



MAYNOOTH UNIVERSITY

Department of Sociology

Third Year Handbook

BA Politics

Academic Year 2020-21

The Third Year Co-ordinator for 2020-21 is:

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A message from the Head of Department, Prof. Seán Ó Riain

Dear students,

Welcome back to the Department of Sociology and the Centre for the Study of Politics at Maynooth for your final year as undergraduates. This will certainly be the most unusual start to the academic year that we have experienced and we know that you have many questions and concerns.

It is our goal to make the year enlightening and interesting for you (and therefore for us), but we also want that experience to be as safe and comfortable as possible. You can find out more about our exciting [undergraduate](#), [Masters](#) and [PhD](#) programmes through the relevant pages on our website - and about [what you can do with a degree in Politics or Sociology](#). Find out about the fascinating [research](#) of our staff and students, as well as the work of our [Centre for the Study of Politics](#).

You will also find details of our teaching approaches this year - in general and each module - on the page for our [Blended Learning Hub](#). This will be the main location for further information about the general departmental approach to teaching and learning this year and I would ask you to visit it regularly for updated information.

Please read the materials available on the Blended Learning Hub along with your outline Timetables, available on the undergraduate page, for a comprehensive view of the overall programme that you will follow (as far as we can predict it in these uncertain times).

Most of what you need to know is contained in this student handbook. But if you have any further questions, please don't hesitate to [contact us](#).

Beir bua

Seán

Professor Seán Ó Riain

Our Learning Community
Key Principles

Our department is a community of teachers and learners who endeavour to learn from each other through relationships that are open, respectful and engaging.

We are a diverse group of people who respect each others' varying experiences and perspectives.

We engage in active discussion and debate in an atmosphere of civility and mutual respect, in-person and online, inside and outside the classroom.

We respect others by avoiding disrupting their teaching and learning – we try to avoid talking during lectures, arriving late and/or leaving early from lectures, and other disruptive actions.

We respect the policies of each lecturer and tutor regarding classroom and module policies and practices, including the use of technology in the classroom.

We understand that the staff of the department are concerned for the welfare of students, for fairness and inclusiveness in our work and, overall, to promote learning in the ways that are judged to be most effective.

We understand that we can bring concerns that we might have to academic and administrative staff, and in particular to the Head of Department.

About the Maynooth University Department of Sociology - Centre for the Study of Politics

This handbook is intended to provide you with the information you need about our programme for the year and our policies.

You will find additional information about the Sociology Department on our website <https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/sociology>, on the department noticeboards in Auxilia, and by following us on twitter @MU_Sociology

Further inquiries can be made to the department office - Room 1.5 in Auxilia (first floor). It is accessible by stairs and by lift.

In the next section of this handbook, we present the overall vision of how the Politics degree programme develops our students' base of knowledge and skills over its three-year course.

Apart from your undergraduate programme this year, you may be interested in other initiatives, talks and events that are run by, or in conjunction with, the Department of Sociology. These will be advertised on the department's notice boards and on the department's [website](#).

In addition to catering for over eight hundred students across our undergraduate programme, a further thirty students are engaged in postgraduate studies in the Department. We encourage you to consider furthering your studies with us in our taught M.A. programmes. Deadlines for applications are in June each year and staff are happy to discuss the programmes earlier in the year. More details are available on our website at: <https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/sociology/ma-programmes>

We also offer supervision for research postgraduates including M.Litt (2 years) and Ph.D degrees (4 years approx.). If you are interested in doing a research postgrad, please talk to the postgraduate co-ordinator Prof. Mary Murphy (mary.p.murphy@mu.ie) and take a look at the specialist areas of interest of the members of the Department below:

If you are interested in considering studying Sociology or Politics at the postgraduate level, you may find useful the listing of the specialist areas of interest of the members of the Department

below. We are particularly interested in using the Special Topics regime to develop your ideas about and interest in potential areas of research in politics at postgraduate level.

Staff Research Interests

Professor Mary P. Murphy is Professor of Politics in the Department of Sociology. She has research interests in gender and social security, globalisation and welfare states, the politics of redistribution and power and civil society. She has published widely, most recently *Careless to Careful Activation: Making Activation Work for Women* (Dublin NWC 2012) and *Towards the Second Republic: Irish Politics after the Celtic Tiger* (with Peadar Kirby, Pluto Ireland, 2011). She is an active advocate for social justice and gender equality, a member of the national advisory group on tax and social welfare, a Commissioner of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission and a regular media commentator. Her work has also appeared in journals such as *Administration*, the *Irish Journal of Sociology*, *New Political Economy*, and *Policy and Politics*. She is also a regular contributor to Irish television and radio on issues of social justice including *RTE Prime Time*, *RTE The Late Debate*, *RTE Morning Ireland*, *TV3 Tonight with Vincent Browne*, and many other outlets. Prof Murphy is also a member of the Council of State.

Dr. Philip Finn

Dr Philip Finn is Assistant Lecturer in the Department of Sociology, Maynooth University. His research interests include welfare conditionality, the sociology of everyday life, social reproduction, and the politics of work and non-work. He has recently completed his PhD, *The Absurdity of Welfare: Experiences of Irish Welfare Conditionality*. He was a visiting fellow at the Department of Social Policy and Social Work, York University, as part of the Welfare Conditionality Project in 2019. He has presented his research findings on the use of conditionality and sanctions in labour activation to the Irish Parliament's Joint Committee on Employment Affairs and Social Protection. He has also co-authored the report *The 'High Road' Back to Work: Developing a Public Employment Eco System for a Post-Covid Recovery* (with Mary Murphy, Nuala Whelan and Michael McGann).

