

## BA (Hons) Social and Political Studies

### ABOUT THE COURSE

This is a **three-year full time**, or **six-year part time**, undergraduate course.

This degree course aims to equip students with a critical understanding of the core concepts, theories and approaches underpinning the study of society and social change. Students will develop the skills and knowledge necessary for social analysis and active engagement – as critical citizens – with social, political and economic issues. The course will be of particular interest to those who want not just to understand and analyse society, but who also want to work towards changing it for the better. Many students are involved in social and political activism of various kinds.

If you are a full-time student you will study two subject modules per term. There are 5 taught contact hours per module per week. We normally teach each module over one day. For example Module 1 Monday 10.00-1pm and 2-4pm and Module 2 Wednesday 10.00-1pm and 2-4pm.

If you are a part-time student you will study one module per term.

### Overall Course Aims

- Develop your depth of knowledge and analytical skills appropriate to each level of study, building progressively from level one through to level three.
- Equip you with the personal and professional skills, knowledge and confidence to succeed in graduate employment or at post-graduate study.
- Develop your capacity for independent judgement, particularly in undertaking independent study and research.
- Develop your comprehension and capacity to analyse social, political and economic issues and to appreciate the relationship between theory and practice in research, policymaking and social/political activism.
- Enable you to apply different theoretical perspectives critically to the analysis of social, political and economic problems and debate in widely different contexts.
- Empower you with the motivation and independent thinking and learning skills to enable you to become a lifelong autonomous learner and active citizen.

### WHAT WILL I STUDY ON THIS COURSE?

#### YEAR 1 (CERTIFICATE OF HIGHER EDUCATION, CertHE)

#### Food for Thought

This module is intended to complement the 'Skills for Social Science' module which runs alongside it. It introduces certain general concepts prominent in contemporary social science, via

### VALIDATION



The course is validated by The Open University.

### ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

All candidates must be able to satisfy the general admissions requirements for Ruskin College.

If you have a Certificate of Higher Education or 120 credits in a relevant subject you may be eligible for direct entry onto Level 5. Please contact Hannah on 01865 759604 for further information. Similarly, if you have a Diploma of Higher Education or 240 Credits in a relevant subject you may be eligible for direct entry onto Level 6 of this course.

### COURSE DATES

This course starts in September. Applications close 15th August.

### CAREERS

Destinations and Progression Opportunities

- Work for NGOs such as Oxfam, Asylum Welcome, Age Concern
- Return to previous careers in care, housing or social services in advanced (managerial) positions
- Embark upon postgraduate research
- Pursue careers in teaching (via PGCE) and lecturing
- Work for NGOs such as Oxfam, Asylum Welcome, Age Concern
- Return to previous careers in care, housing or social services in advanced (managerial) positions

Progression Opportunities within Ruskin College

- MA ILTUS
- MA Women's Studies
- MA Public History

### STAFF

Dr Peter Dwyer  
Dr Louise Livesey  
Dr Ed Rooksby

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the organising theme of food. This theme provides a framework through which you will present and examine the general concepts of production, consumption and trade/exchange, with particular reference to class, gender and ethnicity.

It highlights the specific ways in which these concepts and relations are used and examined in Economics, Sociology and Political Science. This interdisciplinary module is intended to prepare the ground for a more discipline-specific focus on these concepts in the subsequent Introductions to Sociology, Economics and Politics.

### Skills for Social Sciences

The aim of this module is to introduce students to the skills of social science including transferable skills, conceptual tools and methods. It will be grounded in the disciplines of Sociology, Economics and Politics, but will concentrate on the common elements shared by all of the Social Sciences. As an interdisciplinary foundation module, it will provide an introduction to the specific methodologies of the three main social science disciplines, and lay the foundation for the subject specific modules that follow in terms 2 and 3

These skills complement the 'seminar' part of the Food for Thought module, where presentation and group-work skills are developed through practical exercises. In the spring and summer terms the skills acquired in this module become progressively student-led and will be applied and developed through your work in the other modules.

### Introduction to Sociology

This module builds on your understanding of the key concepts and the nature of social scientific understanding and research skills introduced in the 'Food for Thought' and 'Skills for Social Science' modules.

You will be introduced to the theories of Marx, Durkheim and Weber and to the competing sociological perspectives to which they gave rise. You will apply and examine these perspectives for their respective strengths and weaknesses in the empirical field of social inequality.

