SOCIOLOGY 2A:
THINKING SOCIOLOGICALLY

Monday, 14.10 – 15.00
Lecture Theatre C, David Hume Tower
Lecture Theatres

Thursday, 14.10 – 15.00
Lecture Theatre B, David Hume Tower
Lecture Theatres
### University of Edinburgh
School of Social & Political Science
Sociology
2019 - 2020

**Sociology 2A: Thinking Sociologically**
SCIL08012

Semester 1, Year 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Information</th>
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Thursdays 14.10-15.00  
**Lecture Theatre B, David Hume Tower Lecture Theatres** |
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| **Assessment Deadlines** | Essay due: 12 noon, Monday, 28 October, 2019  
Take-home Paper – 2 short exam style essays: **Posted on Learn 2 December**, Submission deadline 12 noon, 11 December |
# Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Key Information</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aims and Objectives</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Outcomes</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Methods</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lectures</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture Recording</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutorials</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring Attendance and Engagement</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutorial Participation</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay Topics</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take-home Paper</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Course Result</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resits</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociology 2A Prize</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjustment schedules- student absence/ illness</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication and Feedback</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Materials and Resource List</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERASMUS Exchanges</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture Summary</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Lectures and Readings</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutorial Topics and Schedules</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 1: Example Take-Home Paper Questions and Guidance</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 2: General Information</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with Disabilities</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Resources for Undergraduates</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Language Support</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussing Sensitive Topics</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexist, Racist and Disablist Language</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutorial Allocation</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance Monitoring</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Examiner</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 3: Coursework Submission and Penalties</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penalties that can be applied to your work and how to avoid them</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELMA: Submission and Return of Coursework</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extensions</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidance on how to avoid academic misconduct (including plagiarism)</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Protection Guidance for Students</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Aims and Objectives

- To provide continuity and contrast with the material taught in Sociology 1.
- To extend the theoretical depth of Sociology 1.
- To provide a basis for entry to Honours in Sociology, through the presentation of topics and theories that students will meet encounter in further study, such as debates around globalization, agency and social stratification.
- To provide an interesting and useful stand-alone course for students not intending to pursue Honours Sociology.
- To draw upon the Department’s sociological and pedagogic strengths in a way that is appropriate at 2nd year level.
- To deliver a course, using a variety of teaching approaches that will not only raise interest amongst students; but also introduce topics of theoretical significance in contemporary sociology.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students should:

- understand and be able to participate in key debates in sociology about core theoretical questions
- understand the strengths and weaknesses of different theoretical approaches
- have learned how empirical research in sociology is informed and shaped by theoretical questions
- be able to place debates about matters of current social interest into a theoretical and comparative framework
- be able to read and interpret tables containing simple descriptive statistics relating to everyday matters of one or more societies
- be able to present their ideas clearly and concisely to their peers, using reading and presentational materials appropriate to the topic.

Teaching Methods

Lectures

There are two 50 minute lectures every week in Weeks 1-10 of Semester 1:

- Mondays 14.10 – 15.00 in Lecture Theatre C, David Hume Tower Lecture Theatres
- Thursdays 14.10 – 15.00 in Lecture Theatre B, David Hume Tower Lecture Theatres.

Lecture Recording

Please note that we will not be recording lectures on this course. This may perplex and annoy some of you as the big signs and huge green button are clearly visible in all lecture theatres. We also know that some other courses are now recording lectures. We are not recording lectures for a number of reasons: firstly, and most practically, the technology is very new and the university is still in the process of working out their policies about storage and use of recordings. The research on whether recorded lectures help or retard student learning is also mixed. A detailed discussion of the key issues may be found here: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1KDOuODI-7KFMq7Ik8jmxbP3HUAy_sjHVW11UHJ6rPo/edit?usp=sharing

Students are free to audio-record lectures for personal use. Slides are posted on Learn for those that miss a lecture. If there are any aspects of the lecture that you are unclear
about (whether you were there or not) please make use of the support available. If something is unclear, then viewing the lecture again is not the answer – speak to people instead. Lecturers, tutors and classmates are all invaluable when thinking through key concepts and ideas. All the course team have guidance and feedback hours and respond to email, so feel free to get in touch.

**Tutorials**

Tutorials have a number of purposes. Firstly, they allow us to explore particular topics in more detail through reading and discussion (topics and readings are listed in Section 9). Secondly, they provide the opportunity to discuss lecture material and essay topics in small groups. Thirdly, we also use them to develop note-taking, précis and presentation skills. These are crucial skills for all undergraduate courses: for example, good note-taking and précis skills minimise the chances of ‘unwitting plagiarism’, and help you to think critically and independently. Tutors differ in how they run the sessions, but they may, at the end of a tutorial, assign set reading to be summarized for the following week. You should bring an outline of the assigned reading, written in your own words (i.e. not a photocopy with phrases highlighted!), summarising the key points and structure of the argument. You may be asked to present your précis as a basis for discussion of the set topic, and could also be asked, for example, to assess others’ note-taking, and/or begin to use the combined notes from a number of readings to construct an essay plan, etc.

Each tutorial consists of 10-12 students. **Tutorials will be held weekly, in Weeks 2-11.** Your first tutorial will take place sometime during the Week 2 starting Monday, 23 September.

You are **required**, as a matter of University policy, to attend all tutorials and to let your tutor know whenever you have good reason (e.g. illness) for failing to attend. Tutorial attendance and the prompt submission of coursework are requirements for all students. Tutorial participation is responsible for 10% of your overall mark (see below).

*Please note that pressure of work or problems of time management are not considered an acceptable reason for non-attendance at tutorials or for late submission of work.*

A list of tutors and contact email addresses will be made available on Learn during the first week of teaching.

**How to sign up**

You will be automatically assigned to a Tutorial group. Your group should be assigned by the beginning of Week 1. Please see Appendix 2 for full details.

**Tutorial Programme: What will we be doing?**

The first tutorial will provide you with essentials about the program and procedures for the rest of the course, and it is therefore all the more important that you do not miss it.
**Assessment**

Students will be assessed by:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Word count limit Do not exceed the word limit or penalties will be applied</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
<th>Submission date</th>
<th>Return of feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tutorial participation</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Continuous</td>
<td>End of Semester</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essay</td>
<td>1500-2000 words max (excluding bibliography)</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>28 October 2019 (all coursework is due at 12 noon on the date of submission)</td>
<td>18 November 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Take-home Paper</td>
<td>Two 1000 words max essays (excluding bibliography)</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>2 December till 11 December</td>
<td>14 January 2020</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** All coursework is submitted electronically through ELMA. Please read the School Policies and Coursework Submission Procedures which you will find [here](#).

Our aim in assessment is to encourage students to cover a wide range of the themes raised, through reading, discussion and writing, and to examine knowledge of the course materials. With this in mind, we seek to differentiate each item of assessment, and to minimise the extent to which it is possible to pass the course by focusing excessively on just one or two elements.

**Monitoring Attendance and Engagement**

It is the policy of the University, as well as good educational practice, to monitor the engagement and attendance of all our students on all our programmes. This provides a positive opportunity for us to identify and help those of you who might be having problems of one kind or another, or who might need additional support.

**Tutorial Participation**

Students are expected to attend tutorials and participate in discussions each week. Instead of penalizing students for missing tutorials, in Sociology 2 students earn marks towards their final grade through tutorial participation. This is to encourage students not to be just physically present at tutorials, but also to contribute actively to a sociological discussion of the topic. 10% of the final grade is made up of the tutorial participation mark. Tutors will give each student a mark of 0, ½, or 1 for their contribution to the tutorial each week. These will be totalled up for the nine tutorials, with 1 bonus mark being either given or withheld at the end of the semester depending on the student’s overall contribution. The following is a guide to the marking of tutorial participation:

A mark of 0 will be awarded for a student in a week in which:

- the student was not present, and did not have a justified absence (see below)
- the student was present, but did not make any contribution
• the student was present and contributed, but this contribution was entirely unsociological and had no connection to the reading for the week.

A mark of ½ would be awarded for a student in a week in which:

• the student was present and made a contribution which showed some evidence of reading for that week and/or sociological thought, but the contribution was brief and/or limited.

A mark of 1 would be awarded for a student in a week in which:

• the student was present and made a contribution which showed good evidence of reading for that week and/or sociological thought, and the contribution was extended and/or insightful.

What if I miss a tutorial or am unable to participate?