Dr Barry Cannon joined Maynooth in 2013 and specializes in democratization and development, particularly in conflict areas in the Latin America region. Since graduating with a PhD from DCU in 2003 he worked for Irish development cooperation NGO, Comhlámh, on an Irish Aid funded project on international volunteering. From 2007 he worked in DCU on an Irish Aid-funded project working with civil society organizations and universities in Central America (Nicaragua, El Salvador and Honduras) and researched with Dr. Mo Hume of the University of Glasgow on democratization in the three project countries. From 2010-2013 he worked on an Irish Research Council (IRC) funded project

reviewing the right in Latin America, focusing on Argentina, Chile, Colombia and Venezuela. He has published widely including *Hugo Chávez and the Bolivarian Revolution: Populism and Democracy in a Globalised Age* (MUP, 2009), *Civil Society and the State in Left-led Latin America: Challenges and Limitations to Democratization* (Zed: 2012), co-edited with Prof. Peadar Kirby and *The Right in Latin America* (Routledge, 2016), and in academic journals, including *Democratization*, *Development in Practice*, *Irish Political Studies*, *Latin American Politics and Society*, and *Third World Quarterly*.

Professor John O'Brennan: is Jean Monnet Professor of European Integration. His research interests are divided between the process and politics of EU enlargement and EU foreign policy on the one hand, and Ireland's relationship with the European Union on the other. He has published a number of books and journal articles on EU enlargement including *The Eastern Enlargement of the European Union* (Routledge, 2006) and *National Parliaments within the Enlarged European Union* (Routledge, 2007). His articles have appeared in the *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, the *Dublin Review of Books*, *European Foreign Affairs Review*, *European Political Science*, *Global Society*, the *Journal of Common Market Studies*, *Parliamentary Affairs*, and the *Journal of European Integration* amongst others. He is a frequent contributor to both the national and international media on EU issues. He is also a member of the Irish government's Brexit Stakeholder Advisory group which advises the Minister for Foreign Affairs on Brexit's impact on Ireland.

Dr. Pauline Cullen

Research interests include political sociology; gender inequality, social movements; civil society and state relations; nongovernmental organisations; social policy and European Integration; coalitions between diverse constituencies; activism on social rights beyond national settings.

Professor Colin Coulter

Research interests include development studies, global politics, Marxism, ethnicity and nationalism, popular culture and in particular popular music and Northern Irish politics and society.

Dr. Laurence Cox

Research interests include social movement research (movement waves, alterglobalization and anti-austerity movements, European social movements, movement theorising, protest policing, knowledge and learning production in social movements, activist sustainability); Buddhist Studies (Buddhism and Ireland, early western Buddhists in Asia); new religious movements; sociology of knowledge and culture (history of ideas, sociology of intellectuals, counter culture); working-class studies (community organising, oral history); social theory (western Marxism, socialist feminism); and methodology (participatory action research, community research).

Professor Seán Ó Riain

Research interests are in the sociology of work, economic sociology, comparative and global political economy and social inequality. Specific areas of interest include work organisation and workplace regimes; developmental states; the global knowledge economy; economic liberalism; changing European societies.

Dr. Mary Benson

My research interests all come under the broad heading of urban sociology. I am particularly interested in changing cityscapes; gentrification; place/ public space; urban exploration; qualitative methods and visual representations. These fields of interest intersect with other topics of interest such as consumption, identity, social class and inequality.

Dr. Delma Byrne

Research interests include social stratification in education and the labour market spanning the primary, second-level and higher education sectors as well as post-secondary education and training; transitions between education and the labour market and the evaluation of educational interventions.

Dr. Brian Conway

Research interests include sociology of religion; collective memory; history of Irish sociology. Current research focuses on examining Catholic public discourses and institutional arrangements, trends and patterns in the Catholic workforce, and religious institutional responses to scandal, all in comparative perspective.

Professor Mary P. Corcoran

Research interests include the Irish migratory experience, urban transformation and change, public culture. She is particularly interested in the fate of the public realm in the face of privatization and monetization trends. Professor Corcoran is currently working at the interface of sociology and art and has collaborated with artist Mary Burke on a number of community engaged projects.

Dr. Eoin Flaherty

I am interested in how patterns of inequality are formed and maintained, and how they change over time. I study these processes with a particular focus on income inequality during the late 20th/early 21st century, and instances of famine during the 19th century (mainly Ireland). I am also interested in how human societies have formed systems of cooperation and managed resources collectively, and whether such systems were resilient to environmental stress. I am also interested in: Top incomes and the 'super-rich', labour's share of national income, time series and pooled time series cross-section analysis. Financialisation, rentiers, and power resources. Famine, common-pool resource systems, primitive

communism, and nineteenth-century Ireland. Complexity theory, human ecology, and environmental sociology.

Professor G. Honor Fagan

Research interests include Human Security, Gender and Development Governance, and Social Sustainability.

Professor Jane Gray

Research and teaching interests include families and households, comparative-historical sociology, life history analysis. Her current research focuses on: life histories and social change in twentieth century Ireland; family and community, gender, household economies and social change.

Professor Aphra Kerr

Research interests focus on technology, media and emergent digital research methods. Current research explores: gender and diversity in digital media; inequality and algorithmic decision making on online platforms; digital citizenship and internet cultures; new forms of virtual work and production. Recent projects have explored digital games production and policy, online community management work, broadcasting and diversity.

