



OLLSCOIL NA
GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY
OF GALWAY

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

BA Joint Honours Year 2 Sociological & Political Studies

Student Handbook



Table of Contents

Welcome	3
Important Information	4
How Year 2 is Organised	8
Year 2 Modules Overview	9
Module Descriptions	10
Semester Two	13
Contact Details	15

Welcome

On behalf of the School of Political Science & Sociology, welcome to Year 2 of Sociological & Political Studies! We are very pleased you have chosen to continue your studies with us and sincerely hope that your second year will be an enjoyable, academically rewarding and enriching experience.

You can learn more about us as a School, including staff bios/research interests, postgraduate programmes and other events happening at the following website:

<https://www.universityofgalway.ie/soc/>

We look forward to you joining us in September.

Best of luck in academic year 26/27!

Brian McGrath
Year 2 Coordinator
School of Political Science and Sociology
University of Galway



Important Information

1. Academic Calendar Dates

Here you will find a list of important upcoming dates for the 26/27 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 making a contribution 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 its UG and PG 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.

19. End of Semester Feedback

We ask students to complete student feedback forms in person (in the lecture) at end of each semester, and this feedback is undertaken over weeks 10-12. It is important for lecturers to get your views about how well you have experienced and engaged with the modules, so we encourage you to provide your considered feedback at these points.

20. Staying Informed throughout Year 2

Please note that there is a great deal of information available on the School's website, including timetables, course outlines, contact details and online materials: [School of Political Science and Sociology - University of Galway.](#)

21. Noticeboard

Information for 2nd year students regarding seminar group allocation, timetabling issues, etc. will be posted on the 2nd year CANVAS site of SPSK3101/2 and on the 2nd Year Notice Board at the School of Political Science & Sociology, Floor 2, Aras Moyola at the beginning of each semester.

22. CANVAS

Please note that from time to time the School will need to circulate information to all 2BA students and will use lectures and Canvas for these purposes. Please make sure you attend to any notices that circulate via Canvas. Do not ignore them!

How Year 2 is Organised

In your second year with the School, you take three Core modules – SPSK3101, SPSK3102 and SP220 – and three Option choices:

i.e. 1 Core and 2 Options in Semester One; and 2 Core and 1 Option in Semester Two. Each semester you take 30 Credits/ECTS: Each Module is worth 5 Credits/ECTS.

In Year 2, unlike the first year experience with the School of Political Science and Sociology, students can - if they wish - choose to specialise in either more 'Political' or more 'Sociological' module choices. This innovative 'Pathway Specialisation' approach allows students to take advantage of the breadth and scope of the modules offered by the School, which cover most of the social and the political sciences. For example in Semester I if you prefer 'the social' to 'the political' side of the School's programme you could then choose to take SP2125 (Welfare, Rights and Policy Issues) as Option 1 and SP2116 (Sociology of Health) as Option 2; and in Semester II, SP212 (Classical Social Thought) as your Option 3. In contrast, if your interests are more clearly 'political' you could then choose SP2122 (European Politics) as Option 1 and SP2117 (International and Global Politics) as your Option 2; in Semester II, you would then pick as your Option 3, SP2123 (Modern Political Thought).

However, these potential choices are merely indicative and discretionary: one of the School's strengths lies in the multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary character of its staff and their modular offerings. Students therefore who wish to avoid a 'Pathway Specialisation' can of course choose to be more mixed in their choices and pick an individually chosen mixture of both the more 'social' and the more 'political' modules in their three Options. In other words, in all three Option choices, it is entirely up to you, *within the limitations imposed by necessary and unavoidable number capping restrictions*, to choose which module you prefer in each of your three possible Option selections. Therefore, *if you have strong preferences, you are advised to register for your preferred 'Pathway' as soon as possible*.

We hope to be able to satisfy the wishes of the vast majority of our students but unfortunately because of capping restrictions, we cannot guarantee that you will be able to enrol in all your preferred Option choices.