If a student misses one tutorial then they may submit a summary of key reading to their tutor instead. Beyond this, if the student feels that their absence from a tutorial is justified, they must get their Personal Tutor to email the course convener with an explanation of this absence. If this explanation is accepted, the student will be asked to submit to their tutor summaries of the tutorial readings for that week. These summaries will be assigned an overall mark of 0, ½ or 1. Summaries must be submitted by the end of Week 10, Friday, 23 November. Please note that this is not an optional alternative to tutorial participation. Students will only be permitted to submit summaries of tutorial readings if they miss a tutorial for reasons that would be accepted as a ‘special circumstances’ case by an exam board. Students with Learning Profiles which indicate the unsuitability of tutorial participation as a form of assessment can request to be set an alternative form of assessment to gain the 10%. They will be required to submit reading summaries of the tutorial readings for each week to demonstrate that they have been engaging with the course material. Please contact the course convener as soon as possible if you are in this situation.

Essay

Your essay should be between 1500-2000 words in length (excluding bibliography). You must provide a word count. Essay topics, together with recommended readings, are provided below. The essay relates to Units 1 and 2 of this course, and contributes 40% to your final class mark.

The essay forms a major part of the course, both in terms of its contribution to overall assessment and in terms of what you will learn from the course. We believe the exercise of putting your own views on paper is a very valuable discipline: it helps you to read the work of other people carefully, to sharpen your critical skills, to confront all sides of contentious issues and to present your arguments clearly and concisely. If you are not happy with your essay-writing techniques, refresh your memory about the advice in the Sociology 1 Handbooks, or look at one of the following:


In Sociology 2A we use a structured form to help us with the assessment of your essay, and to ensure that you receive feedback on a full range of aspects of your essay writing.
The essay is marked by your tutor. The course organiser will second-read a sample of essays from each tutorial group to ensure equal marking standards across tutorial groups.

Coursework is submitted online using our electronic submission system, ELMA. You will not be required to submit a paper copy of your work. We will provide feedback on your essay, with appropriate comments and a provisional grade will be returned to you via ELMA, within three weeks of submission. Please note that your final grade is not confirmed until the external examiner has considered the marks given by the internal examiners. You will not receive a paper copy of your marked course work or feedback.

Essay Topics

This essay is due by 12 noon on Monday, 28 October (Week 7). For this essay you need to choose one of the essay questions below.

Essay Questions for Unit 1

1. How convincing is the idea that sociologists should avoid making a clear division between humans and non-humans?

Guidance: This question asks you to engage with Latour’s idea that non-human artefacts are essential players in social networks and/or with Haraway’s idea that humans and animals should be seen as co-evolving. Latour is somewhat difficult to pin down, so do note the specific pages I suggest attending to in ‘Where are the Missing Masses’. Also remember to read this piece in light of the arguments in the lecture about the wider project of Latour and ANT – to see social life as not just about humans interacting with humans, but to look at networks of connections between human and non-human actors. Haraway can be similarly challenging at times, but there are other sources that might help to interpret her work, including the review of her book by Cassidy, which is listed in the reading for this question. The piece referenced as Barron (2003) (also listed in the essay reading) contains a debate between Fuller and Latour in which Fuller defends the idea that sociology should be human-centred – Fuller’s argument could equally well be contrasted with Haraway’s if you wish. It would make sense to refer to human exceptionalism in this essay and one item you could cite on this is Plumwood (2007). Plumwood discusses human exceptionalism at the start of this book review. Don’t feel obliged to get to grips with the specifics of her review – though her critique of Gaita’s book relates to some of the issues discussed in the lecture.

The essay can be answered in different ways, but a good essay will demonstrate a familiarity with relevant readings and will outline both sides of the debate: those who think sociologists should make a clear-cut division between humans and non-humans and those who disagree. You don’t need to write the same number of words about each side of the debate, but you should say something about each side. Your conclusion should explain why you think one side of the argument is stronger than the other. The best essays will display their grasp of key ideas and concepts by drawing on original examples to illustrate the points being made.

2. Is Rational-Choice Theory’s argument that action is instrumental and self-interested problematic? Justify your answer.

Guidance: This is a fairly specific question, so you can take your time developing an answer to it rather than trying to cover a wide range of issues over the course of the essay. It will make sense to introduce rational choice theory more generally before focusing in more detail on the issue of whether action is self-interested and instrumental. The majority of the readings listed give some kind of account of rational choice theory, although you may notice there is a little bit of variation between them. As such, make sure you reference which work(s) you are drawing your account from. If you take a look at the literature on rational choice theory you will also see that it is subject to a wide variety of critiques. Whilst you might refer briefly to these wider issues, it's important not to spend precious words expanding on criticisms that do not relate to the essay question. In the lecture, the work of Weber is used to develop an alternative approach to action than that defended by rational choice theorists. It will be worth mentioning Weber in your essay, although it is up to you whether you want to bring him substantially into the discussion or focus on other writers. Remember that although Weber can be seen as providing an alternative to rational choice theory he doesn't refer directly to it, as this terminology was not in common usage at the time that Weber was writing. One more point: if you want to defend rational choice theory's
idea that action is instrumental and self-interested, you will still need to explain criticisms that have been put to this idea and explain why you do not accept them.


3. **Should sociologists adopt a ‘realist’ or a ‘social constructionist’ approach? Justify your answer and discuss in relation to one specific area of social concern (e.g. the environment, crime).**

Guidance: There is a sizable social scientific literature about the relative merits of social constructionism or realism, some of which is listed below. In the listed reading there are (at least) four kinds of pieces: those that look at social constructionism and/or realism as a general issue (e.g. Hacking, Law, Abbott), those that look at it in relation to nature and the environment (Peterson, Burningham and Cooper, Crist, Cronon, Proctor etc.), those that consider it in relation to social problems (Gardner, Root, Hilgartner and Bosk etc.), and those who consider the issue in relation to the more specific ‘social problem’ of crime (E.g. Currie, Matthews, Goode and Ben-Yehuda, Herda-Rapp etc.). All should be helpful for gathering a picture of what the social constructionism vs. realism debate is about, but you don’t need to read thoroughly on each of these different areas of application. The question asks you to focus on one area of social concern when exploring the issues and it will be beneficial to focus most of your reading on literature in that area. You are welcome to choose an area of social concern beyond the bounds of the recommended literature if you can find one where social constructionism vs. realism is debated. Don’t feel too constrained by the idea of a ‘social concern’ – this could mean any area/issue debated in society, past or present. Remember that you are being asked to defend whether you think sociologists should adopt a realist or constructionist approach, so you need
to develop a structure that will allow you to make your case and then wrap things up in the conclusion. It is possible to argue that a compromise between the two perspectives is the best position, but if you want to defend this view make sure you make a positive argument for it rather than simply assuming that a middle path must be best.

- Herda-Rapp, A., 2003. ‘The social construction of local school violence threats by the news media and professional organizations.’ Sociological Inquiry, 73(4), pp.545-574. [for overview of social construction as an idea see pp. 545-549]

Essay Questions on Unit 2

1. When asked what racism feels like, a 13-year old Syrian refugee living in the Palestinian Camp in Beirut, Lebanon said: ‘In my heart, it’s something like a fire – it burns.’ What might this subjective expression suggest about some of the structural forces that might be impinging on him?

Guidance: This open question is really asking you to do some interpretive sociology by reflecting on how understanding the embodied subject / subjectivity can be a way of accessing certain wider socio-structural processes. So, you might consider in this case what the feeling of injustice – as it’s deeply embodied – is telling us about this young refugee’s social world. You could write about this by first exploring the subjectivity involved, drawing on Coates, Fanon, Baldwin, Rios, R Student et al., and ‘A Conversation with my Black Son’. Rios’ ‘crimes of resistance’ might be especially useful. The essay might then build out from your interpretation of the embodied experience of injustice in the face of racism to seeing some of the structural forces that might be in play: institutional racism, policing, stigmas of ‘the refugee’, social inequalities, intersectionality and so on. It’s important to think about the experience of injustice as one that anyone can feel when confronted with being racialised, hence the suggested readings vary from describing refugees to young black men and people of colour to (post)colonials.


2. **How much of who we are, of how we experience ourselves and our bodies, is shaped by the everyday spaces we navigate – our neighbourhoods and localities?**

Guidance: This question invites you to explore how we can be defined by how we move through our everyday spaces – schools, streets, buses, shops, neighbourhoods. This is particularly the case for those who are marginalised, excluded or ‘othered’ in some way. Your essay might begin, therefore, with a discussion or analysis of ‘Living in a Poor Neighbourhood Changes Everything About Your Life’, ‘Destini’s Brother’, Human Rights Watch 2012 ‘The Root of Humiliation’ in France, and/or ‘Denmark’s Migrant Ghettos’. Then the focus of the remainder of the essay might explore just one or two of the issues or themes that these accounts raise by drawing on some of the other reading suggestions. One such issue might be that of how ‘class’ is inhabited or experienced, embodied and then reproduced. Another might be how racialised exclusions can reproduce underlying inequalities and continue to be experienced as such. Yet another issue might be the significance of public services in our neighbourhoods in shaping both our daily experiences and our possibilities for social mobility. And still another might be to intersectionally explore the realities of being an immigrant in Copenhagen’s ‘ghettos’, defined as stigmatised spaces of crime, poverty and cultural difference. There are many others, of course, so use your sociological imagination! But focus only on one or two and remember to connect the issue to some of the literature included in the list below.