Dr. Rebecca King Ó Riain

Research and teaching interests include: globalization, emotions and technology; racial/ethnic beauty pageants; critical race theory; qualitative methods; interracial marriage and multiracial people. Her current research explores globalized interpersonal and interactive forms of bodily culture through skin altering practices in Asia and Europe, beauty pageants, and Asian popular culture (Korean and Japanese dramas).

Dr. Paul Ryan

Research interests revolve around the sociology of personal life specifically the study of the family, sexual citizenship, sex work, gay and lesbian studies, social movements and qualitative research methods.

Dr. Eamonn Slater

Research interests include the structure of modernity, the heritage industry (including tourism), the social construction of landscape and the environment, visual sociology and historical sociology. All of these sociological areas are investigated with a special emphasis on Irish society.

For more information on the Department and on the individual research interests of members of staff please consult our web page at:

<https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/sociology/our-people>

The Politics Degree at Maynooth University

The BA in Politics

This degree allows students to explore the different ways that politics shapes our lives, the various forms that politics takes, and how politics is organised differently around the world. The key distinguishing feature of Politics at Maynooth is that we expand the study of politics beyond the conventional focus on formal political institutions to include political sociology and a distinctive focus on active citizenship. Adding these extra pillars to the politics degree means that the BA Politics at Maynooth includes, but goes beyond, the traditional study of parties and elections to include a much broader variety of aspects of politics (including public opinion, community activism, the media, NGOs, new social movements, trade unions etc.). The three interwoven strands of the course are outlined below.

Political institutions

The study of politics begins with the effort to understand political institutions – the formal mechanisms and instruments employed at local, regional, national and international level, to give expression to the political character of collective (human) groupings. Political institutions are formed by and embedded in specific cultural and historical practices. They reflect both traditional or local sensibilities and important external influences on political ideas and societal organization.

The core courses which you will take will focus on the most important political institutions to be found at local, regional, national and international level, the actors who are most active within them, and the activities which these institutions engage in. These institutions range from local bodies such as Kildare County Council to national institutions such as the Dáil and Oireachtas Committees, to regional groupings such as the European Union, and international organizations such as the United Nations, the IMF and NATO.

The study of political institutions is vital to gaining an understanding of how individuals are represented within different types of political systems. It also reveals much about where power is concentrated in given political settings, and how specific political actors and social

agents interact to produce policy outcomes. We hope that the study of a diverse range of political institutions, from the local to the global, will provide students with a sophisticated understanding of how politics is constituted in the formal sense in different parts of the world.

Political sociology

Political sociology is the study of political inequalities and the connection between political and other forms of inequalities across class, gender and ethnicity. Political sociology is therefore interested in power, who has it and how it is used. It includes a broad range of approaches which study the relationship between politics and society. It studies how underlying social contexts of class, gender and ethnicity impacts on political actors, pressure groups and social movements and how, in turn, politics shapes social structures.

It examines the central issue of how power is distributed between the state and society, how it is institutionalised and how it is exercised. It examines competing definitions of power including traditional theories of elite power, pluralist power and corporatist power as well as theories of informal power including citizenship, participative democracy, social capital and social movements. In exploring the interdependent relationship between the state and society it examines various arguments for the state to have a more minor or more central role in modern societies. The modern evolution of the state and society has been made more complex by globalization and the course examines how globalization might impact on state - society relationships, whether it might, for example, diminish the power of the state, whether it gives rise to new forms of power in the shape of new social movements and how it might impact on citizens capacity to be active shapers of their own environment.

Politics and active citizenship: a study, a practice and a career

This course is aimed towards those interested in the process of politics and active citizenship - creative involvement in political life whether at a community, national or global level. We have a quota for mature students and many students will already be active in this way.

Students are likely to go on to find work in areas such as NGOs, political research, activism, diplomacy and international affairs, journalism, development work, community work, public policy, human rights, or other forms of active involvement. Others again may enter electoral and party politics or the institutions of the European Union. Indeed, quite a number of our BA Politics graduates from recent years are now working for individual TDs/MEPs or political parties in Dublin and/or Brussels.

The second-year "Active citizenship and participation" core module includes a placement element geared towards active engagement in some area of everyday political life. Your dissertation will also often involve you in a degree of practical work, and may well grow out of your placement. Finally, it is planned to organise an extended field trip or summer school in a European city as an elective module which would substitute for one of your final-year

electives (including prior preparation and a subsequent essay). These elements are an invaluable way of gaining practical experience and developing your own direction for political involvement as well as possible future careers.

For students with prior experience, they offer the chance to reflect in a more systematic way on their own everyday practice, and to bring research and theoretical skills to bear on the area. A degree in politics will also provide the knowledge, theories and research skills that will serve students well in any career. The degree equips the graduate with various skills, including the abilities to understand topical issues, to investigate public life through systematic research, to analyse and present information, and to apply these skills to a wide variety of societies around the world.

The course gives you a good overall grounding in key areas of political understanding: active citizenship, formal politics, political theory, political sociology and research methods. You can develop each of these to a greater or lesser extent although you will engage seriously with each pillar of the degree. Each year develops each of these strands within the overall theme of the year.

Third Year - Doing Contemporary Politics

Goal for the Year:

To continue developing your political imagination and skills and to put those skills into practice through designing and operationalising an original political science research project.

Teaching and Learning Formats

There are still a lot of uncertainties about the year ahead. We have done our best here to provide a guide to how we see the teaching in the department operating in the first semester (at least), under current health guidelines.

