School of Sociology and Social Policy

Year 2 Undergraduate Modules

**Applied Ethics and Society**

The module will explore the application of moral philosophy and applied ethics to various social issues including, but not limited to, addiction, abortion, euthanasia, migration and global justice. It will review the main ideas and theorists from the fields of consequentialism, deontology and virtue ethics and it will introduce students to the contemporary state of various socially and ethically problematic topics. This module makes up a year-long module with Political Theory and Social Policy.

**Belief, Spirituality and Religion**

This module examines the key sociological issues and debates in relation to the religion/spirituality and non-religious belief systems. They include: classical and contemporary perspectives on religion/spirituality, transformation of religion, the spiritual revolution, fundamentalism and politics, religion/spirituality in relation to young people, new media, sexuality/gender, atheism, secularism, humanism, scientism and freedom of expression versus sanctity of religion.

**Classical and Contemporary Sociological Theory**

What is sociological knowledge, what are its key objects of study and how do those change? Whose knowledge is represented within sociology? What is the relation of the history of sociology to the present and how is the history of sociology told in relation to particular issues of the present? The module will address these issues through the ideas of classical social theorists (including Karl Marx, Max Weber, Emile Durkheim, G.H. Mead and W.E.B. Du Bois), as well as contemporary writers and key theoretical movements such as feminism and postcolonialism.

**Criminal Justice System: Function, Processes and Policy**

This module provides a critical examination of the criminal justice system as a response to offending behaviour. It looks the main institutions involved in criminal justice from the police and the courts to the probation and prison services and asks whether they do indeed operate as part of a ‘system’ with a coherent set of objectives. It considers different theories of criminal justice and asks what ‘justice’ means for offenders, victims and society as a whole. By examining the impact of the politicisation of criminal justice policy-making, the module sets the Criminal Justice System in England and Wales in the social and political context. Thought is also given to alternatives to conventional forms of criminal justice and the lessons to be learnt from other jurisdictions and the impact of the global influences on criminal justice policy and the criminal justice ‘system’.

**Ethnicity and Everyday Life**

You’ll examine the intersection of two key concepts in contemporary sociology – ethnicity and everyday life. In particular you’ll consider the following topics: existing sociological theories of everyday life concerning its political relevance and historical specificity as well as methodological issues as to how ‘the everyday’ has been researched. Sociological models of ethnicity, the construction of ethnic boundaries and identities, the relationship between ‘culture’ and ‘ethnicity’, and its relevance in the contemporary world.
Family and Social Divisions

You’ll consider the sociological approaches to the family ranging from early functionalist accounts to the feminist problematisation of such accounts. Starting from feminist critiques of the family, the first part of the module will explore issues of gender, power and patriarchy. Drawing on second-wave feminism, the second part of the module will consider issues of diversity in family practices. Topics covered will include gender and families, families and class, families and race, migrant and transnational families, sexuality, and age and generation. Contemporary debates around the breakdown, democratisation or continuity in contemporary families will also be addressed.

Health: Theory, Policy and Practice

The module explores the meanings of health and how these meanings have impacted upon policy and practice in the health services. This introduces students to both the relevant sociological and policy literature over the past 50 years, though the focus of the module is very much upon contemporary debate and the way these debates inform service provision.

History of British Social Policy

This module locates contemporary issues within a broader historical perspective by examining developments in social provision since the early nineteenth century. Students acquire an understanding of the economic, political and social processes through which social policy has evolved. How has the balance between the state, the market, the voluntary sector and informal and family systems of welfare altered? Students will be expected to think about how social problems are defined, and how policies are formulated, implemented and revised.

Human Rights

In principle, virtually everyone is in favour of universal human rights. But in practice, there is disagreement about what kind of rights we should enjoy by virtue of our common humanity, and about who is included in the category of ‘human’. This module introduces students to sociological debate on human rights, and uses examples of different forms of exploitation, oppression and suffering in the contemporary world to explore competing understandings of ‘rights’ and critically interrogate the relationship between human rights, power and hegemony under contemporary conditions of globalisation.

Introduction to Cultural Theory

This module is focused on the conceptual issues that are at stake when we seek to study culture and concentrates on current themes in the study of culture. Through focusing on topics of subjectivity and identity, performativity, memory, emotions and the senses you will be introduced to the work and thinking of a range of cultural theorists, such as: Butler, Freud, Hall, Said, Sedgewick and Williams. The module will also cover issues such as the formation of hegemonic and marginalised identities, hybridity and globalisation, queer theory, and the relationship [or not] between social structures and individual agency.