3. What does it mean to have agency and subjectivity as an ‘other’, a subaltern, a non cis-gendered person, or even as object of humanitarian care?

Guidance: This open theoretical question asks you to reflect on a core thematic argument that runs through the lectures and tutorials, which is how institutions, structures and social categories shape, define and even subjuga te us. What kinds of ‘subjects’ do we become as a result of our own agency in contestation with wider power structures? You might begin the essay with a brief theoretical discussion on subjectivity and agency, drawing on Foucault, Butler (Ch. 3) and Biehl et al. From here, follow your own substantive interest. You could, for instance, then explore this in connection with or through the lens of the subaltern, black and/or postcolonial ‘other’, drawing on Fanon, Bhabha, Spivak or Du Bois. Or you could explore this through a feminist lens, perhaps reflecting on the feminine vs. feminist subjectivities in ‘art by a woman’,

- Fassin, D. 2013. Enforcing Order: An Ethnography of Urban Policing. Polity. (Chs. 3 and 5 on French banlieu)
- Watch: ‘Denmark’s Migrant Ghettos’: https://www.bbc.co.uk/ichannel/episode/m0006j88/our-world-denmarks-migrant-ghettos also available here: https://learningonscreen.ac.uk/ondemand
- Sampson, R. 2012. The Great American City: Chicago and the Enduring Neighborhood Effect. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. (Chs. 1, 2, 10)
drawing on Broude and Garrard, Lorber and Moore or Borzello. Or you might wish to carefully unpack Caduff’s, ‘Hot Chocolate’, and explore what kinds of subjectivities, agencies and ‘victims’ are involved in practices of care, both in the ‘intimate caring’ of social work and in the ‘distant caring’ of humanitarianism. Here you could draw on Fassin 2009 (ch.8), Malkki (Introduction) and Marshall.


**Take-home Paper**

The Take Home Paper consists of one paper and takes place at the end of the semester. It will provide 50% of your course mark. In your tutorials, towards the end of the course, you will have the opportunity to prepare for the paper by reviewing course materials and concepts.

- You need to write two short (1000 word) exam-style essays.
- There are no exemption or extension arrangements. If you cannot submit in time then you will receive a Lateness Penalty and will need to apply for this to be removed through the Special Circumstances Board. If you are struggling to make the deadline then please contact your PT and the course organizer. You will need to provide supporting evidence. If your Learning Profiles makes
You must answer two questions, one relating to Unit 3, the other relating to Unit 4.

The assignment marks contribute 50% of the overall assessment.

You must pass the assignment in order to pass the course.

The Take Home Paper questions will be posted on Learn on Monday, 2 December 2019 at 10am and you will have until 12 noon on Wednesday, 11 December to answer two questions, one for each of the last two units of the course.

NB. Your answers will be marked as exam answers written under semi-exam conditions. You have a week to complete the essays to avoid problems of overlap with other courses, but we do not expect you to take more than 3 hours drafting, writing and reviewing each essay. Pick a day in this range rather than thinking you have to use the whole time.

You will need to submit your essays online using our submission system – ELMA. For information, help and advice on submitting coursework and accessing feedback, please see: https://www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/SPSITWiki/ELMA

Each answer must be no more than 1000 words. Include a word count for each answer. Do not exceed the word count. Word count penalties apply. Footnotes, endnotes and in-text references are included in the word count.

You are expected to produce a bibliography but this will not count towards the word length.

There are example questions for the short assignment at the end of this handbook. Please also consult the various resources on ‘Take Home Papers’ available on Learn. The emphasis in this year’s assignment will be on questions that require students to draw on material across that unit, not just focus on one lecture/tutorial.

The board of examiners includes all course lecturers and one of the Department’s external examiner (Professor Wendy Bottero). Questions for the December essays are set in Semester 1, and are designed to cover Units 3 and 4 of the course. We make considerable effort (including taking the advice of the external examiner) to ensure that the questions are easy to understand and not ambiguous. The questions should be answerable if you have attended the lectures and done the set reading: an answer that draws only on lecture notes will not receive good marks. The marking distributions of all markers are compared to ensure that no member of staff is marking particularly harshly or very leniently. Some scripts may be marked twice, particularly if they receive a failing mark or a first-class mark.

Overall Course Result

Your final grade will be decided by your tutor, the course organiser, and the Board of Examiners. In the course of the tutorials you will have the opportunity to discuss criteria and processes of assessment. Knowing how you are being assessed ought to help you produce work that we will be glad to give a high mark!

In order to pass Sociology 2A you must achieve an overall mark of at least 40% (this mark is based on a weighted combination of marks – see below). You must also achieve a mark of at least 40% on the Take Home Paper.

In order to proceed automatically to Honours Sociology, students have to achieve a pass mark of at least 50% in each of these courses, Sociology 2A and
Sociology uses the University’s extended common marking scheme (please see Appendix 5). Marks for essays, tutorial participation and Take-Home Paper are totaled separately.

Your final mark will be made up as follows: your tutorial participation contributes 10%; your essay contributes 40%; and the Take Home Paper contributes the remaining 50%.

The essay and assignment script of any candidate falling on a margin (e.g. between passing and failing, or at a merit border) will be seen additionally by the external examiner before the final mark is awarded at the examiners’ meeting in late May 2017. There is no fixed percentage of passes or of merits.

The most common cause of failure is that students do not complete the course-work or the Take Home Paper.

Resits
If you fail to pass the course overall and need to take the resit, you must re-take all failed assessments. Any component of assessment that have been passed will be carried forwards and included as part of your final mark. The weightings of each component will the stay same.

The format of the component being re-sat may be different then the first attempt. If you are required to resit components of the course, you will be contacted by the Course Administrator.

For details on regulations see here: http://www.sps.ed.ac.uk/undergrad/year_1_2/assessment_and_regs/examination_requirements

Note: The Institute of Academic Development provides support for students’ learning and study skills. For further information see: https://www.ed.ac.uk/institute-academic-development

The THP resit will be posted on Learn at 10 am, 20 April 2020 and will be due by 12 noon on Wednesday, 29 April 2020. This way it will not impinge on your summer.

Please note that if you are required to take a resit as a result of failing the course you may incur a reassessment fee. More information can be found on the Scholarships and Student Funding webpage: https://www.ed.ac.uk/student-funding/tuition-fees/undergraduate/additional-fees

Any student who is resubmitting an assignment or resitting an examination as a result of a valid Special Circumstances application will not be charged this fee.

Sociology 2A Prize
There will be a cash prize and certificate to the student who gains the highest mark in Sociology 2A, to celebrate students’ achievements on the course. The Dorothy Smith award is named in honour of one of the leading thinkers in Sociology who was awarded an Honorary Doctorate here in 2014. The award will also appear on the student’s academic record.

Adjustment schedules- student absence/ illness
If you are a student with an adjustment that states you should not be penalized for
absence due to illness/disability, you must contact your tutor/course organiser to let them know each time you are unable to attend.

If the condition for which you have learning adjustments has worsened, and this is causing excessive absences, you must apply for special circumstances. Please speak to your Student Support Officer.

Please note that participation is an assessed component of this course. If you are unable to attend for a prolonged period, your participation mark is likely to be low as a result. If you have any concerns, please contact the course organisers to discuss options.

Communication and Feedback
You are strongly encouraged to use email for routine communication with lecturers. We shall also use email to communicate with you, e.g., to assign readings for the second hour of each class. All students are provided with email addresses on the university system, if you are not sure of your address, which is based on your matric number, check your EUCLID database entry using the Student Portal.

In the course of the year, all important class information will be announced during lectures and on Learn. It is also important that you check your university email account regularly as this is the only way that teaching and office staff can contact you. This is the ONLY email address we shall use to communicate with you. Please note that we will NOT use ‘private’ email addresses such as yahoo or hotmail; it is therefore essential that you check your university email regularly, preferably each day.

A range of information and course material, including PowerPoint presentations and Key Readings, will be posted on Learn.

PLEASE DO NOT DISTURB THE SECRETARIAL STAFF OR THE COURSE TUTORS UNLESS YOU HAVE CHECKED THAT THE INFORMATION IS NOT ALREADY IN YOUR HANDBOOK OR POSTED ON THE WEB-PAGE OR LEARN.

