



# GET READY TO STUDY A LEVEL SOCIOLOGY

If you are planning to study A Level Sociology with us in September, please review this document and complete the required activities. Please bring the completed activities with you at induction.

## FAQ

**What specification will I study?**

[AQA | Sociology | AS and A-level | Sociology](#)

**How many lessons will I have a week?**

You'll have 4 lessons a week, each lesson is 1 hours and 5 minutes

**Who can I contact if I have a question about this subject?**

Josephine Bird [j.bird@barnsley.ac.uk](mailto:j.bird@barnsley.ac.uk)

**What subjects go well with Sociology?**

Politics, Religion, Philosophy and Ethics, English, History, Psychology

**What grades should I have?**

In addition to the general sixth form entry requirements, learners must have grade 5 or above in GCSE English or Humanities subject

# WHAT WILL I STUDY?

**In Year 12, you will study the following topics:**

[Education with Theory and Methods](#)

[Culture and Identity](#)

**In Year 13, you will study the following topics:**

[Crime and Deviance with Theory and Methods](#)

[Beliefs in society](#)

# WHAT WILL I NEED?

To study the course you will need the following equipment:

- A folder with dividers
- Lined paper
- Pens and pencils
- Highlighters

We recommend all students buy a textbook and these can be purchased from the college at the start of term. Financial support is available for those.

# FIND OUT MORE

These activities are to help broaden your understanding of the subject in preparation for studying this subject at an advanced level.

Careers	<a href="http://thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk">Careers with a Sociology degree (thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk)</a>
Social Media	<a href="#">Sociology of Education – Hectic Teacher Sociology</a>
YouTube	<a href="#">tutor2u sociology youtube - Bing video</a>
Further Reading / Useful websites	<a href="#">tutor2u   Support resources for Sociology students and teachers</a>

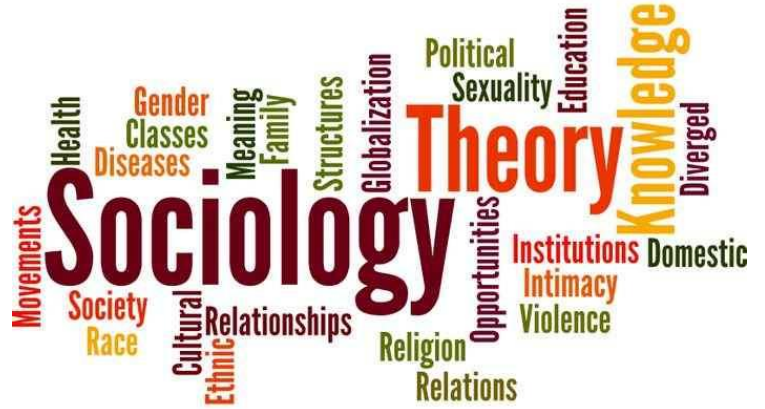
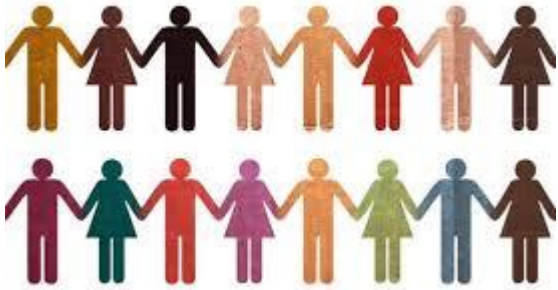
# REQUIRED ACTIVITIES

It is important that all the required activities are completed in preparation for starting your course. Please bring these completed activities with you at induction.

Choosing your A Levels can be a challenge for some learners therefore if you are undecided around which subjects you are planning to study completing these activities will give yourself greater insight into the course to help ensure you have made the right choice.

# A-LEVEL SOCIOLOGY

## Induction Booklet



## Induction assignment

### Task 1:

Welcome to A level sociology, we hope that you enjoy studying with us this academic year. Please use the following link and look at what is sociology and the crash course video.

