

Course information 2026-27

SC1179 Contemporary Sociology in a Global Age

General information

MODULE LEVEL: 4

CREDIT: 30

NOTIONAL STUDY TIME: 300 hours

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

None

Aims and objectives

The aims of this course are to:

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

Learning outcomes

At the end of this half 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 skill outcomes for students undertaking this course which can be conveyed to future prospective employers:

1. Complex problem solving
2. Creativity and innovation
3. Persuasion and negotiation

Essential reading

For full details, please refer to the reading list, there is no single text for the course.

Assessment

This course is assessed by a 3 hour examination.

Syllabus

Unit 1: Social spatialities: Cities, nation states, conflict, migration	This unit introduces you to major processes that have been a central focus of sociology since its origins: urbanisation, mass politics, migration and war. The main subject areas are contained in two chapters: cities and nation states (Chapter 1), and migration and conflict (Chapter 2). Chapter 1 introduces cities and mass politics through the four founding thinkers of sociology (Simmel, Durkheim, Marx and Weber). Empirical studies explore suburbanisation, slums and megacities. Chapter 1 broaches the question of the future of the nation state in the globalised world. Chapter 2 deepens the examination of contemporary social spatiality, focusing on migration and war.
Unit 2: Change in social life: Climate, the digital revolution and biopolitics	This unit introduces three topics that currently dominate the field of global sociology, while accounting for some debates on how change occurs in social process and social forms. Chapter 3 focuses on the climate , Chapter 4 explores the digital revolution and Chapter 5 presents discussion of the field of health and medicine through biopolitics .
Unit 3: Social identities: family, religion, and the life course	In this section, a range of topics relating are explored that relate to subjectivity and identity. This unit includes topics such as the family, religion and ages and stages of life. It contains 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 reinvigorated in response to global changes.
Unit 4: Exchange in global social life: money, markets, debt, work, consumption and property	The sociology of economic life is the focus of this unit and includes two chapters: Chapter 9 money, markets and debt , and Chapter 10 consumption, work and property . These chapters look at sociological studies on the changing forms of money, markets and the growing and deepening field of debt. It also surveys the changing nature of work, consumerism and forms of ownership.
Unit 5: Deviance and social control	This section explores the deviance, crime and social control in a global context. Chapter 11 explores deviance and crime and Chapter 12 presents social control . This vibrant area of sociology is discussed through cases studies of both intra- and international case studies of deviance, and crime. Case studies range from piracy and cybercrime to the state crimes of torture and genocide.

Unit 6: Global inequalities; class; race, ethnicity and gender	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 13), race (Chapter 14), ethnicity (Chapter 15), and gender (Chapter 16).
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