



Course information 2018–19

SC3144 Historical sociology

Historical sociology is a wide-ranging subject that explores in depth the historical ‘roots’ of contemporary social, economic and political conditions. This course looks in detail at some of the processes that contributed to the formation of key aspects of the ‘modern’ world. There are many possible ways of approaching historical sociology. In this course, students focus on the complex range of factors that were at work in the rise of the modern state. By focusing in this way, students will be able to examine a range of sociological ideas about social, political and institutional change.

Prerequisite

If taken as part of a BSc degree, courses which must be passed before this course may be attempted:

SC1021 Principles of sociology or
SC1179 Contemporary sociology in a global age

Aims and objectives

This course is designed to:

- examine the historical development of key social and political formations of the modern world
- enable students to recognise and understand different ways in which historical change has been conceptualised in different theoretical traditions.

Essential reading

For full details please refer to the reading list

Hall, S. and B. Gieben *Formations of modernity*. (Polity Press)

Goldthorpe, J H. ‘The Uses of History in Sociology: Reflections on Some Recent Tendencies’, *The British Journal of Sociology* 42(2) 1991, pp. 211–230.

Mann, M. ‘In Praise of Macro-Sociology: a Reply to Goldthorpe’, *The British Journal of Sociology* 45(1) 1994, pp. 37–54.

Learning outcomes

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

- ☑ identify and describe the conditions and processes that have contributed to the development of key aspects of the contemporary world
- ☑ locate contemporary social phenomena in a historical context
- ☑ recognise the ways that philosophies and theories of history have shaped the ways that we understand processes of historical and social change
- ☑ demonstrate critical and reflexive skills in relation to the analysis of contemporary social phenomena and their historical contexts
- ☑ demonstrate a critical understanding of the conditions that have privileged notions of western ‘modernity’ in comparison to other social formations, both historical and geographical.

Assessment

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

Syllabus

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

Sociology and history. A critical introduction to theories and ideas about the nature and meaning of historical change and development in Enlightenment, Hegelian, Marxist, neo-Marxist, liberal and post-structuralist and postcolonial thought; an introduction to historical sociology as a sub-discipline and the relationship between history and sociology as disciplines; a consideration of the centrality of the state and its development to historical sociological traditions; the emergence and development of the state form in different historical/sociological perspectives.

The emergence of the early modern state. A survey of historical state forms through ancient empires, the feudal state to the early modern state; a comparison of ancient 'imperial', feudal and early modern state forms; consideration of theoretical models that describe the transition from feudal to early modern states.

The development of the modern state. Key concerns in the formation of liberal democratic, welfare and 'totalitarian' states; examination of continuities and discontinuities between absolutist, liberal democratic/welfare, constitutional and

'totalitarian' state forms; consideration of questions of revolution and social change, governmentality, 'population' and the emergence of 'bio-political' concerns.

Nationalism and imperialism. An examination of the centrality of nationalism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; a consideration of European colonial and imperial expansionism in the same period.

Globalisation, the postcolonial situation and neo-imperialism. A consideration of the emergence of 'globalisation'; theoretical models of 'globalisation' and their historical context; an examination of contemporary geo-political formations in a historical context.

Students should consult the appropriate *EMFSS Programme Regulations*, which are reviewed on an annual basis. The *Regulations* provide information on the availability of a course, where it can be placed on your programme's structure, and details of co-requisites and prerequisites.