As the new academic year approaches attention turns to new cohorts of Sociology students who may be picking up the subject for the first time. One of the first questions Sociology teachers are often asked is from those who have never studied it before is, 'What is Sociology?' Which can often prompt a number of follow-up questions!

The following tutor2u Sociology blog posts could help newbie students get their head around that question as well as introduce them to some of the topics covered:

What is Sociology?

Crash Course: What is Sociology?

<https://www.tutor2u.net/sociology/blog/a-new-academic-year-an-introduction-to-sociology>

### Task 2:

- Read though this booklet which outlines the introductory concepts in sociology.
- Make brief notes on all of the content
- Bring handwritten notes to enrolment as they will be checked

Don't be concerned if you don't understand all the terminology yet, it is introductory material that will be expanded on over the two years.

### Task 3:

Read the additional document on Alienation and answer all of the questions

## What is sociology?

Sociology is made up of two words:

**Socio** = society

**Logy** = science or study of

### In other words it is the science of society

- Sociology is the **study of how individuals relate to each other within and between groups.**
- A group consists of two or more people. A family is an example of a small group, and a school is an example of a larger group.
- Sociology is concerned with **explaining what is happening in the world** that humans inhabit.

## Sociology is challenging

In sociology, you will be actively involved in exploring and asking questions about the society in which you live. Studying sociology offers you opportunities to gain a greater understanding of society and to make sense of your own experiences within it.

Sociology can be both thought-provoking and challenging because it forces people to rethink some of their common-sense views and assumptions.

## What questions do sociologists ask?

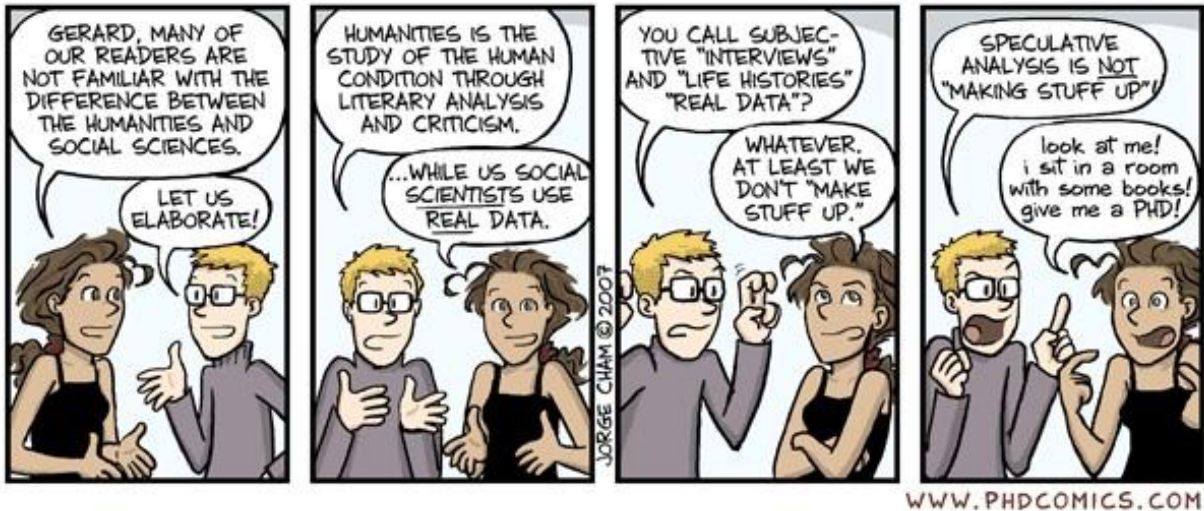
- Who does the housework?
- What are teenage girls' future ideas about work and marriage?
- Is society in harmony or conflict?
- Why are some people more powerful than others?
- Does society shape the individual or does the individual shape society? (Have a think of some of your own)

## What do Sociologists do?

Like all scientists, sociologists carry out **research**. Research can be done in a variety of ways, for example, questionnaires, interviews or observation. The aim of research may be simply to describe a social context, or it may be to explain it. Sociologists start research with a hypothesis (prediction), based on current knowledge, pick a research method and collect data (information).

