

## An Introduction to the Social Sciences

The social sciences are those subjects that seek to understand human beings, how they behave, and how they interact with each other. Whereas biology, and some branches of psychology, seek to understand the systems *within* the body that make humans behave in certain ways, the social sciences seek to understand how human beings operate within external systems, such as society, or the economy, and how these systems influence human life.



### Examples of the social sciences:

Anthropology; economics; human geography; history; law; linguistics; political science and sociology (this list is not exhaustive).

These subjects share many common themes and goals, and often overlap in the theory and methods that they utilise, leading to the emergence of subjects like 'political sociology' or 'political economy'.

### Studying social sciences at University

One of the biggest transitions between your A-Levels and University study is that you will be expected to read and understand academic texts. These can be lengthy and complicated, but there is a process that you can follow when reading academic texts in order to ensure you are getting the information that you need to take part in a class discussion, or to write an assignment based on the reading.

## How to read academic texts

<p>What is the purpose of this reading? What are the questions you are seeking to answer by carrying out this reading? What do you want to learn about this topic?</p>	
<p>Once you have started reading, write down any thought you have about what you are reading, as you go along. If you read a sentence that sparks a question, write that down. You should avoid copying out large chunks of the text – this doesn't show that you have understood what it means. If you find words that you don't understand, highlight these.</p>	
<p>Once you have finished the reading, write a summary of the text in your own words. Keep this as succinct as possible, but make sure that you will be able to understand what you have written when you revise the topic, at a later time.</p>	

When you go to class, you should then have a succinct summary of what you have understood from the text, a list of points that you found interesting or thought-provoking, and a list of points or words that you did not understand, and can then ask for help with from your tutor.

## Key Resources in the Social Sciences

The following resources have been collated from across the disciplines of sociology, political science, economics and human geography. They will give you an idea of the kind of topics that social science degrees address, and the style of academic writing that you will be required to read.

Castles, I. (2014) Economics and Anti-Economics in Podger, A. and Trewin, D. Measuring and Promoting Wellbeing: How Important is Economic Growth? ANU Press: [https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/j.ctt6wp80q.8.pdf?ab\\_segments=0%2Fbasic\\_SYC-5055%2Ftest](https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/j.ctt6wp80q.8.pdf?ab_segments=0%2Fbasic_SYC-5055%2Ftest)

Flinders, M. (2011) In Defence of Politics - podcast: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/b015n05j>

Hay, C. (2007) Why We Hate Politics, Cambridge: Polity - Chapter 1:

[https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=3GbZnoJkq3sC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs\\_ViewAPI&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=3GbZnoJkq3sC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ViewAPI&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false)

Johnston, J. Cairns, K. and Baumann, S. (2017) Introducing Sociology Using the Stuff of Everyday Life, New York: Routledge: Read Chapter 1 (A Day in the Life of Your Jeans)

[https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=O6vZDQAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs\\_ViewAPI&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=O6vZDQAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ViewAPI&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false)

Kalekin-Fishman, D. (2011) Sociology of Everyday Life:

<http://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/4240/eb0ec9aa3a5055802119abf03512a536d9cf.pdf>

Nagaraj, A and Stern, S. (2020) The Economics of Maps in The Journal of Economic Perspectives, Vol. 34, No.1, pp.196-221:

[https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/26873535.pdf?ab\\_segments=0%2Fbasic\\_SYC-5055%2Ftest](https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/26873535.pdf?ab_segments=0%2Fbasic_SYC-5055%2Ftest)

O'Brien, K. Selboe, E. and Hayward, B.H. (2018) Exploring Youth Activism on Climate Change: Dutiful, Disruptive, and Dangerous Dissent in Ecology and Society, Vol. 23, No.3: [https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/26799169.pdf?ab\\_segments=0%2Fbasic\\_SYC-5055%2Ftest](https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/26799169.pdf?ab_segments=0%2Fbasic_SYC-5055%2Ftest)

Ramey, V.A (2019) Ten Years After the Financial Crisis: What Have We Learned From the Renaissance in Fiscal Research? In The Journal of Economic Perspectives, vol.33, no.2, pp.89-114:

[https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/26621241.pdf?ab\\_segments=0%2Fbasic\\_SYC-5055%2Ftest](https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/26621241.pdf?ab_segments=0%2Fbasic_SYC-5055%2Ftest)