Media and Popular Culture

This module examines the historical and contemporary significance of the media of mass communication. In particular this module will examine the public role that the media plays in the context of modern democratic society in helping define questions of public interest, the
contestation of identity and popular pleasure. The module will seek to guide students through a number of debates that have focused on questions related to the public sphere, technology, the network society, the society of the spectacle, globalisation, and the development of new media. In particular the module will explore the structural transformation of modern mediated societies in relation to the capacity of audiences to make meaning in different settings. This will allow the module to explore the complexities of modern mediated environments in relation to a range of (both new and old) media technologies.

**Police, Policing and the Police**

The police can be seen as the gatekeepers to the criminal justice system. But there is much more to policing than ‘the police‘ and what they do and this module begins by examining what we mean by ‘policing’, who does it and how it relates to feelings of security. It goes on to explore some of the most important issues and debates in contemporary policing from police history, culture, governance and accountability to the future of policing and the role of the state in providing it.

**Political Theory and Social Policy**

The module will explore the application of moral philosophy and applied ethics to various social issues including, but not limited to, addiction, abortion, euthanasia, migration and global justice. It will review the main ideas and theorists from the fields of consequentialism, deontology and virtue ethics and it will introduce students to the contemporary state of various socially and ethically problematic topics. This module makes up a year-long module with Applied Ethics and Society.

**Prisons and Incarceration**

This module explores aims and outcomes of imprisonment, the penal context (e.g. culture and regime), international debates, a focus on Her Majesty’s Prison Service in England and Wales, and an historical account of penal styles. General and mental health in prison plus the incarceration experience as an institutionalised existence are evaluated. The nature of imprisonment is analysed via the themes of care, custody, culture and structure.

**Research Design and Practice**

A primary aim of this module is to give a critical overview of different paradigms within sociological research, so that you are better equipped both to design your own research and to assess and evaluate the work of others. You will receive training in research philosophy, qualitative (e.g. interviewing) and quantitative (e.g. survey) research methods. The module will also help you prepare for the dissertation in the following year, by providing you with the opportunity to work out your own research topic and suitable methods.

**Social Research and Community Engagement**

This module gives you the chance during the second semester of your second year to spend several hours a week contributing to, and observing the work of, a local civil society organisation. The aim of the community engagement opportunity is to give you direct experience of social change, social inequalities, and how community organisations respond to challenging circumstances. Your assessment is a 5,000 word essay reflecting on your experience in the light of academic debates introduced to you in lectures on civil society, the role of the voluntary sector, the role of social research in society.
Sociology of Health, Illness and The Body

When a person is deemed to be mentally or physically sick, this involves taking on a particular social role and coming under the care (power) of others. This module examines the power relations of medical care; the cultural meanings (and thus ‘treatment’) of different illnesses; and the impact that illness has on our personal and social identities. Topics include:

- Medicine and Power Relations
- The Sociology of Mental Illness
- Experiencing Illness: Narrative and Identity
- Morality: Risk, Blame and Shame
- The Body
- Post-modern Medicine
- Care

The Body, The Self and Others

This module will encourage you to think critically about the body as a political entity, which carries significant meanings in society in terms of power, resistance, expression, control, deviance, individualism, risk and inequality. It asks: what is a body, what does it stand for and what is its relationship to the self and to Others? What are the social and political forces that shape human bodies and bodily experience, and how are those experiences expressed and read? How are different bodies perceived, valued and treated? This module will examine the body not through the lens of the physical or biological sciences but as the product of complex social arrangements and processes. In lectures and seminars, the module examines the body as the container and expression of the self, as the object of social control, and as the repository of shifting race, gender and sexual categories.

Theories of Welfare

As an academic subject social policy is underpinned by a wide variety of social, political and economic theories. Without an understanding of these theories our analyses of both society and of welfare systems are likely to be inadequate. For instance, we may overlook the extent to which policies and welfare reforms are sometimes based upon weak theoretical foundations and assumptions. This module explores a range of both traditional and contemporary themes and concepts, including liberty, equality, citizenship, needs, class, old and new welfare ideologies, as well as recent developments in welfare theory.

Youth Crime and Justice

This module considers historical, social, cultural and political factors which have influenced society’s attitudes and responses to young people and crime. Youth justice in England and Wales has developed as a particularly complex and volatile area of criminal justice, reflecting shifting ideas and anxieties about young people and social disorder. Responses to youth justice are explored within the context of longstanding debates about the balance to be struck between ‘justice’ and ‘welfare’. Also examined are international responses to young people and crime leading to the setting up of different models of youth justice.