If you have any problems, they should be taken first of all to your tutor. The easiest time to see your tutor is just before or after a tutorial. Tutors can be contacted via email. More serious personal problems are best dealt with by your Personal Tutor or Student Support Officer, who will let us know, for example, if you have been ill or, for some other serious reason, unable to keep up with the work for part of the course.

Administrative problems to do with the course can usually be dealt with by your tutor, but you may if necessary consult the Course Organiser, Dr Hugo Gorringe (H.Gorringe@ed.ac.uk), e.g. about problems to do with tutorial teaching.

There are various avenues for you to provide us with feedback about the course:

- You can always raise issues in tutorials, and the tutors will pass on your comments to the course organiser.
- All members of the course team have guidance and feedback hours. Pop by during these times or email to arrange another time. We are always happy to hear from you. If you are puzzled by anything please do raise this and chances are, many others are feeling the same.
- At the end of the course, we ask all students to fill in a questionnaire about the various lecture blocks and other aspects of the course. We do hope you will take note of what you like and dislike as the course progresses, and that you
then take the time to share your experience with us. We do our best to include your constructive suggestions into the program for subsequent years.

Please check Learn regularly for announcements and individual messages. You can watch a short video on how to use Learn at: https://www.ed.ac.uk/information-services/learning-technology/virtual-environments/learn/getting-started-with-learn

Reading Materials and Resource List
In order to get to grips with the key ideas examined in the course you need to read widely. The BASIC reading consists of the journal articles or book chapters listed on tutorial or essay reading lists, some of which will be available on Learn. Key readings are provided on Leganto – the service that has replaced Talis Aspire. Whilst that system is very convenient, students often find that the jump from ordinary to Honours years can be great. If you get used to checking library resources and chasing up readings now, it will stand you in good stead next year.

Most reading list entries indicate whether the reading is on Learn, on Reserve in the library, or available through the library’s electronic journals (e-journals) or as e-books. Some readings are available in more than one format (e.g. a book chapter may be available in Reserve, and on the open shelves) so make sure you investigate other sources if the one listed is unavailable. The handbook is up-to-date at the beginning of the semester, but the status of some readings may change – make sure you check the references properly on the Library Catalogue and on Learn.

The course does not use a text-book for teaching, but The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Sociology (ed. Gordon Marshall) is a very useful reference source.

All books which are on the reading list for the lectures should be available in the Main Library’s Reserve Reading section, on the ground floor. Offprints of journal articles can be downloaded electronically through the Library website, and many book chapters on the reading list will be available as PDFs linked to the Learn site for this course. We are also working with a dynamic reading list that you can find through this list: http://resourcelists.ed.ac.uk/index.html (search for Sociology 2A and select from the drop-down menu).

Reading Materials can be in heavy demand, so treat them kindly, use the reading room at off-peak times whenever possible, and return readings as soon as you have finished using them.

Do browse through the Sociology books and periodicals in the Main Library in George Square and especially through current, still unbound periodicals (1st Floor Reading Room). Where possible refer to the electronic journal versions, and browse electronically – see web guide at: http://www.san.ed.ac.uk/anthwebresources02.rtf and e-journals list/database at: http://tweed.lib.ed.ac.uk/ejournals/ej2.asp

ERASMUS Exchanges
Joint and single Honours Sociology students may apply to spend their third year at the University of Copenhagen or Jacobs University in Bremen under the Erasmus exchange scheme. This is an ideal opportunity to study abroad at leading universities that host many international students. Many courses at Copenhagen are offered in English so fluency in Danish is not required; courses at Jacobs University are taught in English.

You can find out more about the Erasmus scheme here: http://www.international.ed.ac.uk/exchanges/Erasmus/index.html
More about the University of Copenhagen here: http://www.ku.dk/english/
And more about Jacobs University, Bremen here:
http://www.jacobs-university.de/welcome

If you are interested, please contact your PT and Dr Nick Prior in the first instance.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Lecture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Unit 1: Constructing Alternatives or Keeping it Real? Key Dilemmas in Sociological Thinking – Stephen Kemp</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>16 September</td>
<td>Introduction to the Course – Course Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>19 September</td>
<td>Lecture 1: Social Constructionism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>23 September</td>
<td>Lecture 2: Realism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>26 September</td>
<td>Lecture 3: Instrumental Self-interest vs. Value-based Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>30 September</td>
<td>Lecture 4: Human/Non-Human</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>3 October</td>
<td><strong>Unit 2: Experiencing Social Inequality: subjects, subjectivities and Verstehen sociology – Liliana Riga</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>3 October</td>
<td>Lecture 1: Understanding subjectivities through the (post)colonial subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>7 October</td>
<td>Lecture 2: The 21st century refugee: global humanitarianism’s subjects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>10 October</td>
<td>Lecture 3: The racial/ised subject: policing, social control and the black body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>14 October</td>
<td>Lecture 4: Living intersectionally? Class, migration, poverty, neighbourhoods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>17 October</td>
<td>Lecture 5: Differencing the canon? Women artists, marginality, feminine subjectivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>21 October</td>
<td><strong>Unit 3: Social Movements and Social Change in a Global Context – Hugo Gorringe</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>24 October</td>
<td>Lecture 1: Disrupting the Quotidian?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>28 October</td>
<td>Lecture 2: Activist Participation and Non-Participation: A Case Study of the Student Protests in the UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>31 October</td>
<td>Lecture 3: Globalising Change?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>4 November</td>
<td><strong>Unit 4: Thinking the Present with Classical Theory: contemporary capitalism, dispossession and the new iron cage – Isabelle Darmon</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>7 November</td>
<td>Lecture 1: The many naturalisations of capitalism – the case of the ‘super rich’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>11 November</td>
<td>Lecture 2: Karl Marx on Capitalism, Dispossession and Exploitation (I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>14 November</td>
<td>Lecture 3: Marx on Capitalism, Dispossession and Exploitation (II); Marx on Emancipation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>18 November</td>
<td>Lecture 4: Max Weber, ‘Rationalisation’ and the shaping of the modern human being (I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>21 November</td>
<td>Lecture 5: Max Weber, ‘Rationalisation’ and the shaping of the modern human being (II); Weber on Emancipation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wrap-up Lecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
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<td><strong>No lectures</strong></td>
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Course Lectures and Readings

Week 1

Introduction to the Course – Course Team
Monday, 16 September

In this lecture the course team will introduce the main themes of the course, and provide an overview of the content of the four units that make up the course.

Unit 1: Constructing Alternatives or Keeping it Real? Key Dilemmas in Sociological Thinking - Stephen Kemp

This unit provides an introduction to some of the key theoretical issues that have stimulated and intrigued sociologists in recent times. We explore different conceptual distinctions or contrasts, in order to explore their value as ways of thinking about the social world. The particular distinctions we will consider are: social constructionism versus realism, instrumental self-interest vs. value-based action, and human/non-human. One of the questions that we will explore in relation to each of these distinctions is whether it is (i) a productive and insightful way of distinguishing aspects of what sociology studies; or (ii) an artificial and problematic distinction that obscures more than it reveals. In exploring these theoretical distinctions, we will also be engaging with the ideas of key classical and contemporary sociologists and social theorists, including Weber, Haraway, and Latour.

Unit 1, Lecture 1: Social Constructionism
Thursday, 19 September

You will have heard the terms ‘social construct’ and ‘socially constructed’ a lot during the first year of studying sociology. In this session we scrutinize this idea to help us to formulate an answer to the question: ‘is everything socially constructed?’ We will also look at the application of social constructionist ideas in the areas of environment and crime.

Key Readings:


Further Readings:

For some general accounts of social constructionism see:


Discussions of social constructionism and the environment


Analyses of crime with a social constructionist leaning:


• Herda-Rapp, A., 2003. ’The social construction of local school violence threats by the news media and professional organizations.’ Sociological Inquiry, 73(4), pp.545-574. [for overview of social construction as an idea see pp.545-549]


Discussions of the social construction of social problems:

doi:10.1017/9781108656184.011 (e-book)


For a different kind of constructionist take on nature see:


Week 2

Unit 1, Lecture 2: Realism
Monday, 23 September

Although social constructionism (or something like it) is accepted by many
sociologists, there are dissenting voices. One alternative to social constructionism is realism, and in this session we consider the antagonistic relationship between realism and constructionism, once again drawing on examples to do with environment and crime.

**Key Readings**


**Further Readings:**

For realist(ish) approaches to the environment see:


An analysis of crime with a 'realist' leaning:


Some general views about realism and constructionism


For debates about whether social structure is ‘real’ or not see:


**Unit 1, Lecture 3: Instrumental Self-interest vs. Value-based Action**

**Thursday, 26 September**

This session will analyse the distinction that sociologists often make between action oriented to instrumental self-interest and that based on values. It will examine rational-choice theory and the work of Max Weber.