Sociologists then analyse (examine) and draw conclusions from the information collected. The evidence can then be used to create an explanation for human behaviour e.g. to explain why men commit more crime than women. This explanation can then be used to provide a solution. Sociologists attempt to use evidence to get their solutions to social problems (e.g. crime) accepted by the government and used to make new laws and social policies.

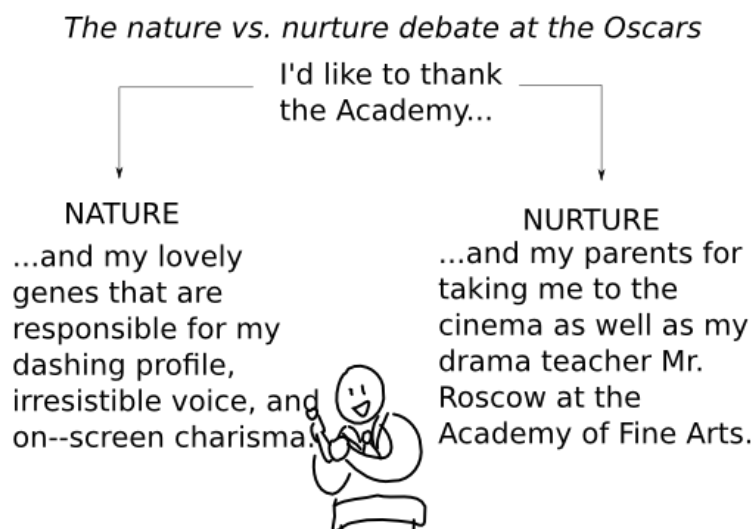




WWW.PHDCOMICS.COM

### The nature vs. nurture debate

You might have come across the word 'nature' to describe someone's personality, for example, 'It's not in John's nature to be aggressive'. Sociologists accept there are some natural reflexes (e.g. blinking) and that people have biological needs, such as food, but for sociologists human behaviour is also influenced by our social environment – people learn to think and act in certain ways. This is called: The **Nature Versus Nurture** debate.



### Norms and values

**Norms** = expected behaviours or unwritten rules of behaviour in society

**Values** = general principles or beliefs

The values that we hold as a society are part of our culture and inform the norms of behaviour we are expected to follow in different social situations. Values underpin norms; they are the basis from which norms are derived.



## Culture and socialisation

**Culture** = the shared norms and values of a society

Each society has its own culture. Sociologists define culture as all those things that are learned and shared by a society or group of people and transmitted from generation to generation. Culture includes all the things that a society regards as important, such as customs, traditions, language, skills, knowledge, beliefs, norms and values.

**Socialisation** = the process of being integrated into and learning the accepted culture of the society in which we live

Culture and socialisation are two sociological concepts which go hand in hand. You can't have culture without socialisation and vice versa. If an individual is not socialised into the culture of society then they are often considered feral. Socialisation allows the culture of the society to be passed on through the generations.



**In class we will watch the documentary about Oxana Malaya who was raised by dogs.**

## Statuses and roles

You might have heard someone refer to a person's **status** before, e.g. someone referring to a celebrity as having high status.

**Status** – a position that someone holds in society

Status can be ascribed or achieved. **Ascribed status** is the status you are born with. In some societies, this remains your status throughout life and affects who you can

marry and what you can do. These are called **closed societies**. **Achieved status** is the status you gain through talents, hard work, effort or luck. Societies which enable **social mobility** (being able to move up or down the **stratification system**) are **open societies**.

**Stratification system** – how society is divided up into layers which are usually hierarchically ordered. The class system is an example, as is the Caste system in India.