Most **Connect students** must choose between two possibilities: either to take TWO Options in Semester I and only Cores in Semester II; or ONE Option in Semester I and then also ONE Option in Semester II. Overall as a Connect you shall thus be taking THREE Core and TWO Option modules. **Major/Minor** students will consult their specific degree programme regulations to ascertain which module options are available to choose.

In relation to the seminar-based modules (SPSK3101 and SPSK3102), students in Semester I (SPSK3101) are divided into **four separate seminar streams, A, B, C and D** regarding which particular combination of module Options they have chosen - since the seminars are designed to amplify and underscore through innovative and participatory teaching the themes being covered in the modular lecture series. In semester II as there are only two possible variations (SP212 or SP2123), there is in effect only two streams.

Year 2 Modules Overview

Please read the following information carefully, noting the instructions for both semester 1 and semester 2:

In Semester 1: Your Core module is: SPSK3101 - Politics and Society: Themes and Topics (Core module); AND Students choose TWO option modules: YOU MUST CHOOSE One module from Option 1 (SP2122 or SP2125) and One from Option 2 (SP2116 or SP2117)

In Semester 2: Your **Core modules** are: SPSK3102 – Society & Politics: Ideas and Research (Core module); AND SP220 Research Methods; AND Students choose ONE option module: YOU MUST CHOOSE SP2123 or SP212

Module Code	Module Title	ECTS	Sem	Timetable and Venue
Semester 1				
SPSK3101	Politics and Society: Themes and Topics	5	1	Weekly Seminars from Week 3
<i>Choose either SP2122 or SP2125</i>				
SP2122	European Politics	5	1	Monday 12.00 (O’Flaherty); AND Monday 2.00 (O’Flaherty)
SP2125	Welfare, Rights and Policy Issues	5	1	Tuesday 12.00 (Arts Millennium Building, AMB 1021); AND Wednesday 12.00 (AMB 1021)
<i>Choose either SP2116 or SP2117</i>				
SP2116	Sociology of Health	5	1	Tuesday 2.00 (Arts Millennium Building, AMB 1021); AND Friday 12.00 (O’Flaherty)
SP2117	International and Global Politics	5	1	Tuesday 2.00 (AUC G002, Aras Ui Chathail); AND Friday 12.00 (Arts Millennium Building, AMB 1022)
Semester 2				
SPSK3102	Society and Politics: Ideas and Research	5	2	Weekly Seminars
SP220	Methods for Social and Political Science	5	2	Monday 2.00 (O’Flaherty); Tuesday 12.00 (O’Flaherty)
<i>Choose either SP2123 or SP212</i>				
SP2123	Modern Political Thought	5	2	Wednesday 12.00 (Arts Millennium Building, AMB 1021); Friday 12.00 (AMB 1021)
SP212	Classical Social Thought	5	2	Wednesday 12.00 (MRA 201, Ryan Institute); Friday 12.00 (IT250)

Module Descriptions

SEMESTER 1

SPSK3101 - Politics and Society: Themes and Topics **CORE Module (for ALL Joint Honours Students)**

Module Coordinator: Dr Brian McGrath (staff members will be your Seminar Leaders)

The Seminar modules support and extend the learning in the other modules. The format involves a number of students meeting weekly, to encourage group discussion and debate around selected themes and individual and group-work exercises. They are designed specifically to help you develop your critical thinking and presentation skills. You will have a Seminar Leader who is a member of staff in the School, who will guide and facilitate your learning throughout this semester once you sign up for your group. The overall Module Coordinator is Dr Brian McGrath. Based on the other modules you are studying this year, your seminars will cover a selection of relevant topics and themes related to those modules. Depending on your study choices, this will include, for example, the sources and consequences of inequality; improving child protection policy; understanding the social dimensions of health and healthcare systems; international issues relating to war and peace; European politics; responding to migration and refugee 'crises' or emerging challenges to democratic forms of government including new forms of populism.

