

Module 9: Understanding Society

Stage				I			
Semester				1			
Module Title				Understanding Society			
Module Number/Reference				9			
Module Status (Mandatory/Elective)				Mandatory			
Module NFQ level (only if applicable)				6			
Pre-requisite Module Titles				None			
Co-requisite Module Titles				History of the Media			
Is this a capstone module? (Yes or No)				Yes			
Contact Hours				Non-contact Hours			Total Effort (Hours)
Lecture	Practical	Tutorial	Seminar	Assignment	Placement	Independent work	
48		12		24		152	200
Allocation of Marks (Within the Module)							
	Continuous Assessment	Project	Practical	Final Examination	Total is always 100%		
Percentage contribution		40%		60%	100%		

Intended Module Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this module, the learner will be able to

:

1. Demonstrate critical judgement and analytical skills
2. Accommodate further study in related areas in years two and three
3. Apply sociological concepts to social issues and problems in society

Module Objectives

- To make learners aware of how society affects the opinions and actions of groups and individuals;
- To examine the origins of the study of society, the changes brought about by the industrial revolution in western society and their impact on the rest of the world;
- To make learners aware of how society affects the opinions and actions of groups and individuals;
- To examine the impact of sociological research on some groups, events and issues in society and to explain its relevance.

Module Curriculum

STRAND A - Empirical Analysis of Society

(1) Social forces and influences – an introduction

What is a 'social force'? Can we demonstrate how it might influence groups of people, large and small?

(2) The origins of sociology and of industrial society, the rise of 'individualism'.

What are the changes brought about by industrialisation? Why is it necessary to study society in its own right?

(3) The founding figures in sociology: Marx Durkheim and Weber:

Durkheim – case study suicide: how do social forces beyond the control or conscious awareness of an individual drive an individual to commit suicide

Weber – case study social stratification: The role of inequality in society – Weber's explanation

Marx – case study class society and inequality: Inequality as a force for change - Marx's conception

(4) Gender inequality – the social basis of patriarchy

How and why did women change and challenge their role in society?

(5) Crime & Deviance – the role of inequality and poverty

Who are the criminals and how does society categorise socially harmful behaviour?

STRAND B - Ideas and Action

(1) The Origins of Self-interest

Here we look at the economic origins of self-interest and individualism with an introduction to the philosophy of the Classical Liberalists who are the originators of market economics and monetarist philosophies prevalent today. We investigate the psychological, economic and political rationale of the classical liberal thinkers including Jeremy Bentham, Adam Smith and Robert Malthus.

(2) The Utopian Socialists

The ideological response to classical liberalism came from what we now loosely describe as the utopian socialists, groups of mainly European writers activists and agitators who wrote in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. We analyse their key arguments, comparing and contrasting their work and consider its influences on political thought from then to the present day.

(3) From dictatorship to democracy

How we organise a society in terms of electoral systems and institutional structures can have profound effects on the political cultures that subsequently grow out of such systems. In this topic we look at the idea of democracy and the role political systems and structures can have on political life, tracing the impact of the debate on the US constitution in the 1780s up to the formation of the Irish state as well as the implications of the 2011 Arab Spring on how we in Europe value and understand our own democratic traditions and institutions.

(4) Good and evil society

In this topic we have an introductory look at the issues of power, authority and the philosophy of what is considered good and evil in modern society. We use the community of the Simpsons TV programme as our template. We want to see by using well known philosophers such as Aristotle, Nietzsche and Confucius what we can learn from the Simpsons about how our own societies work and interact.

Reading lists and other learning materials

Recommended Reading

- Giddens, A. (2011, latest ed.) *Sociology*, Polity Press
Haralambos, Michael (2008, latest ed.) *Sociology, Themes and Perspectives*, Harper Collins
Bilton, et al, (2012, latest ed.) *Sociology*, Macmillan
Boucher David, Kelly Paul (2009) *Political Thinkers From Socrates to the Present*, 2nd edition, Oxford University Press.
Heywood Andrew (2012) *Political Ideologies*, 5th edition, Palgrave Macmillan
Heywood Andrew (2013) *Politics*, 4th Edition, Palgrave MacMillan.
Sherman Howard J, Hunt E. K, Reynold Nesiba F, Ohara Phillip Anthony (2008) *Economics: An Introduction to Traditional and Progressive Views*, 7th edition, M E Sharpe.

Secondary Reading

- Durkheim, Emile (2007 + online) *On Suicide*, penguin Classic
Kevin J. Christiano, et al (2002) *Sociology of Religion: Contemporary Development*, Rowman Altamira
Marx, Karl (1983) *The Portable Karl Marx*, Penguin
Marx, Karl and Frederick Engels (1972 + online) *Ireland and the Irish Question*, Progress
Mészáros, István (1970 + online) *Marx's Theory of Alienation*, Merlin
Weber, Max (2002 + online) *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Penguin

Journals

- Annual Review of Sociology (online)
Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture (online)
Globalization and Health (online)

Module Learning Environment

The learning environment is designed to both engage the learners and to encourage their critical thinking. This is achieved through lectures, viewings and practical exercises designed to stimulate discussions and questions.

Learners are also supported with resources to offer structure and guidance. This includes lecture notes, reading materials as well as a detailed module curriculum that includes the learning outcomes, a class schedule, the necessary reading material and the assignment strategy. Participants also have access to Moodle, the College's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

Module Teaching and Learning Strategy

This module is supported with structured web-based resources and applies the use of the programme Teaching Learning and Assessment methodologies. Specifically, the module is delivered using:

- Participative Lectures
- Tutorials

Module Assessment Strategy

Learners are required to complete one assignment during the semester and to undertake an exam at the end of the semester.

Element Number	Weighting	Type	Description
1	40%	Reflective Essay	Learners are required to relate sociological ideas studied to a contemporary issue or problem.
2	60%	Examination	End of semester Closed Book examination