> <li>The impact of social change on religious belief, practices and organisations.</li> </ul>
Religious organisations, including cults, sects, denominations, churches and New Age movements, and their relationship to religious and spiritual belief and practice.	Troeltsch; Wallis; Weber; Barker; Stark and Bainbridge.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Characteristics of different types of religious organisation.</li> <li>Explanations for growth or decline of different forms of religious organisation.</li> </ul>
The relationship between different social groups and religious/spiritual organisations and movements, beliefs and practices.	Bruce; El Sadaawi; Madood et al; Woodhead; and Davie.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Patterns of religiosity among different social groups, such as social class, ethnicity, gender and age.</li> <li>Explanations for changes in these patterns.</li> </ul>
The significance of religion and religiosity in the contemporary world, including the nature and extent of secularisation in a global context, and globalisation and the spread of religions.	Wilson; Glock and Stark; Huntingdon; Norris and Inglehart.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Defining and measuring secularisation. The extent of belief and practice.</li> <li>Competing explanations and evidence for secularisation in terms of belief, practice and organisations.</li> <li>Global context of debate including the growth of religion.</li> </ul>

### Paper 3: Crime and Deviance with Theories and Methods

Specification:	Key Thinkers:	Indicative Content:
Crime, deviance, social order and social control.	Becker; Lea and Young; Merton; Chambliss; and Wilson.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Functionalist explanations of crime, deviance, social order and social control, eg positive functions of crime, adaptations to strain, types of subculture, differential association.</li> <li>Marxist and neo-Marxist explanations of crime, deviance, social order and social control, eg criminogenic capitalism, law</li> </ul>

		<p>making and critical criminology.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Labelling theory of crime, deviance, social order and social control, eg the social construction of crime, the effects of labelling and deviance amplification.</li> <li>• Right realist explanations of crime, deviance, social order and social control, eg the causes of crime and solutions to crime.</li> <li>• Left realist explanations of crime, deviance, social order and social control, eg relative deprivation, subcultures and marginalisation.</li> </ul>
<p>The social distribution of crime and deviance by ethnicity, gender and social class, including recent patterns and trends in crime.</p>	<p>Carlen; Heidensohn; Patel and Tyrer; Pearce; Williams and Clarke.</p>	<p>The social distribution of crime and deviance by ethnicity, including recent patterns and trends and different explanations for these, eg ethnicity and criminality, racism and the criminal justice system and victimisation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The social distribution of crime and deviance by gender, including recent patterns and trends and different explanations for these, eg feminism, the chivalry thesis, sex role theory, social control and liberation thesis.</li> <li>• The social distribution of crime and deviance by social class, including recent patterns and trends and different explanations for these, eg selective law enforcement and white-collar crime.</li> </ul>
<p>Globalisation and crime in contemporary society; the media and crime; green crime; human rights and state crimes.</p>	<p>Castells; S. Cohen; Hobbs and Dunningham; McLaughlin; and White.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Globalisation and crime in contemporary society, eg transnational organised crime, global criminal organisations, global capitalism and crimes of the powerful.</li> <li>• The media and crime, eg media representations of crime, the media as a cause of crime and moral panics.</li> <li>• Green crime, eg types of green crime and green criminology.</li> <li>• Human rights and state crimes, eg war, genocide and torture, and human rights abuses.</li> </ul>
<p>Crime control, surveillance, prevention and punishment, victims, and the role of the criminal justice system and other agencies.</p>	<p>Christie; Foucault; Mawby and Walklate; Phillips and Webster; and Tombs and Whyte.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crime control, surveillance, prevention and punishment, eg crime prevention strategies, and sociological perspectives on punishment.</li> <li>• Patterns of victimisation and explanations for these, eg positivist and critical victimology.</li> <li>• The role of the criminal justice system and other agencies, eg the role of police, courts and prisons.</li> </ul>