

We experience society every day, we live it, so sociology is just common sense, right? Well, maybe not... That would be like saying that, because we come into contact with humans every day, we know everything about them. If that were the case then there would be no need to study anatomy, medicine, psychology, psychiatry and so on. There is an important point here: all of these sciences have to look beyond the surface to explore their subject matter. Sociology is no different.

You need a broad set of skills to study sociology. Sociologists draw on a wide body of knowledge – it's not 'just' sociology, it's psychology, anthropology, economics, history, political science, human geography and philosophy combined. Auguste Comte called sociology the 'Queen' of the social sciences because it does everything the other social sciences do - and more.

Sociologists tackle some of the most pressing problems confronting humanity. Sociology examines the workings of our everyday world and attempts to make a difference. What could be more important than that? It equips you with a new way of interacting with the world for the rest of your life. Absolutely everything can be looked at from a sociological perspective. You might say everything is sociology.

Sociology isn't always comfortable and it shows us things we'd perhaps like to hide from. But crucially, it gives us rough sketches, not finished maps. It's for you to shape.

The purpose of sociology is "to come to the help of the individual"  
(Zygmunt Bauman)



"Sociology is the scientific study of human life, social groups, whole societies and the human world as such. It is a dazzling and compelling enterprise, as its subject-matter is our own behaviour as social beings."  
Giddens 2009.

Why sociology?

"To reveal that which is hidden"  
(Pierre Bourdieu)

## Open doors with a sociology Degree

Sociology graduates succeed in many different jobs and careers. Sociology trains you to answer the 'what', 'how' and 'why' questions about human societies and to think critically, which gives you the edge in the job market.

Careers you can follow with a sociology degree:

- Social worker
- Journalist
- Teacher
- Market researcher
- Public health officer
- Police officer
- Probation worker
- Charity worker
- Government adviser
- Human resources manager
- Welfare rights officer
- Community development worker

At its core, sociology is all about speaking up.

## Sociology is...

- **Reflexive** – it holds a mirror up to society and asks why things are this way, rather than assuming there are no alternatives.
- **Critical** – it involves constructively critiquing social relationships and institutions, and can be crucial for improving people's lives.
- **Empirical** – it is based on evidence as well as allowing scope for abstract theories.
- **Radical** – it offers a fresh and potentially revolutionary way of thinking about the world.
- **Relevant** – it deals with the major social issues of today and with long standing social concerns that affect us all.
- **Democratic** – it is not the preserve of an elite but is accessible to everyone. Not by default but by design.
- **Concerned with justice** – it exposes inequality and informs debates about fairness.
- **Powerful** – it offers a transformative understanding of the social world and can help change things for the better.

Some sociology graduates you may have heard of

- Martin Luther King Jr
- Michelle Obama
- Valerie Amos  
UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, 2010-2015
- Kal Penn
- Michael Sheen
- Dan Ackroyd
- Robin Williams

“I find that my sociological background is invaluable to my day-to-day work. It really is a fantastic grounding for public health.”

– Dr Catherine Heffernan, NHS Doctor  
– [www.britsoc.co.uk/what-is-sociology/discover-sociology.aspx](http://www.britsoc.co.uk/what-is-sociology/discover-sociology.aspx)

“Sociology today is one of the most popular subjects. Many sociological ideas, such as ‘moral panic’ and charisma, are now in everyday use.”

– <http://www.britsoc.co.uk/what-is-sociology/studying-sociology.aspx>

“[Sociology] disturbs conventional ways of thinking, breaks up solid categories and throws doubt on accepted truths... You don’t retire from sociology any more than you retire from life.”

– Laurie Taylor (BBC Radio 4 presenter)

“I often say that Sociology is a martial art, a means of self-defence. Basically, you use it to defend yourself, without having the right to use it for unfair attacks.”

– Pierre Bourdieu



Speak up for  
SOCIOLOGY

What it is  
Why it matters

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