

A-Level Sociology

Welcome to Sixth Form and the AQA A Level Sociology course! Sociology is the study of society and helps you understand how social structures, institutions, and relationships shape our lives. You'll explore topics like families, education, crime, and beliefs, while learning key theories and research methods. It's a subject that's relevant to everyday life and encourages you to question the world around you. Sociology develops critical thinking, essay writing, and analytical skills that are useful for many careers. If you're curious about people and enjoy discussion and debate, this is the perfect subject to challenge and inspire you.

Mrs Mayo- Teacher of Sociology

Understanding the course

Specification	AQA Sociology A Level
Exams	All exams are at the end of Y13 Paper 1: AS content 2 hours Paper 2: AS and A2 content 2 hours Paper 3: AS and A2 content 2 hours
Teacher	Mr Craddick and Mr Charles bcraddick@yateacademy.co.uk rhcharles@yateacademy.co.uk

Course requirements

Please come prepared to your first lesson with the following materials:

- Pencil case with black pens, pencils, ruler, rubber
- 1 lever arch folder with dividers.
- 1 blank, lined exercise book for independent study
- A diary or planner

Summer bridging work

To ensure you start the year as successfully as possible, please come to your first lesson having completed the following tasks.

Consolidate

Task	Time expected	Complete
<p>Introduction to Functionalism – https://www.tutor2u.net/sociology/reference/what-is-functionalism</p> <p>Read the extract and create a glossary of the key terms and their definitions;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organic analogy • Social cohesion • Social control • Socialisation (primary and secondary) • Meritocracy <p>Write a 100-word summary of the key ideas of Functionalism.</p>	1 hour	
<p>Introduction to Marxism – https://www.tutor2u.net/sociology/reference/sociological-theory-marxism</p> <p>Watch the video and create a glossary of the key terms and their definitions;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proletariat • Bourgeoisie • Alienation • Hegemony • Dual consciousness • Ideological state apparatus • Repressive state apparatus <p>Write a 100-word summary of the key ideas of Marxism.</p>	1 hour	
<p>Introduction to Feminism – https://www.tutor2u.net/sociology/reference/families-feminism</p> <p>Watch the video and create a glossary of the key terms and their definitions;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patriarchy • Dual Burden • Triple Shift <p>Write a 100-word summary of the differences between the different types of Feminists.</p>	1 hour	

Apply

Task: Read the article about the debate around what is family and answer the questions at the end.

'The choice to love is a choice to connect': Chosen family is more important than blood

BELLA BAKEMAN Detroit Free Press

My whole life I've been told blood is thicker than water, family comes first and we do anything for family.

Mostly, it's true. The Bakeman-Crank clan shows up for each other in crisis, but tragic events tend to be the only reason we're in the same room. While that doesn't make us any less of a family, it has influenced the way I define family: I value non-familial and family relationships equally. This has always felt right to me, but some members of my family have sought to make me feel as though I am choosing my friends over my family.

I am lucky to have a chosen family, a community of people I trust, who support and love me but are not necessarily related to me.

I've been wrestling with the definition of family since I was 8, when my parents sat me down and told me they were getting divorced. My dad wasn't my cousin's uncle anymore. My mom wouldn't be at Christmas Eve dinner. Since then, I've been seeking to understand my relationship with family, and with love. I didn't understand why some families were closer than mine, and I couldn't pinpoint why I didn't have the sort of love and connection that they did.

And until recently, I never thought to ask the people who were charged with fostering my relationship with love and family.

Family of choice

This summer, I sat down for dinner with my father and aunt. I asked what family meant to them. I questioned why we weren't closer to our extended family members in Michigan. We talked about the idea of chosen family, or as my aunt called it, "family of choice."

I wasn't surprised that my aunt agreed with my definition and understanding of chosen family, nor was I surprised that my dad had his own. What did surprise me was how the thoughts I'm having at 21 were reflected in the words of my mid-50s relatives.

My father told me he thinks everyone has a chosen family, even if they don't define it that way. I think he's right, although I think some don't view close friends as family in the same way the three of us do.