Please keep a close eye on our '[Blended Learning Hub](#)' on the department website. This will be updated during the year with information regarding various aspects of teaching and learning in the department.

Please follow the information from your lecturers through Moodle and other media particularly closely.

Our overall approach is to provide as much 'content' (lectures, readings etc) as clearly and interestingly as possible and to provide you with plenty of opportunities to discuss the ideas, knowledge and information in each module. In some cases, that will be in-person and in some cases it will be through a variety of online formats.

We have three main formats – Live, Flipped and Remote/Online – and you can find explanations of these different approaches [here](#). For ease of reference it is also reproduced below.

To find out which format will be used in which course you can go [here](#) or consult the (provisional) timetable on the next page.

Given the ongoing health crisis, it is very possible that the mix of courses may change during the semester and affect the format of each module. You will understand that the specifics of some of these factors are confidential and it may not be possible to fully explain changes in format. It is possible that overall we may be able to move to more in-person teaching as the year goes on, but it is also possible that we will shift towards more remote, online teaching and learning, as circumstances change.

While we provide a mix of in-person and online teaching, we also understand that student circumstances vary. In general, please prepare as much as possible for both. However, our approach is also to provide as much back-up as possible for in-person teaching so that students who miss out on some of that teaching will have an online backup to turn to. This includes:

- recording of live lectures (except in the case of discussion oriented or tutorial style sessions);
- provision of other online materials;
- avoiding assessments in class;
- avoiding attendance marks as much as possible (although there may be participation marks, which can be completed online).

If you miss in-person sessions, we can't guarantee that everything will be replaced or replicated online. However, the bulk of the material will be available in some recorded or other online format. There may be technological or other issues that interfere with that from time to time but please bear with us while we do our best to mesh together in-person and online learning.

Further information about tutorials and so on will be available over the coming weeks. However, we hope this gives you a general sense of the department's approach.

We will also make clear before the start of the semester how sub-groups within classes will be allocated (probably on an alphabetical basis) and who your first point of contact in the department should be in case of difficulties. Please don't hesitate to contact the relevant university offices if you think that you could benefit from various supports that the university offers. Every year, many students avail of these supports and they make a huge difference in their university experience

Department of Sociology Timetable

Please refer to the online Timetable for up to date information on venues and times.

<https://apps.maynoothuniversity.ie/timetable/>

Semester 1

28th September 2020 – 18th December 2020

COMPULSORY MODULES:	Credits
PO303A Special Topic Research Project (including Overview lectures Dr. Philip Finn)	5
OPTIONAL MODULES: Select 2 modules from the following group:	
SO311 Sociology of Development Prof. Colin Coulter	5
SO319 Revolutions Dr. Laurence Cox	5
PO311 Politics of Ethnic Conflict Prof. John O'Brennan	5
PO312 Gender and Politics Dr. Pauline Cullen	5
GY337 Geo Politics: Power and Space Prof. Gerry Kearns	5

Semester 2

1st February 2021 – 7th May 2021

COMPULSORY MODULES:	Credits
PO303A Special Topic Research Project	5
PO315 Irish Politics and Society Prof. Mary Murphy	5
OPTIONAL MODULES: Select <u>1</u> module from the following group:	
PO212 Politics in Crisis Dr. Philip Finn	5
PO314 Policies and Policy-Making in the European Union Prof. John O'Brennan	5
SO353 Northern Irish Society (B) Prof. Colin Coulter	5
GY347 Electoral Geography Dr. Adrian Kavanagh	5

Module Descriptions

PO303A Special Topic Research Project: The Special Topic reading and discussion groups provide a forum within which research projects are conceived and executed under the guidance of the group director. There is also a required Special Topics CORE module that runs alongside the PO303A groups.

SO311 Sociology of Development: The Sociology of Development seeks to describe and explain the dramatic and growing inequalities in power and wealth. What it means to be a "developed" society, the ways in which the west has conventionally constructed what is often described as the "third world" and the recent radical transformations at work in the global economy, politics and culture as well as a number of contemporary issues in the field of development studies.

SO319 Revolutions: Revolutions are situations where **society transforms the state**: when (usually) large numbers of people take action together in a (sometimes) successful action to change the nature of the state or (sometimes) do away with the state altogether. Revolutionary situations (whether or not they led to state-level change) have been a regular feature of European history over the last two hundred years, and of world history over the last seventy years or so. The vast majority of contemporary states owe their origin to revolutions, and revolutions continue to change states around the world. This course introduces students to some important modern revolutions in Ireland, Europe and further afield and introduces some of the key ideas in thinking about revolutions, such as what makes a revolutionary situation, the role of the state, popular mobilisation and radicalisation, success and failure in revolutions and the role of revolutionary traditions, and the question of what revolution means today.

PO311 Politics of Ethnic Conflict: This course introduces students to the causes, nature and consequences of ethnic conflict in Europe and the wider world. It aims to familiarize students with the theoretical debates surrounding ethnicity and nationalism in the contemporary world and moves from the general to the particular by introducing a series of case studies which emphasise the importance played by ethnicity in divided societies. Students will thus get the opportunity to compare and test the applicability of different theories of ethnic conflict against 'real world' cases where division has produced inter-ethnic contestation, confrontation and violence. Key case studies to be considered may include: Bosnia, Kosovo, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, and the Basque Country.

PO212 Politics in Crisis

The aim of this module is to interrogate the state of politics in the modern world, and in particular, the decline of the status and legitimacy of political parties, politicians, and political institutions of the modern state. The module will assess the future of democracy in light of the retreat of elites and the decline of interest in mass electoral politics. Case studies

of recent political events, including shifts to populist politics and emerging new forms of political institutions, will be drawn upon to explore the implications of the crisis in politics.