### Introduction to Politics

This module offers you an introduction to the study of politics. Drawing on the themes, concepts and skills developed in Food for Thought and Skills for Social Science. During the first half of this module you will explore further key political concepts and their role and interpretation in classical political ideologies (e.g. liberalism, conservatism, socialism, environmentalism, fundamentalism). During the second half of this module you will be introduced to the study of political actors and institutions and the changing nature of relationships between them.

### HOW TO APPLY FOR THIS COURSE

You can apply for courses online via the Ruskin College website or you can download a pdf of our application form. Send printed application forms to: Academic Registrar, Ruskin College, Ruskin Hall, Dunstan Road, Old Headington, Oxford, OX3 9BZ

You can request a hard copy of the application form to be sent to you by contacting Reception at Ruskin Hall on 01865 759600 or email [enquiries@ruskin.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@ruskin.ac.uk)

When filling in the application form please ensure that you complete the personal statement section in full and ensure that you include the contact details of two references. Incomplete applications will be returned.

You may also apply for this course online through UCAS ([www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)) The UCAS course code is L001.

### FUNDING YOUR STUDIES

Funding is available from Student Finance England if you live in England ([www.gov.uk/studentfinance](http://www.gov.uk/studentfinance), 0845 300 5090). If you live in other parts of the UK please contact Student Finance Wales, Student Finance Northern Ireland or the Student Award Agency for Scotland. International students will be responsible for the payment of their own tuition fees.

Further information on funding can be found in our fees and funding support sections on the website: [www.ruskin.ac.uk](http://www.ruskin.ac.uk)

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact Hannah on 01865 759604 or email [enquiries@ruskin.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@ruskin.ac.uk)

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### **Economy and Society**

This module introduces you to the basic principles of Economics. With some reference to the theme of food introduced in the 'Food for Thought' module during the Autumn Term, it focuses on the concepts of production, consumption and exchange.

You will identify the distinctive approach adopted by Economics, as well as the different traditions of economic thought – in particular the neoclassical and Keynesian approaches and begin to explore new economic ideas.

### **Independent Studies**

This module allows you to explore a topic of your own choice in some more depth over the course of the Summer Term. Where previous coursework will have been based around tasks and questions set by tutors, here you have the opportunity – in negotiation with an allocated supervisor - to shape your own interests into a manageable research topic.

The main aim of the module is to develop and sharpen your independent learning and research skills, with 'research' here meaning a structured exploration of an agreed topic (rather than research based on empirical fieldwork).

## **YEAR 2 (DIPLOMA OF HIGHER EDUCATION, DipHE, LEVEL 5)**

### **Work, Employment and Economic Change**

This module is designed to introduce students to the changes in the character of work and employment brought about by the forces of globalisation. It builds on the first year Economy and Society module by giving basic economic concepts – demand, supply and price of labour – a more detailed and applied focus. But whereas the categories of the orthodox economics framework inadequately reflect the transformations of labour brought about by the forces of globalisation, 'Work, Employment and Economic Change' examines the various theoretical responses to this.

In order to enable students to understand and evaluate current debates and controversies, the module examines different theoretical perspectives on work, employment and the working of labour markets (Classical Political Economy, Neo-classical Economics and Marxist Political Economy).

### **Campaigning on Race Class and Gender**

This module draws together the sometimes disparate strands of thinking around labour and women's history in order to provide students with a course which develops concepts of class and gender. This module both builds on our students' interest in the lives of 'ordinary people' and the college's mission.

Based on 20th century Britain it draws on students' own

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experiences and provides opportunity for further interrogation of contested historical ideas. Emphasis is placed upon the reading and use of contemporary materials, including those in the Ruskin college archive and papers and material in the Bodleian. The Module emphasises social change and social activism. It is taught with BA History with Social Science students as an interdisciplinary module.

### **Research Methods in the Social Sciences**

This module is designed to provide you with a broad and critical understanding of methodology and research methods. It also prepares you for term three, by providing the framework for developing a small research proposal of your own. This research proposal could be used as the basis for actual research in the Independent Studies Module.

### **Europe in a Changing World**

This module aims to examine the politics of globalisation and regionalisation by looking at these processes in a European context. The focus here will be on the growth, development and the crises of the European Union as both a challenge to the sovereignty and autonomy of traditional political actors (the nation-state) and – at the same time – a conscious response by European nation-states to the much wider challenges of globalisation.