In addition to gaining understanding of important social and political questions and issues covered in the Second Year curriculum, an overarching objective of this module is to provide structured opportunities for you to develop and strengthen a range of transferable skills, from the ability to undertake *critical reading*, *summary*, *synthesis* and *properly referenced academic writing*, to *group work* and *presentation* skills.

SEMINARS COMMENCE IN Week 3 AND RUN FOR 10 WEEKS. There are no full group lectures for this module. You will have specific readings assigned for this Module.

Choose either SP2122 or SP2125 in Semester 1:

SP2122 - European Politics

Lecturer: Dr Brendan Flynn

This module explores European politics through a broadly comparative perspective. It first addresses the strategic developments of the last decade and beyond, starting with the end of the cold war in the early 1990s, and the new security frameworks emerging today. We then discuss European nationalism, examining this issue in the context of Spain and the collapse of Yugoslavia. This is followed by lectures on the wider significance of German reunification. In the second part of the course, we will use a regional framework of analysis. Here we will examine the Nordic democracies, the Mediterranean states, the newly established and struggling democracies of central Europe and the smaller European democracies such as the Netherlands, Switzerland, Belgium, and Austria. Finally in the last section of the course we will examine some comparative trends: European electoral behaviour, Europe's various distinctive styles of governance, and the rise of political extremist movements across Europe in the last few years

OR

SP2125 Welfare, Rights and Policy Issues

Lecturers: Dr Brian McGrath & Colleagues.

For students of Sociology and Politics, a particularly relevant field of study concerns people's welfare and

wellbeing; and the purpose and role of social policy in addressing complex issues. Taking a broadly defined perspective on human 'welfare', and engagement with theoretical perspectives, policy frameworks, and contemporary policy areas, the module develops students' ability to critically analyse welfare issues and policy responses in diverse social contexts. It explores key welfare themes in Irish society and relates these to policy developments, historical context and wider theoretical perspectives. Key concepts are introduced - such as need, equality, freedom, human rights - alongside the development, structure, and role of the broader welfare system. With particular attention to themes of gender equality, rights and policy; and children's rights, welfare and family support, it examines how welfare policies respond to social risks and inequalities.

Choose either SP2116 or SP2117 in semester 1:

SP2116 Sociology of Health

Lecturer: Dr Vesna Malesevic

Health is deeply personal, but it is also profoundly political. This module challenges you to look beneath the surface of the medical model to discover how health, illness, and medical knowledge are socially constructed. We will investigate how institutions categorise our bodies and minds, exploring how medicalisation can act as a form of social control across race, gender, and class. Spanning individual experiences to global systems, we analyse the social determinants of health and the root causes of systemic disparities. From examining the social realities of caregiving to analysing how institutional structures perpetuate disadvantage, this course equips you with the vital analytical tools to critique—and challenge—the systemic conditions of health inequalities. Through engaging debates on chronic illness, disability, and structural disparities, you will learn to look at modern medicine through a critical sociological lens. If you want to understand the hidden structural forces driving today's biggest health debates, this module is for you.

OR

SP2117 International and Global Politics

Lecturer: Dr Evans Fanoulis and Colleagues

The module aims at introducing you to the world of concepts, actors, events and theoretical approaches of international and global politics, with a primary focus on questions of peace, war, security and conflict. By the end of the semester, you will understand key concepts such as the nation-state and the international system as well as the main theoretical schools in international relations such as realism, liberalism and constructivism. You will be able to understand the role of international and regional organisations in the context of multilateral diplomacy. It also considers the role of non-state actors such as NGOs like Amnesty International or Greenpeace, and multinational corporations.

