



## Course information 2011–12

### SC1021 Principles of sociology

This is the foundation course on which subsequent, more specialised sociology courses are based.

#### Prerequisite

None apply.

#### Aims and objectives

##### Section A Theory and method

- To introduce students to the subject matter and focus of sociology.
- To provide students with the ‘tools’ to enable them to read critically and to gather information creatively and carefully.
- To describe and provide students with knowledge of and critical evaluation of the major sociological theories of society.
- To introduce students to the major techniques and the methods used in sociological research.
- To provide the students with an understanding of the relationship of theory to the formation, collection and analysis of data.
- To introduce students to the analyses of the changing nature of modern/contemporary societies and their relevance for social theory.

##### Section B Globalisation and social change

- To introduce students to the range of theoretical perspectives that aim to explain the phenomenon of globalisation and social change and the importance of critical evaluation of these.
- To introduce students to the contribution that studies of globalisation make to the sociological discussions of contemporary society.

##### Section C

To introduce students to one substantive area of sociology enabling them to use the theories studied in Sections A and B and to ensure that they have understood how these theories have influenced the approach of the key sociologists to the subject matter with particular reference to epistemological concerns.

- **Religion and society:** To introduce students to a range of perspectives on religion as a social phenomenon and the interaction of religious belief and practice on society.
- **Gender:** To introduce students to the major ways of theorising about gender and its importance to sociology and social enquiry, and to the way that the major feminist and mainstream theorists have dealt with the role of gender in discussions of social inequality.
- **Social inequality and social injustice:** To introduce students to a range of sociological perspectives relating to the forms of social inequality and social injustice and to the importance of locating the study of social inequality and social injustice with an analysis of the contemporary world.
- **‘Race’ and ethnicity:** To introduce students to sociological understandings of racial and ethnic divisions as a key feature of modern societies and to the contemporary debates in relation to racial and ethnic identities and to provide students with an overview of the critical perspectives in understanding the ‘social construction’ of both race and ethnicity.
- **The sociology of organisations:** To introduce students to the role of organisational analysis in social science and to the different approaches used by sociologists in the analysis of organisations.
- **Power in society:** To introduce students to a range of sociological perspectives on the nature and role of power in society, to the contribution of power analyses to sociological discussions of the nature and dynamics of modernity and to the importance of critical reading of the different methodologies underlying the competing arguments regarding the distribution of power in modern societies.

## Essential reading

For full details please refer to the reading list.

### Section A

#### Choose one from:

Fulcher, James and John Scott *Sociology*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, ).

Giddens, A. *Sociology*. (Cambridge: Polity Press)

Macionis, J. and K. Plummer *Sociology: a global introduction*. (Harlow: Prentice Hall)

#### And choose one from:

Cuff, E., W.W. Sharrock and D.W. Francis *Perspectives in sociology*. (London: Routledge)

Lee, D. and H. Newby *The problem of sociology*. (London: Routledge)

### Section B Globalisation and social change

Waters, M. *Globalization*. (London: Routledge)

### Section C

Please refer to the subject guide for essential reading for the six topics of which students must choose one.

## Assessment

This course is assessed by a three hour unseen written examination.

## Learning outcomes

At the end of the course and having completed the essential reading and activities students should be able to:

- ✓ Describe the nature of the sociological perspective and the major theories of society.
- ✓ Apply the major sociological perspectives to at least two aspects of social life.
- ✓ Read the set texts critically and creatively and select relevant material cited by the authors selectively in their examination answers.
- ✓ Explain and evaluate the scope of the research process and the approach of different methods of social inquiry and be able to criticise these.
- ✓ Explain the relationship between theory and method in sociology.
- ✓ Outline debates surrounding sociology as a science and the major theories of knowledge.
- ✓ Evaluate the sociological debates surrounding the processes of modernisation and globalisation and be able to compare and criticise these.
- ✓ Apply the skills and knowledge learnt in sections A and B to a specialist topic in section C.
- ✓ Describe the key sociological debates surrounding the subject matter of the area chosen, especially in relation to the development of key concepts, epistemological concerns and social research.

## Syllabus

This is a description of the material to be examined, as published in the *Regulations*. On registration, students receive a detailed subject guide which provides a framework for covering the topics in the syllabus and directions to the essential reading for the course.

### Section A: Theory and method

*What is sociology?* the difference between lay and sociological knowledge of societies; the differences between sociology and related social sciences; the nature of sociological problems: social order, social change, social institutions and relationships between the individual and society; The concepts of role, identity and socialisation.

*Sociological method:* the scope of sociological research; the importance of conceptual thinking and measurement in social research; different theoretical models and analogies; the centrality of the debates concerning social research; the research process.

*Theory and method:* the concept of social theory; methodology: ontological, epistemological and technical questions; theories of knowledge: positivism/ empiricism, interpretivism/phenomenology and social realism.

*Theories of society:* modernity and the genesis of sociology; classical social theory: Marx, Weber, Durkheim; modern social theory: structural-functionalism, interactionism, phenomenology and rational choice; the idea of postmodern societies and the implications for sociology.

### Section B: Globalisation and social change

Understanding and defining the concept of globalisation, the major theories that aim to explain globalisation, the economic, political and cultural levels of globalisation.

### Section C

Students must specialise in one of the following and should relate theories and examples to sociological data from their own society.

*Religion:* religious belief, practice, and power; religion and social change; religion, modernity, and globalization.

*Gender:* The relationship between sex, gender and sexualities; equality and difference, oppression and discrimination; work/home life balance.

*Race and Ethnicity:* definitions of 'race' and ethnicity; 'race' and ethnicity as social division; changing approaches to racial and ethnic studies.

*Power:* Power, modernity and sociology; Marxism and the analysis of power; Weber: power, stratification and domination; the power of elites; the pluralist model of power; power to and power over; postmodernist perspectives on power.

*Organisations:* a sociological approach to organisations, theories for understanding organisations, methods of organisational analysis, structure, control and communications within organisations.

*Social Inequality and Social Injustice:* Social inequality and social injustice; global perspectives on inequality and injustice; classical perspectives on social inequality; structural dimensions of inequality; analysing social injustice; States, social injustice and the pursuit of human rights; agendas of inequality and injustice.

Students should consult the *Programme Regulations for degrees and diplomas in Economics, Management, Finance and the Social Sciences* that are reviewed annually. The Prerequisites, Exclusions, and Syllabus are subject to confirmation in the *Regulations*. Notice is also given in the *Regulations* of any courses which are being phased out and students are advised to check course availability.