PO312 Gender and Politics: This module will provide an assessment of the key debates about the relation between gender and politics in the Western political tradition. It will explore how gender has shaped and been shaped by key political ideas (including the public-private distinction, the idea of contract, political representation, rights, justice, identity and equality), connections between conceptual debates institutional politics and, more specifically, gender inequality and political representation.

PO314 Policies and Policy-Making in the European Union: This module introduces students to the main policy areas and contentious issues which shape and define the politics of European Integration in the contemporary era. The European Union is a unique actor in international politics and constitutes the key reference point for public policy in its member states. The module introduces and analyses the significance of key EU policy areas such as agriculture, competition and environment policy and how such policies are formulated and implemented. It also evaluates EU Enlargement and Neighbourhood policies and the priorities attached to the Lisbon Agenda and Horizon 2020. It examines the EU budgetary process and how it shapes regional and national politics. It assesses the development of European Monetary Union (EMU) and the challenges faced by the EU in the face of continuing turmoil within the Eurozone and the threats to its very survival. Students also engage with the key modalities of the policy-making process within the EU, how this system has evolved over time, and, in particular at changes which have been wrought by management of successive crises within the Euro-zone. This module will complement and logically follow on (sequentially) from our existing module on EU institutions (The Politics of the European Union, PO305) and provide students with a more nuanced and balanced sense of how the EU functions as a political system.

PO315 Irish Politics and Society: This module focuses on the issues facing contemporary Ireland and seek to enable students apply their basic theoretical knowledge to key political questions and policy problems the world of Irish politics and society experiences today. By using fundamental conceptual and analytical tools used in the discipline to consider such questions the module seeks to enable students to critically analyse the major political questions in Irish society and beyond. Particular attention is paid to how political and social discourse is framed and who frames and sets agendas in Ireland.

GY337 Geo Politics: Power and Space: This course will examine the relations between power and space at a variety of scales. It will have three main areas. First, the Political Geography of Ireland and its place in colonial and postcolonial worlds. Second, the geopolitics of race in the United States. And, finally, the global geopolitics of the Cold War and the New World Order that has replaced it. The central concepts of the course will be scale, race, colonialism, postcolonialism, power, exclusion, and imperialism.

GY347 Electoral Geography: This module introduces students to the key themes and debates in electoral geography and the recent literature in this field. It will offer a cogent argument as to why geography and geographical concepts (such as space and place) matter when it comes to explaining political behaviour and in particular electoral behaviour. This module will draw on examples from the Irish and the international context. Key themes to be covered during this module include:

- Electoral systems and how these are expressed in terms of geographical patterns of support both for "major" political parties and for "minor" parties and the levels of proportionality/disproportionality associated with different political systems;
- How political parties "use geography" to organise themselves and to maximise their representation levels based on current/expected levels of support;
- The shaping of electoral boundaries and how these may impact on the ability of political parties to translate given support levels into parliamentary seat numbers/representation levels, with specific reference to current/past examples of gerrymandering;
- The geographical dimensions of "under representation" in political systems with specific reference to different demographic and social groups (e.g. females, younger voters, working class voters, ethnic minorities) - what are the causes and the implications of this, and what measures can be undertaken to increase the representation of these groups.

SO353 Northern Irish Society

This course sets out to introduce the particular ways in which contemporary Northern Irish society is organised, experienced and represented. In the opening lectures, we examine some of the forms of inter-communal distinction frequently associated with the region and consider whether these are best considered sectarian, ethnic or nationalist. While acknowledging that many of the divisions that defined the Troubles have survived into the era of the peace process, we examine the many ways in which Northern Ireland has changed since the 1998 Good Friday Agreement. In particular, we consider the emergence of a 'peace generation' that has rather more liberal and fluid attitudes towards both personal freedoms and relations between the 'two communities.' We move then to consider a series of other forms of social identity that are often underplayed in mainstream approaches to Northern Irish society. In these lectures, we examine whether the peace process has altered the position of women, reflect on whether Belfast deserves the tag of 'most racist city in Europe' that some commentators have placed on it, and address the experience of those working class communities that bore the brunt of the conflict and now have to deal with the assault of austerity policies initiated at Westminster. The course ends on a (slightly) lighter note by considering how the combination of stasis and change that defines contemporary Northern Ireland finds reflection in recent pop music, television and cinema.

PO303A Special Topic Reading, Discussion and Research Groups

The aim of the special topic thesis is to bring together your learning in the three strands of *Concepts and Theories*, *The Substance of Politics* and *Research Methods and Design* in one capstone project – the final year special topics thesis. The seminars and the Special Topics CORE module (ST CORE) are there to assist you in producing a high-quality undergraduate thesis. You will join one Special Topic reading, discussion and research group from a list of specialist topics.

Seminars begin in week 3 of semester one.

Meeting once a week for one hour in both terms, each of these seminar ST groups will focus on a specific theme or area and will have a staff supervisor. Working within one of these groups during the first semester, you will initially build up your knowledge of the topic by studying a series of key readings set by the group director and you will contribute to the group's discussion of these readings.

At the end of the first semester, and for most of the second semester, the group will provide a forum within which you develop and carry out a research project on a subject that falls within the group's Special Topic area. In this project, the methodological knowledge you have acquired in research courses you took in previous semesters is put to practical use. This is indicated in the descriptions of each of the special topics group themes.