**Key Readings:**


**Further Readings:**


**Week 3**

**Unit 1, Lecture 4: Human/Non-Human**

**Monday, 30 September**

In this lecture we look at the question of whether sociologists should invoke a clear divide between humans and non-humans, or whether it is productive to blur that divide.
Key Readings:


Further Readings:


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**Unit 2: Experiencing Social Inequality: subjects, subjectivities and Verstehen sociology – Liliana Riga**
This unit explores the subjects and subjectivities constituted by those social inequalities involving (post)colonialism, refugeedom, race/ethnicity, class and gender. We try to understand how these inequalities are lived and embodied by interpreting the ways in which they are subjectively experienced and understood. We position social subjects as very specifically situated – as racialised others, as refugees, as women artists, as working poor, as a colonised subaltern – and in this way explore the specificities of agency and subjectivity. The empirical focus each week is on particular subjective experiences – what does it feel like to be a social problem, such as the refugee ‘Other’? How is one’s black body socially controlled and how does this shape one’s way of being in the world? What does daily existence within a certain ‘social class’ actually feel like? In asking these questions, this unit emphasises phenomenological, hermeneutic or interpretive approaches – a **Verstehen** sociology – that is focused on grasping broad, macro processes through lived experiences and through the embodiments that form the ground for understanding subjectivity.

**Unit 2, Lecture 1: Understanding subjectivities through the (post)colonial subject**
**Thursday, 3 October**

Biehl et al (2007: 5-15-16) write that subjectivity and the “inner lives of subjects” tell us how people “forge and foreclose their lives around what is most at stake” in their “making and unmaking of meaning, … we look through subjectivity not to theorize an intangible Subject but human conditions.” This week introduces this theorisation whilst exploring it in the context of experiencing ‘being an object’ and the ‘double consciousness’ of (sub)alterity.

**Key Readings:**


**Further Reading:**

**Week 4**

**Unit 2, Lecture 2: The 21st century refugee: global humanitarianism's subjects**

Monday, 7 October

We frame the complexities refugedom’s inequalities within a tension: the forcibly displaced experience the political realities of daily lives in culturally diverse and challenging displacement spaces, but at the same time their lives are also defined by the protections, neutralities and human rights-based practices of the humanitarian organisations that serve and care for them. One important line of criticism is that humanitarianism generally can’t easily ‘see’ political, historical and cultural experiences and their subjectivities – and that indeed its practices often erase them or set them aside because of its constructions of trauma, care and the need for neutrality. This is very visible in the figuration of the ‘displaced child,’ so we explore this as we try to understand the very real experiences with racism and discrimination faced by young Syrian and Iraqi refugees in Beirut, Lebanon.

**Key readings:**


**Further reading:**

- Kennedy, D. 2009. ‘Selling the Distant Other: Humanitarianism and Imagery—Ethical Dilemmas of Humanitarian Action’ *Journal of Humanitarian
Unit 2, Lecture 3: The racial/ised subject: policing, social control and the black body
Thursday, 10 October

Ta-Nehisi Coates (2015: 95-95) writes:

‘One must be without error here. Walk in single file. Work quietly. Pack an extra number 2 pencil. Make no mistakes...But you are human and you will make mistakes. You will misjudge. You will yell. You will drink too much. You will hang out with people you shouldn't...But the price of error is higher for you than it is for your countrymen, and so that America might justify itself, the story of a black body's destruction must always begin with his or her error, real or imagined.’

Locating policing and social control in specific experiences and institutional practices, we ask: how is policing experienced if you are black or Muslim or visibly ‘Othered’? How is ‘blackness’ experienced within often unrecognized and less visible forms of discrimination? Does ‘embodied’ blackness and experiences of racial (in)justice in 2019 make it difficult to live and move freely in one’s blackness or ‘other-ness’? We ground these questions empirically in the lived experiences of young black and/or Muslim citizens in daily interactions with law enforcement in the US, the UK and France. The aim is to sociologically access wider structural and institutional processes.
of racialisation.

Key readings:

- (SKIM) Human Rights Watch. 2012. 'The Root of Humiliation: Abusive Identity Checks in France.' Available at: [https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/france0112ForUpload.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/france0112ForUpload.pdf)

Further reading:

How are racial / ethnic and gender inequalities related to other kinds of structural social and class inequalities? Are there spatial and intersectional dimensions to poverty and to racial inequality, to class and ethnic background? We explore the close association of poverty and inequalities with cultural difference in the UK and France through experienced ‘neighbourhood effects.’ What do structural racism and neighbourhood inequalities look like through the lenses of embodied and lived experience? Do our policy practices fully grasp this? We anchor this in connection with UK and French responses to community riots in recent years.

Key Readings:


Further Reading:

- Steele, L. 2016. ‘Ethnic diversity and support for redistributive social policies’ Social Forces 94 (4): 1439-81
- Sampson, R. 2012. The Great American City: Chicago and the Enduring Neighborhood Effect. University of Chicago Press. (Ch. 1, 2, 10)
- Van Eijk, G. 2011. ‘They eat potatoes, I eat rice’: symbolic boundary-making and space in neighbour relations’ Sociological Research On-Line 16 (4)
Looking more carefully at our knowledge practices, we explore female subjective agency and the invisibility and social marginality of the female experience and subjectivity in the sociology of art and art history. We explore these issues by focusing on the work the most celebrated female artist of 17th century Baroque painting, Artemisia Gentileschi (c.1593-1656). Gentileschi has become a feminist icon in the art world in recent decades, and in 2020 London’s National Gallery opens a new exhibition to her work in trying to expand its women artists collections. The retrieval of her work has recently stirred great interest in the art and art history world, and over the past two decades her work has reinvigorated feminist art criticism. Gentileschi’s work makes her a compelling sociological figure with which to “see” how a feminist heroine and her paintings have become something of a canvas for feminist self-reflexivity. As Mieke Bal (2005: ix) writes,

“[a]lthough Artemisia Gentileschi worked as an artist during the 17th century, ‘Artemisia Gentileschi’ is a fabrication of the last decades of the 20th. During the era of feminist revisionism of the art-history canon, she was (re)discovered as one of the great artists of baroque Italy only after having been invented as one of the first women making great art.”

Historicizing the embodied subject. Should we see as anachronistic feminist interpretations of her work as a site of feminine subjectivity and patriarchal violence? How much does a woman’s art confirm a feminine subjectivity? A careful look at Gentileschi’s art – and the interpretation of her art – allows us to glimpse contestations in female subjective agency, and art from a feminine vs. feminist experience.

Key Readings:

in social theory’ Sociology 46 (2): 224-40.

Further Reading:


Week 6

Unit 3: Social Movements and Social Change in a Global Context – Hugo Gorringe

This Unit focuses on social movements and social change. Social Movements are collectivities of individuals, organisations and networks who act in concert to advance or stave off processes of social change. As such, they offer us an insight into the interplay between structure and agency and allow us to ask why structures endure and how things change. It will look at who chooses to protest, how they mobilise and what impact activism has and ask how we should understand why people choose to/not to engage in forms of protest.

Unit 3, Lecture 1: Disrupting the Quotidian?
Monday, 21 October

Addressing the Climate March in Stockholm in September 2018, Greta Thunberg explained her reasons for engaging in a school strike. ‘If everyone knew how serious the situation is and how little is actually being done’, she argued, ‘everyone would come and sit down beside us’. Thunberg is an inspiring figure who has galvanized a wave of action around climate change. Sadly I do not think she is right. Many of us do know how serious the situation is, and yet continue with life as normal.

This first lecture seeks to place activism within its wider socio-structural context and ask why forms of inequality and injustice persist for as long as they do. It will outline
some of the key arguments about the reproduction of the social order and note how few people engage in activism. It will reflect on more interactive accounts of non-participation in social movements and explore how social movements seek to challenge taken-for-granted ways of being in the world.

Key Readings (2 of):


Further Readings:


Unit 3, Lecture 2: Activist Participation and Non-Participation: A Case Study of the Student Protests in the UK

Thursday, 25 October
Why might people who are sympathetic to the goals of a protest campaign choose not to participate in them? What distinguishes them sociologically from those who do participate? This lecture uses the 2010/11 student protests in the UK as a case study for understanding how contemporary social movements mobilise individuals into more alternative forms of political participation. The student protests saw large-scale regional and national demonstrations take place, as well as the formation of a network of simultaneous campus occupations across the UK, presenting a greater scale and diversity of protest participation opportunities than had been seen for a generation.

