



OLLSCOIL NA
GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY
OF GALWAY

Scoil na hEolaíochta Polaitiúla
agus na Socheolaíochta
School of Political Science
and Sociology

BA Joint Honours Year 1 Sociological & Political Studies

Student Handbook



A very warm welcome to Year 1 in Sociological and Political Studies. I would like to take this opportunity to wish you well with your academic endeavours in the forthcoming year. It is my priority to offer academic guidance and support to all students on the programme. However, I would advise you to review the content of this general guide and reflect on the programme expectations and responsibilities before embarking on the year ahead. I look forward to working with you throughout your studies.

Gerry Fitzpatrick, First Year Programme Coordinator

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1. Academic Calendar Dates

Here you will find a list of important upcoming dates for the 2026/27 academic year, including; study weeks, exam dates, holidays, etc.: [Academic Term Dates - University of Galway](#).

2. Attendance

It is the duty of a student to attend every scheduled lecture/tutorial and to undertake other academic activities (such as essay assignments, laboratory classes, project work, seminars, tutorials etc.) as required in each of the subjects, unless prevented by some unavoidable cause of absence. Students, therefore, are strongly recommended to attend all module lectures and tutorials. In the case of the latter, without weekly participation (i.e. by keeping up with the prescribed or recommended readings and by contributing to class discussion) it is highly unlikely that students will produce work of a standard expected from small-group teaching and learning.

3. Canvas

[Canvas](#) is a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). A VLE is a web-based application designed to facilitate lecturers in the management of modules for their students, especially by helping lecturers and learners with course administration. A VLE is used to supplement face-to-face lectures and tutorials. Learn all about Canvas [here](#).

4. Referencing

The School of Political Science and Sociology advises that students **must use** the Harvard (UL) Referencing Style for all assignments and essays. Details on the Harvard (UL) referencing style, and examples, are available from the University of Galway library [here](#).

5. Academic Writing Centre

[The Academic Writing Centre \(AWC\)](#) provides one-on-one tutorials and email consultations on essay writing. These are free and available to everyone, regardless of experience or grade average. They are located in the main Library.

6. Academic Integrity Policy

[Academic integrity](#) is a fundamental value of any university community. As a principle, it assumes that all student interactions with the academic institution are entered into in the spirit of honesty. This value gives the student responsibility for ensuring that all assignments that they submit for academic purposes are their own work.

7. Disability Support Service (DSS)

Disability support is available to University of Galway students who need support or reasonable accommodations due to the impact of a disability, ongoing physical or mental health condition, or a specific learning difficulty. These supports are provided through DSS. Click [here](#) for further information.

8. Exam Support

Student Services have a range of valuable supports on offer to help you both before and during exams. Workshops, helplines and online resources are just some of the many options available and have been developed. [Here](#) is a list of useful policies and procedures. You will also find information about exam repeats, appeals, deferrals, past papers, alternative arrangements, etc.

9. Student Enquiry Centre

For any enquiries about student life, services and support, contact the **Student Enquiry Centre**. You can drop into them on the first floor of the Arts/Science Concourse from 9am-5pm, Monday to Friday. You can also email SEC@universityofgalway.ie.

10. Chaplaincy

The Chaplaincy is here to help students navigate the challenges associated with university life. Don't know who you need to speak to? That's where Chaplaincy comes in. They are available on campus for a chat from Monday - Friday and are here to listen.

11. Counselling

Student Counselling provides a free hybrid service of in-person and online one-to-one counselling. They also provide group counselling and workshops. Seeking counselling is normal here and is not a sign that you are unable to cope, but of strength and resourcefulness. Counselling support about 10% of the student population each year. Any problem, large or small, if unresolved, is welcomed here.

12. Examination and Assessment Process

Student examination and assessment in the University is governed by a set of **important policies and processes** which outline:

- a) the academic rules which all programmes and modules must comply with for the awarding of degrees and
- b) the way in which exams and assessment are conducted.

The University's degree structure and assessment process is aligned to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System to allow for recognition of awards across Europe. Consequently, programmes are structured in multiples of 5 ECTS, with 60 ECTS making up a full year of undergraduate study and 90 ECTS for postgraduate study.