Research projects may be carried out on an individual or a group basis. Decisions on the nature of the projects to be undertaken will be taken by the directors of the groups in consultation with the student group members. The **group director must approve all project topics** and work in progress on the projects must be presented to meetings of the whole group according to arrangements made by the director. **Any project submitted that is not approved and does not fulfil these conditions will not be marked.**

Students should expect to spend approximately 8-10 hours carrying out the empirical research for their special topics thesis. This quantity may vary from group to group, particularly when groups involve collaborative research or collective data collection.

As a guide, this would translate into approximately:

10-15 hours of document study

8-10 hours of participant observation;

8-10 semi-structured interviews; or,

40-50 surveys.

Students will receive further guidance on the research requirements from the special topics group directors.

Each group will meet throughout the year (two semesters) at the same time. It is **your** responsibility to make sure that your group's meeting time does not clash with required courses in other Departments in either the first or the second semester.

Each group will meet throughout the year (two semesters) at the same time. It is **your** responsibility to make sure that your group's meeting time does not clash with required courses in other Departments in either the first or the second semester.

Sign-up for workshop times will be done through the PO303A module Moodle site, on a **first-come, first-served basis**. Details on group meeting times are available on the SO303A Moodle site. Please also ensure that you attend lectures and monitor the departmental website and notice boards for further information;

- 1) **PO303A group sign-up will commence on the PO303A Moodle site on WEDNESDAY 30th September at 10am and run until 12 noon on MONDAY 5th of October 2020;**
- 2) All registered PO303A students should automatically have access to the module's Moodle page; **if you haven't finalised your registration by the time the sign-up process gets under way, please contact the Sociology Department office.** Once the sign-up process concludes, you cannot change out of your selected group;
- 3) The groups will commence the week beginning **Monday 12th October 2020.**

Please note that at registration you will register for PO303A Special Topic Research Project no matter what specific group you are in. This is the only Third Year Sociology module that is not completed within a single semester and your Special Topic mark has three components.

- 1) A research proposal with a preliminary literature review (Minimum of 10 sources and a maximum of 2,000 words) is due on Thursday, 17th December 2020. This is worth 25% of total marks.
- 2) The research project, which is due on Thursday 22nd April 2021. This is worth 65% of the total marks.
- 3) 10% is awarded for attendance and participation in the seminars AND the ST CORE module. The directors in all of the groups will keep a record of attendance and attendance will be taken in the ST CORE module.

Ethical issues

- You should also make reference where appropriate to the ethical guidelines of the Sociological Association of Ireland and Maynooth University and how they inform your research. You are expected to explicitly discuss the ethical issues specific to the topic of your research.
- Students are not allowed to carry out research directly with people under 18 years old or any person/s deemed to be vulnerable in any way.
- **You cannot begin data collection until you receive ethical approval from your Special Topics Leader/Supervisor.**

Special Topic Groups 2020/2021

Please choose one of the following special topic groups.

Personal troubles: Public Issues: who decides? - Prof Mary Murphy

We use our sociological or political imagination to distinguish between personal troubles and public issues (Mills 1967). A *trouble* is a private matter while *issues* have to do with institutions of society and their failings or crisis. To hide such failures governments often present *public issues* such as homelessness, unemployment, poverty, or inequality as *private troubles* and the fault of individuals rather than outcomes of structural or political arrangements. We are interested in how the sociological and political imagination can open up spaces to reframe troubles to issues, leading to social change.

In this special topic group students are invited to use their sociological and political imaginations to consider how certain topics and public issues are framed and who defines how they are understood. Each student will be invited to select a particular issue as a case study for their dissertation. Using a power-systems analysis the group will explore the interaction of ideas, interests and institutions in influencing different stages of the policy cycle. We explore how different issues are or are not framed as public policies, and who frames them, or suppresses issues emerging as public policy problems.

This special topic is structured to help students identify the main ways public or social policy is constructed, to formulate relevant research questions about their chosen field and to devise appropriate methodological strategies to help answer those research questions. The emphasis is on active learning which blends discussion on public policy with practical group and individual support to assist students to research and write their special topic dissertation.

Social Movements - Dr Laurence Cox

Social movements are a crucial dimension of contemporary society, in Ireland and globally. Black Lives Matter, strikes, climate justice struggles, housing conflicts, anti-racist activism, pro-choice organising, the water charges movement, marriage equality activism and many more show us ordinary people seeking to assert power from below in the face of corporate wealth, state power and cultural hierarchies. Social movements have been defined as networks of formal organisations, informal groups and individuals engaged in political or cultural conflict around the shape of society. In this special topic group you will work on one such movement or movement organisation, looking at questions like who gets involved – and who doesn't; how activism connects to the needs and everyday lives of its participants; processes of movement formation and development; the strategies that movements pursue in alliance and conflict with other social actors; movement cultures and discourses. You will be supported to identify research methods which are appropriate to your choice of group or movement and workable within the current virus situation.

Ireland since the crash – Prof Colin Coulter

As the century turned, the Irish Republic was lauded widely as an exemplar of how small, previously underdeveloped states might reach the promised land of national prosperity. Within a few years, however, a country that was once a 'poster child' for capitalist globalisation would come to be seen as a cautionary tale for those tempted to tread the same neoliberal path. The global economic crash heralded most dramatically by the collapse of Lehman Brothers in September 2008 had rather more severe consequences for Ireland than most other western societies. The scale of the country's fall from grace was indexed in spiraling levels of unemployment, emigration and national debt not seen since the sour times of the 1980s. In this seminar programme, we will take a critical look at how Irish society has changed since the onset of the global economic recession. We will examine some of the debates that attended the Celtic Tiger era before turning to consider the ways in which the austerity measures introduced since that era of boom turned to bust have been represented, experienced and contested. The series will then turn to consider the recent claims that Ireland has 'turned a corner' into a period of 'recovery' before concluding by addressing what impact the global pandemic might have on the immediate future of the Irish Republic. It is hoped that the programme will offer a critical and engaging perspective on the nature of social change in a country that has, more than almost any other, reflected the promise and peril at the heart of late capitalism.