SEMESTER TWO

Each Module is worth 5 Credits/ECTS

SPSK3102: Society and Politics : Ideas and Research CORE Module (for ALL Joint Honours Students)

Module Coordinator: Dr Brian McGrath (staff members will be your Seminar Leaders)

This module aims to enhance the capacity of students to think critically about society and politics; to formulate research questions; and to identify appropriate ways or methods to conduct research and gather the evidence necessary to begin to answer different types of research queries. It also aims to build students' knowledge and confidence in discussing the 'big ideas' of key thinkers in social and/or political theory (e.g., liberty, justice, class conflict, equality, solidarity, rationality, etc.) and to draw on these ideas when thinking about research topics. Informed by these discussions, students further examine how knowledge about social and political life is constructed, including through formulating questions and designing and conducting ethical research that can answer such questions. This student-centred module is organised around the completion of critical thinking and research tasks. Tasks can include the following: close reading, synthesis, and discussion of significant ideas in social and political thought; group work exercises to define a research question and plan; practice research methods (using surveys, interviews, statistics, archival materials); and conduct data analysis and peer reviews. Working in small groups students shall develop deepened skills of critical analysis as they scrutinise taken-for-granted assumptions about society and politics and develop and practise a range of widely used social research skills.

CORE Module SP220 Methods for Social and Political Science

Lecturers: Dr Mike Hynes and Dr Bernadine Brady

Course Description:

This course aims to introduce students to the fundamentals of social science research. The course starts by providing an overview of the key principles of social research and qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches. Students will learn how to design a research study and develop a research proposal. The module introduces four specific research methods – surveys/questionnaires, qualitative interviews, focus groups and ethnography/participant observation. Students will learn about good practice in undertaking each method and the benefits and challenges associated with each approach. Participants also will be introduced to techniques for qualitative and quantitative data analysis. Methods of sampling (i.e. choosing participants to participate in research) and the ethical issues arising in social and political research are also explored.

Choose either SP212 or SP2123 in Semester 2:

SP212 Classical Social Thought

Lecturer: Prof Niamh Reilly and Colleagues

This module provides a broad introduction to classic ideas and debates in the development of sociology and social thought in Europe and the USA. The writings, life and times of Karl Marx (1818-1883), Émile Durkheim (1858-1917) and Max Weber (1864-1920) feature prominently. Each of these thinkers reflects an influential tradition in the study of society. Their ideas have contributed substantially to our present-day understanding of the evolution and the shape of modern societies and how we approach social research. Classical social thought focuses especially on understanding profound social change, such as industrialisation and secularisation, how societies and individuals adapt to such change, how power operates in modern societies, and how resources are distributed within and across the different parts of society. This module also explores key contributions to social theory in relation to "race" and "gender" by important precursors or contemporaries of Marx, Durkheim and Weber, including Harriet Martineau, Frederick Douglass, Jane Addams, Anna J. Cooper, W.E.B. Dubois, Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Ida B. Wells-Barnett.

OR

SP2123 - Modern Political Thought

Lecturer: Gerry Fitzpatrick

This module is an introduction to European modern political thought through some of its principal thinkers. It traces the development of thinking about power, politics and the State from the Renaissance to the beginning of the 20th Century. Its aim is to help you to understand the nature of the history of political thought and how it has shaped and is shaping the modern world. The major themes are political obligation - why and how should we obey the State; and the emergence of the sovereign integrated nation-state as the paradigm polity of political modernity. The main approaches to these questions that we will consider are Renaissance humanism, Social Contractarianism, Utilitarianism, Idealism, Republicanism and democratic Nationalism. The writers covered shall run from Thomas More (early 16th Century) to Max Weber and LT Hobhouse (early 20th Century). The idea throughout is to examine both the historical context and intentions of all the thinkers analysed - and to assess what they have to say to us about our current political predicaments.

Contact Details

Year 2 Coordinator: Dr Brian McGrath (brian.mcgrath@universityofgalway.ie)

Room 322, 2nd Floor, Áras Moyola

When emailing please state at the top of your email the course you are studying. Emails are normally answered within 24-48 hours. If you do not receive a response within 48 hours, please feel free to send a follow-up email reminder. Note that emails sent after 4 pm on Friday evening will not be responded to over the weekend.

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