Degree classification is normally based on a student's results in pre-final (30%) and in final (70%) year and degree awards are classified from pass to first class honours. Results are approved by the University's College Exam Boards with independent validation of marks by External Examiners.

College Boards, Academic Council and its sub-Committee, Academic Standing Committee are the key decision-making bodies in relation to student examination and assessment.

The School of Political Science and Sociology uses a categorical marking system across all programmes. These categorical marks are applied only at the level of assessed components (and NOT overall modular marks) to foster consistency across the programme and achieve a better distribution of marks across degree grades.

Fail: 0, 25, 35

Pass: 42, 45, 48

Lower Second: 52, 55, 58

Upper Second: 62, 65, 68

First: 72, 75, 78.

13. Extensions and Deferrals

If you are unable to submit your work on time, you must apply to the Module Coordinator or Seminar Leader for an extension no later than 24 hours in advance of an assessment deadline. If granted, the maximum extension will be no more than one week (7 calendar days). This requirement applies to all students, including those with a LENS (Learning

Educational Needs Summary) report. If you have extenuating circumstances where more than 7 calendar days are required, the authorisation process depends on the weighting of the piece of assessment:

- Where the module assignments of course work constitutes less than 30% of the overall mark, this will be considered by the Module Coordinator or Seminar Leader in line with the [Extenuating Circumstances policy](#).
- Where the module assignments and coursework constitutes over 30% of the overall mark, you must apply 7 days in advance of the assessment deadline directly to the College of Arts, Social Sciences, and Celtic Studies following the [Extenuating Circumstances policy](#) and completing the Extenuating Circumstances form. The extension request must be based upon a medical certificate and/or relevant supporting documentation.

14. Late submission without an extension

For module assignments and work constituting 20% or less of the overall mark: if you submit an assignment after the deadline without submitting an extension request and/or extension request approval, the work will be marked and a penalty will be applied.

- Late submissions will be penalised at a rate of 2 marks per day off the mark originally awarded. (E.g. if the essay merits a mark of 68, and was submitted one day late, the mark will go down to 66).
- No work is accepted or marked if submitted more than 7 working days after the deadline without an extension.

15. Feedback On Assignments

Feedback timeframe policy: normally, assignments will be marked within 3 weeks from the submission deadline.

Feedback from your lecturer/seminar leader is provided through [Canvas](#).

16. Parking Information

There are different types of spaces on campus, including spaces for staff permit holders only, student permit holders only, shared use (staff student permit holders), visitor/non-permit holder pay-and-display/Pay by Phone (P&D) spaces.

You need a permit to park in University of Galway, or you can buy a ticket from P&D machines or Pay by Phone. Please note, that P&D tickets only apply to spaces marked in blue adjacent to the meters - P&D tickets do not allow you to park anywhere else. Permit holders can use P&D spaces, but you must buy a ticket.

Your permit/P&D ticket allows you to park in specific places and you must familiarise yourself with the zones, and which permit applies to what carpark. There are also 'reserved' spaces and loading bays - do not park in these.

You may use the universally accessible parking spaces if you display a valid and registered 'blue badge' permit issued by the IWA.

Student parking permits are available through an online system for registered students. Allow plenty of time on your first visit to campus with your car.

17. Class Representatives

The Class Rep is the Voice of your Class and represents the views of the majority of the class. They help to solve both individual and class-wide problems. If you decide to run for Class Rep, your responsibilities will include communicating between your class and the course lecturers, attending Comhairle Chomhaltas na Mac Léinn and your College Council meetings to help formulate Student Union policies and arranging class parties, hoodies etc.

18. Student Complaints Process

The purpose of the Student Complaints Procedure is to provide a formal mechanism for students to have their complaints heard and resolved. The Procedure is not intended to be a disciplinary one, However, the Complaints Procedure provides students with an opportunity to raise issues of concern to them, frequently makes recommendations for improvements to University processes and, where appropriate, can provide redress to students.

It is intended that this complaints procedure will allow for matters to be dealt with fairly, transparently and in a timely fashion, for the benefit of current and future students and the wider University Community.

Why Study Political Science and Sociology?