Assessment

Details of assessment will be provided through modules with an overview on the website in due course.

Key Dates

Mon Sept 28	Lectures commence
Wednesday 30 th	PO303A group sign-up commence on the PO303A Moodle site on WEDNESDAY 30 th September at 10am and run until 12 noon on MONDAY 5th October 2020.
Mon Oct 12 (week beginning)	Special Topic groups start meeting
Mon Oct 26 – Fri 30 Oct	Study week
Thurs Dec 17	Special Topic Assignment due
Fri 18 Dec	Conclusion of first semester classes

Mon Feb 1, 2020	Semester 2 Lectures commence
Mon March 15 – Fri March 19	Study week
Mon April 5 – Friday April 9 (Friday 2 April Good Friday – no classes)	Easter Vacation
Thurs April 22	Special Topic Research Project due
Fri May 7	Conclusion of second semester classes

Consultation

It is vital that we are made aware, as soon as possible of any difficulties you may have in relation to your work or with any aspect of the third-year programme. If you have a problem or question which relates generally to the third-year programme, or to your participation in it, please contact the third year co-ordinator Professor John O' Brennan (john.obrennan@mu.ie)

If you have a query in relation to a particular lecture course, please contact the lecturer who is giving that course. Staff members are available for consultation at various hours during each week of term. It is difficult to hold regular in person office hours during these times but staff will post contact times on the module Moodle sites. Alternatively, you may make an appointment by email or by contacting Áine Edmonds or Trish Connerty, Sociology Department, Room 1.5, The Auxilia Building, Tel: 708-3659.

In addition to consulting with individual lecturers or the second year administrator, students may communicate with the Sociology Department through the Staff Student Consultative Committee. The purpose of this body is to provide a forum where the concerns and interests of students can be raised. The committee consists of the staff year co-ordinators and student representatives of the various years who will be elected by students after the beginning of term.

Should you wish to raise a matter at the Staff-Student Consultative Committee you can do so in the following ways:

1. Talk to the staff member who has administrative responsibility for third year (Professor John O' Brennan)
2. Talk to your third year student representative after he or she is elected.

For more information on contacting staff in the department and university, please go to: <https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/sociology/blendedlearninghub>

And click on the *Who Should I Contact?* tab

Communications

It is assumed that you will 'attend' your module in some form on a consistent basis, whether that is in person or online (and this will vary from module to module). It is also assumed that you will check the relevant departmental webpages once every two or three days.

You are responsible for familiarising yourself with announcements or notices provided during periods of time that are absent from class or from campus. It is assumed that you

check your MUMAIL email account every two to three days (even if you primarily use another email account) and that you check module Moodle sites regularly.

All Lecturer and Department announcements go to your Maynooth University email account only. Please make sure that you check your Maynooth University email account every two to three days (even if you primarily use another email account). Please also enable your Moodle account to receive messages from the sociology department and check your module Moodle sites regularly.

You are responsible for keeping up to date with announcements or notices provided during periods of time that you are absent from class or from campus.

Support Services

Maynooth University provides a wide range of support services to its students. A document listing and describing these services can be accessed through the Undergraduate Students page of the [Department's website](#) or by searching the Maynooth website.

Deadlines, Late Work and Penalties

We understand that students will face multiple challenges this year and we will do whatever we can to facilitate your completion of all your work and your programme as a whole. However, our approach is to work to the programme deadlines, more or less as usual, and then provide accommodations and supports as needed. Otherwise it will become very difficult to manage all the competing demands on your studies. We encourage you to manage your schedule of assessment, as well as of teaching and learning, very carefully. We will provide resources at the Blended Learning Hub to help you do this.

Our overall policy is as follows.

Where applicable, the following penalties apply. If coursework is submitted late, 10 marks will be deducted. No coursework will be accepted 14 calendar days after the deadline. Please provide a medical certificate covering the relevant period or explain the other extenuating circumstances. These should generally be communicated to, and accepted by, the lecturer/tutor prior to, or immediately after, the relevant deadline. Please note that work submitted after the deadline may not receive individual feedback from the lecturer concerned.

Requirements for Autumn Supplemental Examination

Details of Autumn resit assessment will be provided during the year, depending on the changing circumstances. However, the basic principles will remain that assessment completed during the year can be carried forward towards the resits.

Essay assessment

The main criteria in assessing an essay are:

- level of understanding of the issue
- number of readings and the use which is made of such readings
- logical development of the discussion
- awareness and discussion of alternative arguments or viewpoints
- clarity of the writing and citation style.

A first-class essay or paper will show an excellent understanding of the issue; demonstrate an ability to use analytical reasoning; mobilise a good range of readings; and it will be written in a clear and concise style. An essay will fail if it does not address the question; reveals a fundamental lack of understanding of the issue; or is based on far too limited a range of readings.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism involves an attempt to use an element of another person's work, without appropriate acknowledgement in order to gain academic credit. It may include the unacknowledged verbatim reproduction of material, unsanctioned collusion, but is not limited to these matters; it may also include the unacknowledged adoption of an argumentative structure, or the unacknowledged use of a source or of research materials.