You might have heard someone use the term role before to describe a person’s job, e.g. ‘the teacher is not fulfilling her role’. Different **social roles** in society have different levels of status. For example, we tend to think of a doctor as having a higher status than a cleaner. Roles are not just occupations, however. They also include roles within social groups such as mother or cousin, friend, carer, co-worker etc.

As part of the socialisation process, we learn to fit into social roles. Some of these roles are given to us, such as daughter, and others are chosen, such as father or friend. In order to fit into social roles we must learn the norms of behaviour expected in that role and the values which underpin those norms.

Agencies of socialisation

It is not just individuals such as parents that teach us the norms and values of society. **Social structures** such as the family and the education system are part of the socialisation process.

There are two stages to the socialisation process:

**Primary socialisation** – the family teaches the individual basic norms and values.

**Secondary socialisation** – the individual learns the norms and values of wider society through institutions such as the education system, the workplace, religion and the media.

Some sociologists see the family as essential for socialisation. Some even suggest that a very specific form of family is needed for socialisation. Other sociologists suggest that whilst the family does socialise children, the effects can be harmful for individuals and society.

**Agencies of socialisation**

<b>Family</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Peer groups</b>
The main agency of primary socialisation – children taught basic norms and values and	Pupils learn about the society they live in and the norms and values to which they will be	The desire for approval and acceptance by peers is a powerful socialising influence – influences individuals self identity

begin to acquire their sense of who they are	expected to conform to as adults	
<p><b>The workplace</b></p> <p>Work involved learning norms and values of wider society and conforming to the social rules governing work</p>	<p><b>Media</b></p> <p>Media is a source of information, ideas, norms and values and shares images and attitudes that can influence peoples values, behaviour and identities</p>	<p><b>Religious institutions</b></p> <p>Religion involves beliefs which influence people's ideas about right and wrong behaviour, important values and norms and morality and these may affect the behaviour and identities of individuals and the culture of communities</p>

### A brief introduction to sociological theories

In Sociology we use the word theory to refer to the different ideas about what society is like. A theory attempts to explain the way society is. There are a variety of theories about what society is like.

Sociologists are broadly divided between:

#### Structuralists

Structuralists are sociologists who try to understand society and human behaviour by studying society's structures. By structures we mean the things which organise (stratify) society - the big things that make up society. Structures could be institutions within society, such as the media and the government, but also includes the groups (or strata) which people belong to, for example: gender; class; ethnicity; religious groups; sexuality. This is a **macro approach** to studying society – based on studying society on the largescale.

Structural theories are **deterministic** – humans lack autonomy/freedom. They see the individual as a product of society – influenced and controlled by external forces, such as class and gender. Functionalists (including neo-functionalists), Marxists and most forms of feminism see humans as being shaped by the way in which society is structured.

Structuralist theories: Marxism; Functionalism; Feminism.

Key concepts: Determinism, top-down; macro; large-scale; generalisations; predictable laws; structures; puppets.

Methods: Positivist; quantitative methods.

#### Interpretivists or Social Action Theory (Including Symbolic Interactionism)

Interpretivists and social action theories take the opposite approach to studying and interpreting society. They believe that humans have **free will** and that individuals create their own social worlds. Instead of believing that humans are simply products of external

forces, they believe that individuals have their own interpretations and attach their own meanings to events. This is a **micro approach** based upon studying society at the individual level through studying small-scale interactions.

Interpretivists reject a scientific approach to understanding society. They favour qualitative methods, such as interviews and observations in their study of society. Interpretivists attempt to uncover individuals' thoughts, feelings and emotions. Interactionism, phenomenology and ethnomethodology all have this approach.

Action theories: Symbolic Interactionism; Ethnomethodology; Phenomenology.  
Key Concepts: Free will; bottom-up; micro; small-scale; voluntaristic; choice; agency.  
Methods: Interpretivist; qualitative methods.