Political Science and Sociology should be a definite subject for any student interested in current affairs and politics. However, many students find it a genuinely engaging and stimulating subject in its own right. It provides an excellent basis for the development of critical thinking, good communication skills, and is appreciated by employers as imparting in students superb awareness of vital social and political trends in society.

Postgraduate programmes include the MA in Gender, Globalisation and Rights, the MA in Public Policy, the MA in Child, Youth and Community and the MA in Social Work; while the M.Litt. and Ph.D. by research in Political Science and in Sociology are also offered.

What Will I Be Studying?

The undergraduate programme introduces basic concepts in political science and sociology, Irish society and politics, political sociology, political and social theory, social science research methods and computer skills, European society and politics, public policy, environmental sociology, and development theories and practice. Students are also facilitated in choosing a specialist interest from a range of special topics. The School of Political Science and Sociology offers a genuinely interdisciplinary social sciences education. Students have opportunities during the course of the undergraduate programme to choose more Sociological or Political pathway in 2nd and Final Year.

Sociological and Political Studies in Year 1

The First Year programme in Sociological and Political Studies provides an understanding of major political and social developments taking place in Ireland and the wider world. It is a foundation for the study of Sociological and Political Studies in subsequent years while also providing students with the opportunity to acquire knowledge of core ideas in Sociology and Political Science.

General Description

Despite the challenges of global diversity and the pervasiveness of conflict, human beings are also disposed to act co-operatively and collectively, seeking solutions to problems. A core theme in sociology and political science concerns how and why societies change, and what alternatives might be possible? This course encourages students to explore the links between sociological and political perspectives in relation to real world issues and puzzles.

Key ideas about social and political processes of power and influence at the level of state, society and individual are introduced. The social and political forces of conformity and conflict, of regulation and resistance are examined. Sociological and political ideas concerning modernity, democracy, freedom, culture, capitalism, identity, diversity, religion and the many problems that beset modern societies, such as crime and deviance, inequality and poverty are introduced. Students will have the opportunity to study how the social and political landscape is formed and transformed, not only regarding political parties, government and state, but also in terms of gender, class and religion in Ireland and elsewhere. The impact of social movements and ideologies in the context of key challenges in the 21st century are also considered, such as cultural pluralism, the politics of climate change, and conflicting conceptions of globalisation. Students critically and practically engage with these and other debates about the personal, political and global challenges of living in modernity and searching for the 'good

society'. The course is taught by a wide range of School staff committed to linking research and scholarship to teaching.

Course Modules

Semester	Lecture-based modules	Seminar-based modules	
		Either	Or
Semester 1	SP1125: Introduction to Politics ECTS Credit: 5	SP1120: Practicing Politics ECTS Credit: 5	SP160: Problems in Politics & Sociology ECTS Credit: 5 SP160 is a year-long module that runs in Semester 1 and Semester 2.
Semester 2	SP1126: Introduction to Sociology ECTS Credit: 5	SP1121: Practicing Sociology ECTS Credit: 5	

Modules Overview

SP1125: Introduction to Politics

This lecture module introduces political science, in part by focusing on Irish examples but it also explores the big ideas and concepts that dominate political debate today. The module covers a number of diverse topics: (1) political parties and Irish parties; (2) the unique political institutions of Ireland, notably the Oireachtas; (3) and political ideologies such as liberalism, conservatism, socialism and anarchism are also examined.

SP1126: Introduction to Sociology

This lecture module introduces students to some of the key areas of sociological study, equipping them with knowledge and skills fundamental to understanding a wide range of present-day issues such as changing role of religion in society, structural inequalities, social management of crime and deviance, and environmental problems and solutions. The module is divided into four main themes linked by the concepts of conformity and identity: 'religion and conformity', 'socialisation, crime and deviance' 'social stratification and inequalities', and 'sustainability, society and the environment'.

SP1120: Practicing Politics

This seminar module is designed to promote inquiry-based learning, to enhance practical scholarship skills while engaging with real world problems. Students work in small groups under the guidance of a seminar leader. Students are introduced to critical reading, taking effective notes, gathering information and using the library, online sources and Canvas, working in groups, preparing and writing essays, using academic language, and revising and taking exams. There is an explicit focus on topics of Irish political system, and political ideologies (e.g. conservatism, liberalism, socialism, etc.).