For example, when you directly copy another person's text without placing it in quotation marks and without acknowledging the source, you are plagiarising. The same is true when you present someone else's original idea, research or argument as though it were your own.

Plagiarism is strictly forbidden. It reveals an unwillingness to think for oneself and is both unethical and illegal under copyright laws. Please do not make the mistake of assuming that we won't recognise plagiarised material – we know how to use Google too. It is almost always possible to identify text that has been professionally copy-edited, or is different in

style from your own. The direct copying of passages (including illustrations) from a book, an article or the Internet without adequate references is a serious breach of academic trust and practice. Submitting essays or projects written by anyone other than yourself will also result in heavy penalties – including receiving a 0 (zero). As your final assessment is partly based on written assignments, plagiarism is equivalent to cheating at examinations.

Maynooth University considers plagiarism to be a serious academic misconduct, deserving of academic penalties. This document sets out the procedures for dealing with cases of plagiarism or suspected plagiarism in taught programmes of the University.

The Department of Sociology operates an “early warning” system. If a student is suspected of plagiarism, the student is required to meet with the appropriate lecturer to discuss the problem. If this is a first instance, the student will receive a warning but will be allowed to resubmit their work.

Second and subsequent instances of this kind will be dealt with strictly in accordance with the procedures outlined in the Maynooth University Policy on Plagiarism.

The Maynooth University policy guidelines on plagiarism are available at:

https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/sites/default/files/assets/document/MU%20Policy%20on%20Plagiarism%20Updated%20July%202019_0.pdf

You should note that when you submit work you sign a cover sheet statement that this work is original and does not constitute plagiarism under the Maynooth University Policy on Plagiarism. Any thesis found to be plagiarized in part or whole will be given a mark of zero (0).

Guidelines for citation

Books and articles read by you and referred to in your essay must be cited both in the essay itself and in the list of references at the end. **Only include in your list of references material you have read yourself and have referred to in your essay.** The usual procedure in sociology is to integrate references into the text itself, not put them as footnotes or endnotes etc.

Citations in the text include the last names of the authors and year of publication. Include page numbers when you quote directly from a work or refer to specific passages. Identify subsequent citations of the same source in the same way as the first. Examples follow:

- If **author's name** is in the text, follow it with the publication year in parentheses: ...in another study by Duncan (1959).
- If **author's name** is not in the text, enclose the last name and publication year in parentheses: ...whenever it occurred (Gouldner 1963).
- **Pagination** follows year of publication after a colon; omit the space between the colon and the page number: Kuhn (1970:71)
- Give both last names for **Joint Authors**: (Martin and Bailey 1988).

Quotations in the text begin and end with quotation marks; the author, date, and/or page numbers follow the end-quote and precede the full-stop:

Wright and Jacobs (1994) found that "the variation in men's earnings relative to their peers in the labour force was not a reliable predictor of men's flight from feminising occupations" (p. 531). [Please note where the full stop is put.]

OR

One study found that "the variation in men's earnings relative to their peers in the labour force was not a reliable predictor of men's flight from feminising occupations" (Wright and Jacobs 1994:531).

Longer quotations are often called Block Quotations and are set off in a separate, indented paragraph. Block quotations should not be enclosed in quotation marks:

As stated by Wright and Jacobs (1994):

The variation in men's earnings relative to their peers in the labour force was not a reliable predictor of men's attrition. This finding is inconsistent with the prediction that declines in earnings are responsible for male flight from feminising occupations (p. 531).

A FULL GUIDE IS AVAILABLE ALONGSIDE THE HANDBOOKS IN THE UNDERGRADUATES SECTION OF OUR WEBSITE.

The Department has prepared specific guidelines for citation please see here:

https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/sites/default/files/assets/document/ASA%20Referencing%20Guide%20for%20MU%20Studentsfinal_0.pdf

You may also find the library helpful in finding, using and citing sociological resources. They also have printers, laptops and other helpful resources on avoiding plagiarism.

USEFUL LINKS:

Library homepage: <https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/library>

Sociology library guide: <http://nuim.libguides.com/sociology>

LIST online: <http://nuim.libguides.com/list-online>

Undergraduate library contact: Áine Carey, aine.carey@mu.ie & Niall O'Brien

Venues and Location, Maynooth University

A comprehensive list of all classroom locations and venues, including timetable codes, can be found at:

<https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/campus-services/theatres-classhalls-av-equipment>

Experiential Learning

The routes available to Maynooth students to experience more from their degree programme are diverse, enabling the development of rich learning experiences that connect classroom content with real-world experience. The Experiential Learning Office connects Maynooth students to a range of opportunities in the following areas.

Professional Development and Employability

Experiential learning professional development and employability modules are available to eligible second year students. The key purpose of these modules, involving a number of employers, is to facilitate students in their academic, personal and professional career development, so that they will be well equipped to secure internships and to successfully enter the graduate labour market.

See Skills for Success EX201 and EX202 for more details

Community Based Service Learning

Community Based Service Learning presents a credit-bearing academic experience that empowers students to engage with their surrounding communities, which often results in enhancing student's academic, civic, social and personal development, whilst they contribute to the common good. The experiential learning office facilitates academic staff in offering community-based service learning experiences with their students.

For further information, refer to:

Website: <https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/experiential-learning-office>

Email: Aisling.Flynn@mu.ie

Tel: + 353 1 4747760