### Consensus and conflict

How would you describe society? Is it based primarily on consensus - agreement between people about social norms and values? Or is it based on conflict?

A brief glance through the newspapers, a review of family life, or a quick read through history books might well suggest that conflict prevails. But consider how we go about our daily lives. Most of us seem to agree with the rules of society, and we work together in terms of those rules. So, although conflict might grab the headlines, it could be argued that social life is largely based on consensus and cooperation, not conflict.

**Consensus:** Consensus approaches see agreement or consensus as the basis of social life. Without it, society would collapse into chaos with its members being unable to agree on rules and norms of behaviour. Consensus provides the basis for cooperation



and social unity. Unless there was general agreement about what is important and worthwhile - in other words, shared values - there would be no cooperation and unity in society. It would be replaced by conflict and division as individuals pursued their own interests which would often directly conflict with those of others. Value consensus provides a harmony of

interests in society.

**Conflict:** Conflict approaches see conflict as the main characteristic of society. This does not mean that members of society are constantly at each other's throats or on the brink of civil war. Rather it means that there are basic conflicts of interest in society with some groups gaining at the expense of others.

Some groups are more powerful than others - usually as a result of their stronger economic position. In this situation,



norms and values are not freely agreed by everyone but are imposed on the weaker sections of society by the more powerful groups. What appears on the surface as consensus is in fact coercion - an 'agreement' based on force. What seems to be cooperation is in fact exploitation - one group gaining at the expense of others.

**Consensus** - theories that see agreement as the basis of society e.g. functionalism

**Conflict** - theories that believe society is not in agreement and the basis of society is conflict e.g. Marxism

### The perspectives that we will learn are:

**Functionalism** - one of the key sociological perspectives and is known as a consensus theory as it is characterised by the idea that society requires shared norms and values in order for it function properly.

**Marxism** - describes a broad set of theories articulated by and then inspired by the writings of German philosopher, economist and sociologist, Karl Marx (1818-1883). Marx developed a critique of capitalism, both as an economic system but also in terms of the social conditions associated with it. He argued that at the heart of capitalism was a class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

**Feminism** - a broad term to refer to a perspective (and a movement) that recognises and opposes patriarchy (the male dominance of society) and that argues for the rights of women.

**Interactionism** - a broad sociological perspective. It is a micro action theory rather than a macro structuralist one and is interpretivist rather than positivist. Associated with George Herbert Mead and Max Weber, it is a perspective that sees society as the product of human interactions, and the meanings that individuals place on those interactions.

**Postmodernism** - refers to a broad movement across many academic disciplines and aspects of society that rejects the apparent certainties that characterised the ideas associated with modernity. It suggests we are now in a new historical era - post-modernity – which is characterised by rapid change and choice

# INDUCTION TASK

## A Level Sociology: Induction Task

### Aims:

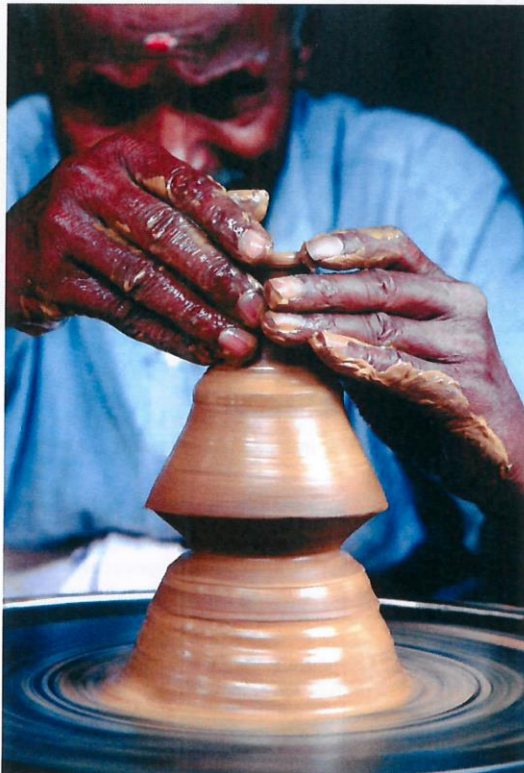
- To discover what it is like to study A Level Sociology and the skills that will be required of you
- To help you decide if A Level Sociology is the right course for you and if you are interested in learning about sociological concepts and theory