SP1121: Practicing Sociology

This seminar module is designed to promote inquiry-based learning, to enhance practical scholarship skills while engaging with real world problems. Students work in small groups under the guidance of a seminar leader. Students are introduced to critical reading, taking effective notes, gathering information and using the library, online sources and Canvas, working in groups, preparing and writing assignments, using academic language, and revising and taking exams. There is an explicit focus on topics of religion, social inequalities, crime and deviance, and environmental problems and solutions.

SP160: Problems in Politics & Sociology

This seminar module is designed to promote inquiry-based learning, to enhance practical scholarship skills while engaging with real world problems. Students work in small groups under the guidance of a seminar leader. Students are introduced to critical reading, taking effective notes, gathering information and using the library, online sources and Canvas, working in groups, preparing and writing assignments, using academic language, and revising and taking exams. There is an explicit focus on topics of Irish political system, and political ideologies in semester 1 while in semester 2 sociological perspectives on social inequalities and environmental problems and solutions are examined.

What modules shall I register for?

This depends on your exact BA degree type:

- On your ID card your course instance is printed, i.e. 1BA1, 1BSS1, etc. Check this to know which modules you need to register for.

Essentially, what modules you will be taking with us depends on the amount of ECTS credits that you need to gain. (Please see below for specific accreditations of the module combinations that we offer.)

1BA1 Joint Honours Programme: Students enrolled on 1BA1 Joint Honours programme are expected to complete 20 ECTS credits in Sociological and Political Studies in Year 1.

Denominated and Connect Programmes: Students enrolled on Denominated and Connect BA Programmes are typically expected to complete 15 ECTS credits in Sociological and Political Studies in Year 1. All students doing Dominated and Connect degrees are strongly advised to check Handbooks for their respective programmes (or, if these are not clear, ask their designated Programme Directors) to ensure that they know how many credits they need to complete with us.

Visiting Students: If you are a Visiting Student in semester 1 (before Christmas) and you are looking to gain 5 ECTS credits with us, you are only required to take the lecture module SP1125: Introduction to Politics. If you are a Visiting Student in semester 2 (after Christmas) and you are looking to gain 5 ECTS credits with us, you are only required to take the lecture module SP1126: Introduction to Sociology.

Please note it is your responsibility to make sure that you are properly registered for the modules that you need to take. Make sure to double check, because a mistake in registration can cause many problems when it comes to exam time.

20 ECTS Sociological and Political Studies Module combination:

Semester	Lecture-based modules	Seminar-based modules
Semester 1	SP1125: Introduction to Politics ECTS Credit: 5	SP1120: Practicing Politics ECTS Credit: 5
Semester 2	SP1126: Introduction to Sociology ECTS Credit: 5	SP1121: Practicing Sociology ECTS Credit: 5

15 ECTS Sociological and Political Studies Module combination:

Semester	Lecture-based modules	Seminar-based module
Semester 1	SP1125: Introduction to Politics ECTS Credit: 5	SP160: Problems in Politics & Sociology ECTS Credit: 5 SP160 is a year-long module that runs in Semester 1 and Semester 2.
Semester 2	SP1126: Introduction to Sociology ECTS Credit: 5	

What will my timetable look like?

This depends on what modules you are taking with us.

Your lecture module

Every student registered for Sociological and Political Studies will take one lecture-based module per semester: 'SP1125: Introduction to Politics' in semester 1 (before Christmas) and 'SP1126: Introduction to Sociology' in semester 2 (after Christmas).

In each semester, you will attend two 50-minute lectures per week.

Due to the very large numbers of students who study Sociological and Political Studies in First Arts, we duplicate our large group teaching, providing a parallel stream of lectures: **Group A and Group B.**

You will attend lectures as part of Group A or Group B, depending on your degree combination.

GROUP A is for BA Joint Honours (1BA1) students combining Sociological and Political Studies with subjects such as English, Archaeology, French, Maths/Mathematical Studies, Economics, etc.