Although arguably a unique political project, the European Union provides a fascinating case study of the two main strategies for overcoming traditional nation-state politics: 'intergovernmentalism' and 'supranationalism'. In this module you will examine the risks and opportunities linked to both strategies and investigate what the Europeanisation of an increasing number of policy areas means for the member states, their regions and the world outside of Europe.

### **Social Change in a Globalising World**

This module is directly concerned with the nature and meaning of social change, taking a broad overview of major social transformations and a critical evaluation of theories and concepts used to analyse and understand them. By tracing the transition from 'traditional' to 'modern' society it is intended to provide students with a broad socio-historical dimension.

Examining the broad sweep of this transition, students are able to historically 'ground' both contemporary political, economic and social institutions and the social sciences themselves. In this sense, the module provides some integration across the three main disciplines within the BA. As well as this historical breadth, the module widens the sociological scope of analysis to incorporate contemporary global processes and assess their impact on social institutions.

### **Independent Studies II**

Building on your skills developed in the Independent Studies module in the first year and the background and training provided in the

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Research Methods module in term 1 of this year, this module allows you to pursue a topic of your own choice in greater depth over the course of the Summer Term.

The main aim of the first year project was to develop your independent study and basic research skills and to provide you with an experience of developing a research question. This year the emphasis shifts more towards the academic content of the resulting essay.

Where your previous coursework will have been based around tasks and questions set by tutors, here you have the opportunity – in negotiation with an allocated supervisor - to shape your own interests into a manageable research topic.

The main aim of the module is to develop and sharpen your independent learning and research skills, with 'research' here meaning a structured exploration of an agreed topic (rather than research based on empirical fieldwork).

### **YEAR 3 (BA (HONS), LEVEL 6)**

#### **The Sociology of Time and Space**

This module builds directly upon the Sociology elements of the first two years of the course. The focus shifts to contemporary sociological research and the relationship between social actors, time and space

The ideas which are examined here are crucially examined through the theoretical perspectives already established in other modules. Of particular interest are power and resistance and organising activism in new forms of time and space.

#### **Contemporary Political Theory**

Over the course of the 20th Century, the increasing speed and intensity of globalisation have shaken the foundations of 'safe' Western assumptions about the nature of politics: the sovereignty of the modern nation-state is challenged from above by the powerful trans-national corporations and the emergence of a global political system, and from below by a crisis of legitimacy brought on by declining confidence and interest in parliamentary and party-politics and the emergence of new social movements.

At the same time, mass-migration from the Global South has unmasked the fiction of a world divided into ethnically homogenous 'nations', while the economic success of the far East and the relative decline of the West cast doubt over our limited notion of 'progress' and the often uncritically assumed link between capitalism and democracy. Developments after 9/11 and the re-emergence of religious fundamentalisms in the sphere of politics have demonstrated that we have neither reached the 'end of history' nor the 'end of ideology' (Fukuyama, 1992).

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Building on the foundations laid in the previous politics years, this module investigates how political theory over the last fifty-odd years has interpreted these developments and responded to the resulting challenges to our understanding of the state and its role, the notion of citizenship and the politics of community and identity in Western Advanced Industrial Societies. The aim here is to discover what is and what is not 'new'

### **Radical Political Economy**

This module is a logical development of the Economics modules of the first two years of the course. It builds on the elementary principles of Economics to which students were initially introduced and the application of some of those to contemporary issues of employment and labour markets developed in year 2.

In the context of contemporary challenges to 'orthodox' modes of analysis and thinking, it introduces students to 'alternative', radical currents of political economy (covering how and what to produce, the nature of work, and the relation of economic activity to the environment). These currents, insofar as they represent a critique of orthodox Economics in the name of a broader political economy, have recast the terms of reference of study and research in an important area of the social sciences.

Starting from the critique made of orthodox economic principles, it explores the methodology of the radical alternatives, enabling students to deepen their understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of mainstream and alternative approaches.

### **Development Studies**

This module takes up 'development' issues that have arisen in previous modules around the broad theme of global social change. The issues of employment, the environment, poverty and inequality; international organisations and models of governance are examined in the context of a globally integrated political economy.

Reflecting the roots of development studies in Sociology, Politics and Economics, this module offers an interdisciplinary approach, emphasising the variety of models, concepts and research strategies used. It considers radical alternatives (World Social Forum, etc) to the dominant paradigms of growth and development promulgated by the IMF, World Bank, WTO.

### **Dissertation**

Building on the Independent Studies modules from years one and two, as well as the research methods course during year two, the aim of this module is to enable you to pursue a more substantive research project of your own choosing and design.