### Instructions:

- Please read the article below, this is a difficult piece of writing and will require careful reading and engagement
- The article will introduce you to an advanced sociological concept – alienation. Once you have read the article answer the comprehension questions on separate pieces of paper
- Once you have completed the comprehension questions, complete the follow-up tasks using the internet to research – complete on separate paper
- Please make sure that this work is completed when you start college after the summer holidays and bring your answers with you



# Alienation



Alienation is a word commonly used in many aspects of social life. But where does the concept come from, and what does it mean?

Alienation is an important concept in the writings of Marx. In order properly to understand what Marx meant by alienation, we must first look at his idea of human nature. Marx believed that humans are naturally creative. Although they need to produce things in order to survive, in the act of production, whether this is growing or making something, they release the creativity and innovation that is their true nature. In doing this, they shape and mould the society in which they live. This means that the nature of society is the result of human actions, rather than being formed by seemingly impersonal forces.

## Marx and the 'species being'

Marx referred to our capacity for work as our 'species being' — that which makes us truly human. In the process of working, however, we also become 'social beings', because in order to produce what we need to live, we need to cooperate and work together.

Marx argued that as societies develop, they become capable of producing more than people need to survive — in other words, they produce a surplus. This means that some people become freed from the need to produce things. Such people can then live not by their own labour, but by controlling and making a profit from the labour of others. This led to the development of class divisions in society. With the development of industrial society a new class emerged (the bourgeoisie) whose power rests on their control over others. The rest of society (the proletariat) lost control over their own labour: a capitalist society was born.

Workers thus lose control over *what* they produce and *how* they produce and dispose of it — they become *alienated* (separated) from the product of their labour, and thus from their 'true' nature. It was Marx's belief that under these conditions, human beings could not be properly 'human'.

## Industrialisation and alienation

While Marx wrote about the development of capitalism in earlier societies, it was the process of industrialisation and its effects on capitalism that were of particular interest to him. He argued that once the manufacturing process becomes industrialised and moves into factories, the division of labour changes its nature and moves into all aspects of production.

Industrial capitalism led to a very detailed division of labour, with workers specialising in small, atomised activities, which allowed them to use only one or two of the creative powers of which they were capable. An extreme example is the division of labour on a production line where each worker has a small and repetitive task to perform in the production of a complex product such as a car.

## The worker as machine

Under this system, workers become increasingly dependent on the capitalists who own the means of production. Workers are reduced, both intellectually and physically, to the level of a machine. Wage labour replaces all other forms of payment, and labour itself becomes a commodity, something to be bought and sold in the marketplace. Workers can no longer live independently of capitalism — they rely on capitalists for a job and work becomes a matter of survival. To work means to work within the system, and to be deprived of work threatens life itself.

It was Marx's belief that all the major institutions of capitalism, such as religion and the state, are marked by the condition of alienation, and that we are confronted by alienation in all spheres

of life. However, because of his belief that it is in the process of creating something over which we have some control that people experience and express their true humanity, he argued that it is alienation in the workplace that has overriding importance.

### Theoretical and methodological issues

Marx's idea of the essence of human nature is important here. He saw humans as essentially creative, expressive and, above all, sociable beings, happy to cooperate with each other. Capitalism prevents the expression of these characteristics — it alienates people from their true nature. This view of human nature is in contrast to social theorists such as Emile Durkheim who see people as essentially anti-social and individualistic, needing the process of socialisation to make them fully human and thus able to live in harmony with others.