Key Readings:


Further Readings:

- Goodwin and Jasper. 2015. The Social Movements Reader [e-book in Lib]: pages 5-7 and/or 53-57 (Part I Introduction and Part III Introduction)
- McAdam, D. 1986. ‘Recruitment to High-Risk Activism: The Case of Freedom Summer’, American Journal of Sociology 92(1) 64-90
- Tufekci, Z and Wilson, C. 2012. ‘Social Media and the Decision to Participate in Political Protest: Observations from Tahrir Square’, Journal of...
Week 7

Unit 3, Lecture 3: Globalising Change?
Monday, 28 October

Contemporary movements emerge, mobilise and operate within a global context. Ideas, tactics and resources are diffused across countries and continents and both ‘Political Opportunities’ and targets of global movements are no longer confined to the nation state in which protest arises. In this lecture we will consider globalization as context, process and ideal in social movement enterprises.

Key Readings:


Further Readings:

- Della Porta, D & Tarrow, S 2005: ‘Transnational Processes and Social Activism’ in Della Porta, D & Tarrow, S (eds) Transnational Protest and Global Activism. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield [HM881 Tra.]
- Van Stekelenburg, J. 2012. ‘The Occupy Movement: Product of this Time’,
Occasionally, very occasionally, social movements succeed in overthrowing governments, transforming political systems or radically restructuring the world we live in. The fact that most movements do not, however, does not mean that they are meaningless or ineffectual. In this final lecture of the unit we will consider the outcomes of social movements and reflect on the questions of power and social change.

Key Readings:


Further Readings:

- Sitrin, M. 2014. ‘Goals Without Demands’, South Atlantic Quarterly 113(2):
This Unit harnesses so-called ‘classical’ social theorists to think our present sociologically with them. As you know from Sociology 1B, for Marx and Weber the present had a name: capitalism, and, to both of them, thinking it through meant understanding how capitalism shapes our material and subjective world, and assessing the kind of human beings and planet it produces and reproduces. By asking questions to our present with ‘classical’ thinkers, we intend to both refresh our gaze on our world and to de-canonise these authors. With them we will explore how structural mechanisms of dispossession and rationalisation are naturalised, rendered normal or common sense, thus shaping the way we think and feel in powerful ways, and we will revisit questions of protest and resistance from that perspective.

You will see that essential readings usually feature texts by these authors: not as difficult as you may think, and certainly much more ‘punchy’ than many a contemporary journal article! Recommended and further readings/resources (including videos and podcasts) then provide you with resources to critically illuminate these essential readings.

**Unit 4, Lecture 1: The many naturalisations of capitalism – the case of the ‘super rich’**

Monday, 4 November

‘Capitalism’, a term which had been forgotten about at the turn of the century, has now been back on the public agenda for some years, usually to be decried, including, allegedly, at its very world-summit in Davos every winter. Yet it seems that the more unfashionable capitalism becomes, the more unquestionable it is as the dominant economic system on this planet. Through this apparent paradox, this lecture introduces some of the key themes of the unit: the structural character of capitalism, its naturalisation, including through calls for a ‘more moral and responsible’ capitalism, and the sources of its vitality and dynamism. Thus we begin to address capitalism not as a mere ‘economic system’ but as a very ‘political’ and cultural dynamic that shapes our social relations and subjectivities.

**Key Readings:**


**Recommended Readings (case study on the super-rich):**


**Further Readings:**


I will allude to the debate on the wealth tax, without entering into technicalities. If you want to read more, take a look at:


I will refer to Max Weber’s ‘theodicy of good fortune’. This is taken from his superb Introduction to the Economic Ethics of World Religions, a difficult and long text, but very rewarding one. This is just for the super keen – and it is not part of the core reading for this unit.


**Unit 4, Lecture 2: Karl Marx on Capitalism, Dispossession and Exploitation (I)**

*Thursday, 7 November*

In this and the following lecture, we go some way toward answering our starting question by examining the ways in which capitalism has been ‘naturalised’ and by ‘de-naturalising it’ and historicizing it with Marx. Marx showed that capitalism ‘produced’ entirely new forms of social relations, and that ‘capital is a social relation’. The implications of such a demanding relational definition are immense for understanding our contemporary world.

Capitalism, as social relation, was built on very violent premises: we will look into these – among other things, through the history of the ‘Scottish Clearances’ resulting into
massive expulsion of peasants from the land and massive migration, and discuss the 
continuation of this violence and ‘dispossession’ today, through a case study of racial 
and colonial extractivism in Canada. But we will also explore the expansionary 
dynamics of accumulation once the capitalist relations are in place.

Key Readings:

  (trans. by Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, ed. by Frederick Engels). 
  Readable on and downloadable from https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Capital-
  Volume-I.pdf (link also provided in the resource list).
  pp. 91-111. (Chapter 8: e-reserve, chapter 9: copies available in hub library. 
  You can also think of buying the paperback, available from £2 in Abebooks)

Recommended Readings (case study on colonial and racial extractivism):

  companies rank among the most world’s most abusive and destructive. 
  *Jacobin* 4 Dec 2016. https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/12/canada-
  corporations-dapl-mining-imperialism-tar-sands/
- Interview with Glen Coulthard by Andrew Bard Epstein. The Colonialism of 
  the Present. https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/01/indigenous-left-glen-
  coulthard-interview/

Further Readings:

  examination of the Canadian Tar Sands mega-projects. *Cultural Studies*, 
  31(2-3), 353-375.
  (also accessible through resource list)]. Read especially pp. 73-76.
  translated by A. Locascio. New York: Monthly Review Press. [Read Preface, Chapter 1 and point 2.2 of Chapter 2.] [e-book]. In my view, this is 
  a very important and clear (though not easy) book on. Do try!
- Fraser, N. (2016). Expropriation and Exploitation in Racialized Capitalism: A 
  1600-1900*, UK: Allen Lane. [There is only one copy in the library, but this is a 
  book well worth buying – it’s less than £10 in pocket book format].
  Downloadable from http://www.thelandmagazine.org.uk/articles/enclosure-
  grand-scale
Week 9

Unit 4, Lecture 3: Marx on Capitalism, Dispossession and Exploitation (II). Marx on Emancipation.
Monday, 11 November

We continue our exploration of dispossession and exploitation, thinking them through with Marx, and supplement him from a feminist point of view (Silvia Federici). Our case study this time is social housing. We also ask whether knowing about these naturalisations of capitalism is enough to trigger social transformation, and we look into Marx’s own views of the possibilities for human emancipation – which has to be not only material but emancipation from all ‘fetishisms’ and naturalisations, partly rectifying what is usually understood under ‘vulgar’ historical materialism.

Key Readings:

- Hodkinson, S. (2012) The new urban enclosures. City, 16(5), 500-518. [This article explains ‘so-called primitive (original) accumulation’ very well, illustrating it with housing policy in Britain – which you will discuss, with further case study material, in the tutorial]

Recommended Readings:


Further Readings:

Löwith, K. (1993) *Max Weber and Karl Marx*, London: Routledge. Chapter 3: 109-118. (e-Book) [this is a difficult book in part due to the antiquated style, but it is profound! Worth it if you are keen]

Unit 4, Lecture 4: Max Weber, ‘Rationalisation’ and the shaping of the modern human being (I)
Thursday, 14 November

For Weber, as for Marx, there was nothing natural about modern capitalism, its institution had to be explained as well as the way in which it violently transformed social relations and individual human beings – from traditional attitudes towards work to ‘modern capitalist’ ones.

But Weber argued that such violent transformation of social relations had demanded a force which was not just that of material interests and drives, a force which was actually external to capitalism – a religious force. Though Weber admired Marx’s work and adopted many of his analyses, his view of the dynamic of how capitalism came to be was very different, and this difference is very illuminating for us to learn to think with one or the other author.

In this and the following class, we build on Sociology 1 B’s introduction to Weber’s thesis about capitalism and asceticism, to explore how Weber analysed capitalism’s victory over ‘traditionalist’ attitudes and modes of relation, in particular through the ‘capitalist’ spirit and ‘rationalisation’, and how these shaped a new ‘character’ for modern and contemporary human beings – a central question for Max Weber.