GROUP B is for students taking Sociological and Political Studies as part of other Programmes (for example, Bachelor of Science Social Science or Bachelor of Arts Child, Youth and Family: Policy and Practice, etc.).

SP1125: Introduction to Politics – Semester 1 Timetable:

Group A	Group B
Tuesdays 11:00-12:00 Kirwan Lecture Theatre and Wednesdays 13:00-14:00 O’Flaherty Lecture Theatre	Tuesdays 12:00-13:00 O’Flaherty Lecture Theatre and Thursdays 11:00-12:00 Kirwan Lecture Theatre

SP1126: Introduction to Sociology – Semester 2 Timetable:

Group A	Group B
Tuesdays 11:00-12:00 Kirwan Lecture Theatre and Wednesdays 13:00-14:00 O’Flaherty Lecture Theatre	Tuesdays 12:00-13:00 IT250 and Thursdays 11:00-12:00 Kirwan Lecture Theatre

Your seminar module

In addition to attending weekly lectures, students who take our seminar modules will have regular opportunities to meet with course teaching staff and with other course participants to exchange views and discuss problems.

Your seminar timetable will depend on the module that you are taking with us. Further details are available in the relevant module Handbooks.

After you register for a seminar module, you will have to self-enrol for a 50-minute seminar group timeslot that fits within your existing timetable. This will be done through the module Canvas page. You will be contacted with all the details in due course.

How will I be assessed?

Our lecture modules are assessed by MCQ exams.

Our seminar modules are assessed by a combination of different components such as, for instance, participation and essays.

The details can be found in the relevant module Handbooks.

We embed elements of assessment support into all our modules to ensure that our students are well-prepared and able to make the most of their degrees.

Exam Regulations

The University Policy on Exam Regulations can be accessed here:

<https://www.universityofgalway.ie/media/registry/exams/policiesprocedures/QA229---Exam-Regulations.pdf>

We require students to confirm that any written work submitted is their own work: see the Assignment Cover Sheet in the Assessment folder on Canvas. When submitting work via Turnitin on Canvas, you can 'sign' the Cover Sheet by typing your name in the space provided.

We allow students to make multiple submissions to Turnitin before the set deadline. You are advised to make use of this option and carefully review your Turnitin similarity match report to ensure that your essay is properly referenced and that all the used sources are acknowledged.

You can find guidance on how to interpret your Turnitin similarity report here:

<https://help.turnitin.com/feedback-studio/turnitin-website/student/the-similarity-report/interpreting-the-similarity-report.htm>

Our expectations of you

Your Responsibility

Be Present	Be Prepared	Participate
		
Attend all modules that you registered for: Lecture modules: 2 hours per week. Seminar modules: 1 hour in designated weeks (see your Module Handbook for details). Please note that your attendance of all timetabled sessions is compulsory and closely monitored.	Complete the required learning and reading activities each week. You will be expected to discuss these with your Lecturers and Classmates.	Complete all learning activities and assessments. At University, you join a 'community of practice'. Learning is active and collaborative. We want to hear your ideas and understanding of the new topics you are engaging with. You will participate in weekly discussions and activities to demonstrate this new understanding.

Information regarding access to and use of learning materials

As a student in the university, you will be provided with a range of materials to help you succeed in your chosen academic programme. These include materials provided by the University centrally, support services, the Library, Academic Schools/Colleges, and individual lecturers, tutors, and others who support teaching and learning.

These materials and resources (which include, for example, lecture notes, slide presentations, video and audio recordings, official copies of journal papers, e-books, readers, handbooks, assessments,

exam papers, etc.) are provided to you for your private, individual use as a student registered on our programmes. The materials are protected by copyright legislation and licensing agreements and therefore you cannot copy these (or materials derived directly from them), or share and redistribute them to others, or via other channels (either online or physically).

Progression

Undergraduate degree programmes at the University are normally organized into Stages. Students must successfully complete each stage before progressing to a subsequent one. Full-time Undergraduate Degree Programmes will be organised on an academic year basis, where each year represents a defined Stage. Full-time undergraduate students will be required to register for and present for examination in a set of modules to a total credit weighting of 60 ECTS, in accordance with the programme structures and regulations set out in the College's Programme Descriptions and Regulations for their chosen programme of study. Provision may be made for Part-time students to complete a stage over several years, accumulating the credits required for each stage in a more flexible credit accumulation structure

Passing

The pass mark on all modules is 40%. Where different components of assessment (i.e. continuous assessment, final assessment, etc.) within a module contribute to the final grade it shall not normally be a requirement that any one of these components be separately passed.