To my father, "relations don't make a family," it's "who you choose to love" and find "fellowship and community with."

My aunt, who moved to Alabama when I was very young and built her own chosen family, said something similar: "You gravitate toward people who have the same values as you."

During our conversation, I learned things about my family history I'd never even considered; gaining perspective on the choices my family members have made. Now I can start to understand the impact of those choices. One thing my aunt said really struck me: "We're not designed to do life alone."

She's right. Humans crave physical and emotional intimacy, and as she said to me, "When your biological family can't be there – your chosen family is there to walk with you."

When boundaries bring peace

For her, those core values are love, trust and boundaries. I'd add honesty, commitment and loyalty.

Boundaries is a big word for Gen Z, my generation, often used with the word "personal" before it. For my aunt and me, healthy personal boundaries are the limits and rules we set for ourselves in relationships. I also use the term "protecting my peace," by which I mean safeguarding my physical, mental and emotional wellbeing in the context of my relationships. Protecting my peace is what I aim to do when setting boundaries with my loved ones.

Beyond my parents, it's not my blood relatives whom I would call first if I needed help, but my chosen family, my selected support system, bound to me not by blood, but because they have chosen to be.

My chosen family started to form in high school and blossomed in college. My family of choice makes active efforts to stay in each other's lives, learn new things about each other and do fun and mundane things together. These are people I talk to every day, see as often as I can and share most of my memories with.

We go to indie concerts and have slumber parties. We sing at the top of our lungs until we are voiceless. We suggest books, shows and movies to each other. We go vintage shopping and drink coffee. We sit in silence when we need it. We drive each other to visit partners and loved ones who have been hospitalized; we hold each other when they die.

We are committed to being friends, in a way I don't always feel my family is always committed to being, well, a family.

Healthy relationships aren't obligations

I don't have a ton of relatives left in Michigan. All my aunts and uncles have moved to various sectors of the country. The folks who are still here are not part of my daily life. I see my grandma the most, but far less frequently than I could and probably should. My dad has a slew of cousins here, but I only see them on Thanksgiving and Christmas. I don't know any of their phone numbers, birthdays or children's names.

If I needed my aunts and uncles, I know they would pick up the phone the minute it rang. But they don't really know me. Their knowledge of me is confined to memories of my childhood. My impulse is to say that most of the disconnection from my family is distance, but I have long-distance friends I feel more connected to, even if we only talk bi-weekly.

Being part of my chosen family is natural, the movements easy. But not everyone views it this way. I've been guilted for not calling more often, for not checking in, for protecting my peace.

When I shared this with my aunt, she told me that in her experience, "people who aren't good family members are threatened by chosen family, because they aren't capable of healthy relationships."

Love in abundance

In "All About Love, New Visions," bell hooks meditates on the way we love: "When we are taught that safety lies always with sameness, then difference, of any kind, will appear as a threat. When we choose to love we choose to move against fear – against alienation and separation. The choice to love is a choice to connect — to find ourselves in the other."

Both ideas make sense to me. It does not surprise me that those who question my chosen family are threatened by its existence. It does sadden me, however, that there are those who view love in abundance as a threat.

I can't speak about anyone else's experience with family. I won't tell you how to love or who you should view as family. But what I will argue for is the importance of abundant love. I have experienced that love through the family I have found, and I cannot wait to watch it grow. I hope that everyone can find that kind of love, community and fellowship — be it within their traditional or chosen family.

Question:

What does family mean to you?

How far do you agree with the article that a chosen family can be just as important as blood ties?

Extend

Pick one of the podcasts in the list to listen to. Summarise the key points.

Topic	What is it about?	Link
An introduction to post-modernism	The differences between modernity, liquid modernity and post-modernity	https://open.spotify.com/episode/70ipXu7znFtYAhXJY8rBRJ
Social class and Cultural capital	A new way of thinking about class	https://open.spotify.com/episode/0vcwReo2ixTM0tyFU4l22J