In terms of methodological issues, alienation is a very difficult concept to operationalise. How can you test whether someone is alienated? And even if you think that you have found that they are, how do you uncover the cause or causes of their alienation?

### Alienation today

Obviously, the world is a very different place from that which existed when Marx was writing in the late nineteenth century. There are now trade unions, laws governing health and safety, and welfare benefits for those who are without work. Nevertheless, the underlying arguments remain the same.

### Globalisation

The forces of capitalism that Marx clearly understood to be controlling all aspects of the workers' existence are now global in scale. Decisions made in another continent can have far-reaching effects on workers here — indeed, even on whether they have any work at all.

It is not simply manual workers in factories who are affected by globalisation. Moving work to overseas call centres, the merging of companies and the resulting 'efficiency savings' — these are all things that can and do affect white-collar workers and managers. Even those who have work, including some very senior personnel, have to work harder and for longer hours to try to show how invaluable they are to the company. Again, there are few people who have not been touched by the global forces of capitalism that led to the recent economic recession.

### Feelings of alienation

Even away from the world of work, many people increasingly experience feelings of 'alienation' — feelings of isolation and loneliness, even when living in the heart of large cities. We increasingly hear talk of young people being alienated from the education system, or people becoming alienated from religion or from politics, or families splitting up and members becoming alienated from each other. It is obvious that the concept is in everyday use to describe ways in which people feel that all is not right with their world.

### How can I use this concept?

Providing it is relevant to the question, you could perhaps discuss alienation in relation to education, citing the view that the emphasis on punctuality, obedience to authority, being forced to study things that are no interest to you, being 'taught to the exam' rather than exploring knowledge for its own sake — all these are



Marx wrote of the power of work to make human beings happy, but also warned of the dangers of treating workers as machines

preparing young people for the world of work with its high levels of alienation. For those unable to obtain work, the emphasis on exam results, league tables and the 'right attitudes' leads to the view that unemployment is somehow their own fault, rather than something wrong with the system.

You could also introduce the concept in a discussion of the alienating effects of striving to find the 'work-life' balance, something many people find increasingly difficult, especially with the stress of factors such as the threat of unemployment, zero-hours contracts, problems of childcare and pressure from bosses to be always available via email or text and so on.

Marxists see the media as being part of the ideological state apparatus that manages potential dissent, and you could discuss the view that part of the function of the media is to keep members of the proletariat entertained and also give them a distorted view of the nature of society so that they are unaware of their exploitation and alienation, and are therefore in a state of 'false consciousness'.

### Activities



- 1 Watch these two YouTube clips, which will explain further both the concept of alienation and more of Marx's views of society.  
[www.tinyurl.com/ptl8alc](http://www.tinyurl.com/ptl8alc)  
[www.tinyurl.com/pc3wqaz](http://www.tinyurl.com/pc3wqaz)
- 2 Use the index in your textbook to look up all the references to alienation, and make notes of any that fit in with the topics you are studying.

Joan Garrod is a managing editor of *Sociology Review*.

### Marxism: Alienation

#### Comprehension questions:

- 1) Why did Marx believe that humans are naturally creative?
- 2) Why did Marx think that work made us social beings?
- 3) What is *surplus*? How does *surplus* lead to the development of class divisions?
- 4) Why was a capitalist society born?
- 5) What does it mean to say that workers are *alienated* from their labour?
- 6) What is an extreme example of the division of labour?
- 7) Identify one methodological issue with the division of labour?
- 8) In what other areas of life do people experience *alienation*?
- 9) How can people be *alienated* in education?

#### Follow-up tasks:

- 1) Who was Karl Marx?
- 2) What did he believe about *capitalism* and *communism*?
- 3) Define what is meant by *ideological state apparatus*.
- 4) Define what is meant by *false class consciousness*.

Outline two reasons why people experience alienation in today's society. 10 marks