

Course information 2025-26

SC1179 Contemporary Sociology in a Global Age

General information

MODULE LEVEL: 4

CREDIT: 30

NOTIONAL STUDY TIME: 300 hours

MODE: Locally Taught and Independent Learner Route Only

Summary

The course provides an introduction to different substantive areas of work in contemporary sociology. Students will gain an understanding of leading-edge research within the discipline worldwide. They will be encouraged to apply this understanding critically to their own social context and their place within it.

Conditions

Please see Programme Regulations for a list of Prerequisites, Corequisites and Exclusions.

Aims and objectives

The aims of this course are to:

- offer an overview of key issues in contemporary sociology
- apply core substantive and theoretical debates in sociology to a diverse range of empirical societies, including your own.

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 contemporary society
- offer a critical and creative reading of the set texts and be able to select relevant material cited by the authors selectively in your examination answers
- evaluate the sociological debates surrounding the processes of globalization and be able to compare and criticise them.

Employability skills

Below are the three most relevant employability skills that students acquire by undertaking this course which can be conveyed to future prospective employers:

1. Complex problem solving
2. Adaptability and resilience
3. Communication

Essential reading

For full details, please refer to the reading list

Anthony Giddens, Sociology (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017) eighth edition [ISBN 978-0745696683]

Assessment

This course is assessed by a three-hour and fifteen-minute closed-book written examination.

Syllabus

Unit 1: Global inequalities; class; gender; race and age

This section investigates key theories of inequality in a global context. It offers the conceptual background of these research fields and presents specific cases as illustration. The major areas of inequality that are examined are social class (Chapter 2), race (Chapter 3), ethnicity (Chapter 4), and gender (Chapter 5).

Unit 2: Other identities: family, religion, and the life course

In this section, we explore a range of topics concerned with subjectivity and identity. The module will include topics such as the family, religion and ages and stages of life. It is composed of three chapters: the family (Chapter 6), religion (Chapter 7), and the life course (Chapter 8). The topics look at how the sociological studies of these areas have been re-invigorated in response to global changes.

Unit 3: Nation states, nationalism, war and conflict

This unit introduces you to the political sociology and the emergence of the modern nation-state and the sociology of violence and war. The main subject areas are contained in two chapters: nation states and nationalism (Chapter 9), war and conflict (Chapter 10). Empirical case studies include terrorism and genocide. It also broaches the question of whether nation-states are disappearing as globalization takes root.

Unit 4: Money and markets, consumption and work

The sociology of economic life is the focus of this unit and includes two chapters: money and markets (Chapter 11), and consumption and work (Chapter 12). We will look at the sociological studies of the multinational corporation, global financial markets, as well as transnational dimensions of the study of the changing nature of work and employment, organizations and networks, and practices of consumerism.

Unit 5: Medical and legal life: Crime and health in the global age

Here the focus will be on the study of crime and deviance and on health and medicine in a global context, and cybercrime. It is composed of two chapters: crime in global context (Chapter 13) and global health (Chapter 14). Chapter 13 focuses on the vibrant area in sociology, the field of deviance studies, offering a backdrop of perspectives and discussion of the law and punishment. Case studies include piracy and organized crime. Chapter 14 examines global health and medicine. It describes the biomedical model of health and offers a detailed examination of the sociology of disability.

Unit 6: New science and new sociation: media and the new forms of social life

This final section of the course takes account of some of the profound changes that have been occurring in social life as a result of the rapid recent transformations in technology and communication. The first chapter looks at media in the global age, including the digital revolution and the emergence of the global media corporation (Chapter 16). The final chapter focuses on changes in social life with the emergence and spread of the Internet and the growing importance of social media (Chapter 17).