Consultation Day

Consultation day is organised by the University after 1st sitting results release. It gives an opportunity to the students to seek informal recheck of their submitted work and the mark achieved. It is a requirement of the University to go through informal recheck first before proceeding with an Appeal.

Rechecks & Appeals

The Examinations Office has a procedure for dealing with queries relating to marks awarded for modules:

<https://www.universityofgalway.ie/media/registry/exams/policiesprocedures/QA235---Procedure-for-the-Discussion-Checking-and-Appeal-of-Examination-Rresults---Feb-2021.pdf>

Repeat Examination / Second Sitting

For information on repeats please see the Examinations Office webpage:

https://www.universityofgalway.ie/exams/timetable-advice/examinations_faqs/repeats_faq/

What to do if you experience difficulties

We are committed to your success and we are here to help you. Now that you are a registered student there are many options available to you. Please let us be your first port of call.

If you are experiencing difficulties that are having a negative impact on your studies, it is important that you let us know so that we can help or offer guidance on where you can seek assistance. Any *information relating to your circumstances will be held in strictest confidence*.

The Golden Rule: deal with these issues as they occur by contacting the First Year Coordinator, Gerry Fitzpatrick (gerard.fitzpatrick@universityofgalway.ie) and/or the College office (artsundergrad@universityofgalway.ie).

If you encounter difficulties with any aspect of a module or with the First year programme in Soc & Pol, we are here to help, but you need to let us know. We welcome feedback from students and an important part of our job is to support you in your studies.

Any issues you may have that have not been resolved with the seminar leader/programme coordinator in the first instance can also be raised with our Deputy Head of School, Dr Mike Hynes (mike.hynes@universityofgalway.ie). You can also contact the Head of School of Political Science and Sociology, Prof Niall O Dochartaigh (niall.odochartaigh@universityofgalway.ie).

As a constituent unit of the College of Arts, Social Sciences and Celtic Studies, the School is subject to the oversight by the Dean of Arts and issues relating to School decisions can also be raised with the Dean's office (contact details can be found here: <https://www.universityofgalway.ie/colleges-and-schools/arts-social-sciences-and-celtic-studies/staff/>).

The School is committed to working with **Year Representatives who are affiliated to the Student Union**. If you are interested in being a Year Rep., please contact Gerry Fitzpatrick (gerard.fitzpatrick@universityofgalway.ie)

Who should I contact?

For general inquiries about Sociological and Political Studies in First Arts, please contact: **First Year Programme Coordinator, Gerry Fitzpatrick**, Email: gerard.fitzpatrick@universityofgalway.ie

For questions about enrolment, please contact: **School of Political Science & Sociology Administrative Assistant, Stephanie Quinn**, Email: stephanie.quinn@universityofgalway.ie

If you have any questions about specific Sociological and Political Studies Year 1 modules, please refer to the relevant Module Handbook in the first instance. If you need further assistance, the contact details of the relevant lecturers can be found in the said Module Handbook.

Assessment Cover Page



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Assignment Cover Sheet

This form MUST be signed by the assignment entrant and must accompany assignment as a cover page. We cannot under any circumstances accept assignments without this form attached. Assignments will not be considered for marking until a cover page is signed and submitted.

Name: _____

ID number: _____

Module Code: _____

Title of the Module: _____

Assignment title: _____

Number of pages: _____

Bibliography attached? ☐ Yes ☐ No

I hereby certify that I understand what plagiarism is and that this assignment is entirely my own work. The paper in its entirety nor parts thereof have been published elsewhere in either paper or electronic form unless indicated through referencing, nor have I paid someone else to write it, and nor have I used Generative Artificial Intelligence. I understand that this work may be entered on a database to enable detection of academic misconduct and I give my consent to this.

Student Signature

Date of submission