Key Readings:


Recommended Readings:


Further Readings:

- Hennis, W. (1983) ‘Max Weber's Central Question’. *Economy and Society*, 12(2), 135-180. [This is a very dense article, and difficult in that sense, but the reinterpretation it proposed of Weber's central question, as one bearing on the character of human beings shaped by capitalism and the other orders of
modern life, revolutionised the understanding of Max Weber's work]


### Week 10

**Unit 4, Lecture 5: Max Weber, ‘Rationalisation’ and the shaping of the modern human being (II). Weber on Emancipation**

**Monday, 18 November**

Opinions about the way in which capitalism shapes or does not shape us today often invoke the ‘work ethic’ and ‘consumer society’. Others argue that capitalism still requires a ‘spirit’ external to it to legitimise itself. Weber and Marx however each had more structural explanations for the ongoing prevalence of capitalist relations: through the ‘metaphor of the ‘iron cage’, Weber explained how capitalist relations demanded and worked through impersonal bureaucratic (today read: managerial) forms of domination; whilst Marx insisted at times on how we are trapped into existing social relations of property and production.

In this class we will explore the meaning of the iron cage, especially the depersonalisation of relations in capitalism, but also in science and bureaucracy, as well as the type of human being which Max Weber saw as the paradigmatic figure of the ‘cage’: the disciplined ‘specialist’. We will ask what happens to this figure today and we will discuss the merits and problems of Weber’s explanations for continuous adaptation to capitalism and for our material but also subjective engagement with it. We will ask whether and how we can draw on his thought for social transformation – and the struggle against managerial capitalism.

**Key Readings:**


**Recommended Readings:**


**Further Readings:**


Wrap up Lecture – Course Team
Thursday, 21 November

This lecture is the final one in the course and will review the course and discuss the Take Home Paper.
Tutorial Topics and Schedules

Tutorial Topics for Unit 1: Constructing Alternatives or Keeping it Real?

Tutorial 1, Week 2: Does social constructionism undermine environmentalist arguments?

Readings:


Tutorial 2, Week 3: Pick a side and put together some arguments for either rejecting or retaining the human/ non-human distinction. Bring in fresh examples to the discussion if you can (i.e. not those from the lecture or the reading!)

Readings:


Tutorial Topics for Unit 2: Experiencing Social Inequality: Subjects, Subjectivities and Verstehen Sociology

Tutorial 3, Week 4: According to Fassin and Rechtman (2009: 281), humanitarianism’s construction of the victim of trauma “obliterates experiences” because it obscures underlying realities before the trauma happened:

‘It operates as a screen between the event and its context on the one hand, and the subject and the meaning he or she gives to the situation on the other. By reducing … the link between what happened and what was experienced to a set of symptoms, or even predefined representations… it obscures the diversity and complexity of experiences. It conceals the way experiences take on multiple meanings in a collective history, in a personal story, in a lived moment. Having lived through … the destruction of one’s home in Palestine [for example] … does not necessarily mean that one’s experience is circumscribed by this event, or even that one desires that it be reduced to this event.’

How might we think about refugee humanitarianism’s care practices, which can produce ‘suffering’ and / or innocent subjects of their beneficiaries? Can refugee humanitarianism sometimes operate with great psychological acuity, but with almost total sociological blindness?

Readings:

Frontieres (MSF), and bearing witness to violence among young Palestinian rock throwers).


**Tutorial 4, Week 5:** How is ‘blackness’ lived, inhabited, experienced as a young citizen?

In 1961, James Baldwin, a famous African American writer, said that ‘to be a Negro in this country and to be relatively conscious is to be in rage almost all the time’. One commenter on social media wrote: ‘I’m tired of having to argue my humanity to you’. What might we make of these sentiments? What does Rios (2012, 2011) mean by ‘crimes of resistance’?

**Readings:**

- Watch: ‘A Conversation with My Black Son’:

**Tutorial 5, Week 6:** In France they are known as ‘sensitive urban zones’, in Sweden as ‘vulnerable areas’, and in Denmark as ‘ghettos’ and ‘severe ghettos.’ These are government designated neighbourhoods that have multiple and overlapping social inequalities – crime, social exclusion, poverty, high unemployment and low education rates, and high concentrations of ethnic or racial minority communities, and immigrant and refugee communities. In Denmark, all parties on the political spectrum have recently approved harsh and restrictive new laws which designate majority low-income and immigrant neighbourhoods as ‘ghettos’, in order to eliminate them by 2030. You can read more about them [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

‘How does it feel to be a problem? ... It is a strange experience’, Du Bois wrote in 1903. What is it like to live your life when everyone sees you as a ‘social problem’? What kind of experiences and subjectivities might this create for the everyday lives of immigrant and refugee residents of Mjolnerparken, Copenhagen – just one of 30 official ghettos in Denmark?

**Readings:**

- Watch: ‘Denmark’s Migrant Ghettos’:
  [https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m0006j88/our-world-denmarks-migrant-ghettos](https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m0006j88/our-world-denmarks-migrant-ghettos)

**Tutorial Topics for Unit 3: Social Movements and Social Change in a Global Context**

**Tutorial 6, Week 7:** In his (non-academic) book Radicals: Outsiders Changing the World, Jamie Bartlett describes taking part in a mass direct action protest at a coal mine. He notes: ‘As we trudged closer to the ridge of the hill, I was thinking about those statistics: Three feet higher [sea level] and ‘mass extinction’. One question became stuck in my head: Why aren’t there more of us?’ Greta Thunberg suggests
that if ‘everyone knew how serious the situation was’ they would be on the streets too. Given the real and pressing issues facing people on a daily basis why don’t more people do not engage in protest?

Think through your own experiences: If you have chosen to attend a protest in the past: Why did you choose to attend? Do you think that you were sufficiently informed about the issues in question? How did you get that information? Did any of your friends attend? Did you go as part of a group/organisation or in an individual capacity (either alone or with friends)? How do your experiences relate to the readings?

If you chose not to participate: Why didn’t you take part? Did you agree or disagree with the cause? Did you identify or not with the participants? Did any of your friends attend? If so, did they ask you to go along? What might have persuaded you to take part? Do you recognize any of the processes discussed by Sutton and Norgaard? What does this tell us about wider social processes and why people engage in – or abstain from – political protest?

Readings (Norgaard and one of the other two):

- Hensby, A. 2013: ‘Networks, Counternetworks And Political Socialisation – Paths And Barriers To High- Cost/Risk Activism In The 2010/11 Student Protests Against Fees And Cuts’, Contemporary Social Science 9(1): pp.92-105

Tutorial 7, Week 8: Gregory White reproduces a quote attributed to Jameson and Zizek to the effect that ‘it is easier to imagine the end of the world than it is to imagine the end of capitalism’. What can social protest achieve in the face of structures that are so naturalized? In an activist blog post entitled ‘Give Up Activism’, the authors reflect on this issue and note that: ‘tackling capitalism will require not only a quantitative change (more actions, more activists) but a qualitative one (we need to discover some more effective form of operating). It seems we have very little idea of what it might actually require to bring down capitalism. As if all it needed was some sort of critical mass of activists occupying offices to be reached and then we’d have a revolution...’ [http://eco-action.org/dod/no9/activism.htm]. Can protest effect social change? What sort of power do social movements wield (if any), and can social movements contest social structures like capitalism or patriarchy – if so, how?

Readings:


Tutorial Topics for Unit 4: Thinking the Present with Classical Theory: Contemporary Capitalism, Dispossession and the New Iron Cage

Tutorial 8, Week 9:
Activity: Watch George Clarke’s documentary: George Clarke’s Council House Scandal on BoB (https://learningonscreen.ac.uk/ondemand accessible through your University of Edinburgh login) in advance of the tutorial.

All read Marx, Hodkinson and Zoe William’s piece [see below]; share the rest of readings among tutorial group members.

Questions: What are the key features of dispossession shown in the trailer? How does Marx’s account of ‘so-called primitive accumulation’ and contemporary versions of it help to understand the social housing situation in the UK? Does it make sense to fight for an ‘urban commons’?

Readings:


Tutorial 9, Week 10: Is the iron cage of capitalism and bureaucracy/managerialism ongoing and if so what specific forms does it take today and how can we resist it?

Debate in your group drawing on your own observations and experience, and on the example of the allegedly ‘unmanaged’ video-game company Valve (see below, Spicer reading), as well as on the following readings [to be distributed among tutorial group members, though everyone should really read the last pages of the Protestant Ethic]:

Readings:


Tutorial 10, Week 11: Course revision and preparation of THP
This tutorial will review key concepts and issues. Part of this tutorial will be given over to the Take Home Paper.
Appendix 1: Example Take-Home Paper Questions and Guidance

Please find the paper from 2 years ago below. It offers a good idea of the sorts of questions you might expect. The key readings for each Unit offer the best starting point for revision. Please remember, though, that the best answers will demonstrate a familiarity with the Unit as a whole rather than particular lectures. The paper will be put up on Learn and emailed out and you will need to answer one question relating to each Unit. Please note that the assignment can be done from anywhere, but will take place in Week 12.