Topics here may be developed from subjects covered in the course so far, or drawn from any area of sociological, political or economic debate, or indeed any suitable combination of these. The topics must be negotiated with your supervising tutor.

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### **Subject Knowledge and Understanding**

Having successfully completed the course you will be able to:

- Demonstrate a systematic understanding of the contribution each of the three disciplines makes to the study of the causes and consequences of social change
- Demonstrate a critical appreciation of the contested nature of key concepts and theories in the social sciences
- Critically engage with advanced and contemporary scholarship in defined fields of study
- Systematically acquire detailed knowledge of defined areas of study
- Defend your choice of research method (or approach) to given research problems
- Show a critical appreciation of the limitations and problems related to the generation of empirical evidence

### **Creative and Cognitive Skills**

Having successfully completed this course you will be able to:

- Develop and sustain coherent social scientific arguments
- Independently define and negotiate a valid research problem
- Systematically acquire detailed knowledge of a defined field of study
- Demonstrate a critical appreciation of the limitations of social scientific arguments and knowledge

### **Key Skills**

Having successfully completed this course you will be able to:

- Demonstrate initiative in managing your learning process
- Collaborate constructively with others
- Communicate ideas and arguments effectively in written and oral forms to different audiences
- Reflect critically on your own academic strengths and weaknesses
- Effectively plan and manage longer-term projects

### **HOW WILL I LEARN AND BE TAUGHT ON THIS COURSE?**

On each module you will meet as a whole group for five hours per week. There are 5 taught contact hours per module per week. We normally teach each module over one day. For example Module 1 Monday 10.00-1pm and 2-4pm and Module 2 Wednesday 10.00-1pm and 2-4pm. The teaching methods employed vary according to the content and aims of the session.

A typical session will make use of a mix of different methods – e.g. mini-lecture, pair- or group-work, learning checks, tutor- or student-led discussion – in order to accommodate different learning styles. In the Autumn of the first year a whole module - Skills for Social

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Science - is dedicated to study skills training to help you become an independent learner.

While the explicit study skills strand is geared towards the formative and summative assessment tasks ahead (e.g. reading, note-taking, essay-writing, referencing, exam techniques), the second – implicit – ‘seminar’ strand aims to develop your presentation skills, group-work, independent learning and student-led discussion in a non-assessed format.

The integration of dedicated study-skills elements during the first year is crucial to easing your return to formal education. In addition to skills teaching and development built into the curriculum, you – like all students – are encouraged to make use of the additional learning support available to you at Ruskin.

During the second and third years, you are expected and encouraged to take an increasingly proactive and independent part in your learning, with tutor-led delivery being scaled down in relation to student-centred activities. During years two and three, only the Independent Studies and Dissertation modules are accompanied by scheduled individual tutorials. During the third year much of the discussion and learning will centre on your individual plan of work.

Beyond the timetabled formal teaching sessions, you will be positively encouraged to form and attend formal and informal study groups in which you can discuss course content, ideas and the wider process of studying. Most of Ruskin’s students are residential and discuss issues informally.

In summary, the main teaching and learning methods adopted across the modules are:

- Tutor-led mini-lectures introducing theoretical, conceptual and methodological issues and debates
- Tutor-led seminars allowing you to engage with, contextualise and examine social scientific sources (texts and/or data) individually and in small groups. These sessions become increasingly student led as the course progresses to years two and three
- Tutorials, initially tutor-led but becoming increasingly student-led as the course progresses to years two and three
- Student-centred activities (defined individual, pair- and group-work tasks; presentations)
- Student-led discussion and (during years two and three) delivery of content

Within these methods a range of strategies are adopted including:

- Critical engagement with written sources and data
- Structured discussion exercises
- Session summaries and feedback

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- Mini-tests and learning checks
- Library- and web-based research exercises
- Guest lectures as part of the tutor-delivered content
- Group and peer critiques and marking exercises
- Student-led individual and group presentations
- Guides to study skills (e.g. self-directed study, giving and receiving critical feedback, reviewing, editing and proofing work, summarising, time management, research and presentation skills)

Teaching aids and materials vary according to the aims and content of each session, but may include a range of the following: handouts on the delivered content (theories and models), set readings with guiding questions, short stimulus materials (e.g. short audio- and visual materials, news-clips, data, articles), longer background videos/DVDs on specific topics. All teaching rooms are equipped with teaching aids such as whiteboards, flip-chart with Power-Point projectors and wireless access to the internet available at tutor- or student-request.