- You must answer ONE question relating to each Unit.
- Write a maximum of 1000 words for EACH question. Word count penalties apply. Each answer above 1000 words will be penalised using the Ordinary level criterion of 5 marks for every over length essay.
- Referencing: You DO need to produce a bibliography at the end of your answer but this is not included in the word count.
- Write this in a single document. When ready to submit, save it in Word format (.doc or .docx).
- Include the Take Home Paper coversheet (available on Learn).
- Do not put your name on the submitted document. Use only your exam number.
- Submit your paper via ELMA.
- Lateness Penalties: If you submit late (e.g. 12.01pm) you will incur lateness penalties.
- For further detail of coursework requirements, see the School website: http://www.sps.ed.ac.uk/undergrad/current_students/assessment_and_regulations/coursework_requirements/coursework_requirements_years_1_and_2

Write a 1000 word (max.) answer for ONE question in EACH unit:

Unit 3 questions:

1) Imagine you are a social movement leader. Drawing on the readings explain how you would persuade supportive non-participants to join your struggle.
2) What understandings of power best enable us to grasp the impact of social protest? Illustrate your answer with examples.
3) How important is computer mediated communication to the emergence of global movements? What are the merits and limitations of computer-networked protest?

Unit 4

1) Which Weberian and Marxian concepts do you find most helpful to ‘de-naturalise’ capitalism for current social struggles, and why?
2) How can Marx’s notion of ‘so-called primitive (original) accumulation’ be developed to make sense of processes of dispossession today? Illustrate your response.
3) Is Weber’s metaphor of the iron cage still suited to analyse today’s ‘connexionist capitalism’?
Appendix 2: General Information

Students with Disabilities
The School welcomes disabled students with disabilities (including those with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia) and is working to make all its courses as accessible as possible. If you have a disability special needs which means that you may require adjustments to be made to ensure access to lectures, tutorials or exams, or any other aspect of your studies, you can discuss these with your Student Support Officer or Personal Tutor who will advise on the appropriate procedures.

You can also contact the Student Disability Service, based on the University of Edinburgh, Third Floor, Main Library. You can find their details as well as information on all of the support they can offer at: http://www.ed.ac.uk/student-disability-service

Learning Resources for Undergraduates

The Study Development Team at the Institute for Academic Development (IAD) provides resources and workshops aimed at helping all students to enhance their learning skills and develop effective study techniques. Resources and workshops cover a range of topics, such as managing your own learning, reading, note-making, essay and report writing, exam preparation and exam techniques.

The study development resources are available at ‘Study Hub’. Follow the link from the IAD Study Development web page: www.ed.ac.uk/iad/undergraduates. This page also offers links to workshops on study skills and Exam Bootcamp, a self-enrol online resource to help students do well in exams.

Workshops are interactive: they will give you the chance to take part in activities, have discussions, exchange strategies, share ideas and ask questions. They are 90 minutes long and held on Wednesday afternoons at 1.30pm or 3.30pm. The schedule is available from the IAD Undergraduate web page (see above).

Workshops are open to all undergraduates but you need to book in advance, using the MyEd booking system. Each workshop opens for booking two weeks before the date of the workshop itself. If you book and then cannot attend, please cancel in advance through MyEd so that another student can have your place. (To be fair to all students, anyone who persistently books on workshops and fails to attend may be barred from signing up for future events).

Study Development Advisors are also available for an individual consultation if you have specific questions about your own approach to studying, working more effectively, strategies for improving your learning and your academic work. Please note, however, that Study Development Advisors are not subject specialists so they cannot comment on the content of your work. They also do not check or proof read students' work.

Students can book a study skills consultation at:

https://www.ed.ac.uk/institute-academic-development/undergraduate/services/quick-consultations
English Language Support
Students looking for Academic English support can accessed this at: https://www.ed.ac.uk/studying/international/student-life/language-support

Students for whom English is a second language can also take the ELSIS training course. More details can be found at: https://www.ed.ac.uk/english-language-teaching/ele-courses/elsis

Discussing Sensitive Topics
The discipline of Sociology addresses a number of topics that some might find sensitive or, in some cases, distressing. You should read this Course Guide carefully and if there are any topics that you may feel distressed by you should seek advice from the course convenor and/or your Personal Tutor.

For more general issues you may consider seeking the advice of the Student Counselling Service: http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/student-counselling

Sexist, Racist and Disablist Language
The language we use to write about social life can hide some very insidious assumptions: e.g. ‘the working class’ sometimes actually means ‘the white, male, English working class’. The British Sociological Association has published useful guidelines on the way language can easily reflect racist and sexist views of the world. Your tutor will discuss these before your first essay is due. The gist of our advice is that you should never use male nouns and pronouns when you are referring to people of both sexes (use a plural ‘they’, ‘their’ or think of a different way to phrase your argument; or use ‘s/he’, ‘his/her’). You should also never use language which suggests that human races exist with distinct biologies, nor language which suggests that people disabled in some way are less than full members of society. You should also check the geographical dimension: for example is your source based on data from Britain, or only from England and Wales?

Tutorial Allocation
You will be automatically assigned to a Tutorial group by the beginning of week 1. This allocation is done using Student Allocator, a tool which will randomly assign you to a suitable tutorial group based on your timetable. The benefits of this system are that students will be able to instantly view their tutorial group on their personal timetable and timetable clashes will be more easily avoided.

Please check your timetable regularly in week 1 to see which group you have been assigned. Guidance on how to view your personal timetable can be found at: https://www.ed.ac.uk/student-administration/timetabling/personalised-timetables

Please note that there are limited spaces in tutorial groups and there will be little room for movement. If you are unable to attend the tutorial group you have been allocated for a valid reason, you can submit a change request by completing the online Group Change Request form. You can access the form via the Timetabling webpages here

Attendance Monitoring
In accordance with the University general degree regulations you are expected to attend all teaching and assessment events associated with all courses that you are enrolled on. The College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences undertakes routine monitoring of attendance at tutorials and seminars for all students enrolled on courses delivered by Schools within our College. We undertake monitoring of attendance and
engagement to enable us to identify where individual students may be experiencing difficulties and to ensure that timely and appropriate intervention can be delivered to provide support and guidance. We also undertake monitoring for sponsored students specifically to meet our obligations to the UKVI. If you miss one or more of your tutorials and/or seminars you may be contacted by your local Student Support Team and be asked to provide an explanation for your absence. All data is gathered and stored in line with the University policies and guidance on data handling and you can view the privacy statement at: https://www.ed.ac.uk/student-systems/use-of-data/policies-and-regulations/privacy-statement

External Examiner
The External Examiner for Years 1 and 2 of the Sociology programme is: Professor Wendy Bottero.
Appendix 3: Coursework Submission and Penalties

Penalties that can be applied to your work and how to avoid them
Below is a list of penalties that can be applied to your course work and these are listed below. Students must read the full description on each of these at: http://www.sps.ed.ac.uk/undergrad/current_students/teaching_and_learning/assessment_and_regulations/coursework_penalties

Make sure you are aware of each of these penalties and know how to avoid them. Students are responsible for taking the time to read guidance and for ensuring their coursework submissions comply with guidance.

Lateness Penalty
If you miss the submission deadline for any piece of assessed work 5 marks will be deducted for each calendar day that work is late, up to a maximum of seven calendar days (35 marks). Thereafter, a mark of zero will be recorded. There is no grace period for lateness and penalties begin to apply immediately following the deadline.

Word Count Penalty
Your course handbook will specify the word length of your assessments. All coursework submitted by students must state the word count on the front page. All courses in the School have a standard penalty for going over the word length; if you are taking courses from other Schools, check with them what their penalties are.

The penalty for excessive word length in coursework is a 5-mark penalty. These 5 marks will be deducted regardless of how many words over the limit the work is (whether it is by 1 word or by 500!). In exceptional circumstances, a marker may also decide that any text beyond the word limit will be excluded from the assignment and it will be marked only on the text up to the word limit. In most cases, appendices and bibliography are not included in the word count whilst in-text references, tables, charts, graphs and footnotes are counted.

In most cases, appendices and bibliography are not included in the word count whilst in-text references, tables, charts, graphs and footnotes are counted. Make sure you know what is and what is not included in the word count. Again, check the course handbook for this information and if you are unsure, contact the Course Organiser to check.

You will not be penalised for submitting work below the word limit. However, you should note that shorter essays are unlikely to achieve the required depth and that this will be reflected in your mark.

ELMA: Submission and Return of Coursework
Coursework is submitted online using our electronic submission system, ELMA. You will not be required to submit a paper copy of your work.

Marked coursework, grades and feedback will be returned to you via ELMA. You will not receive a paper copy of your marked course work or feedback.

For details of how to submit your course work to ELMA, please see our webpages here.
Please note that all submissions to ELMA should be formatted as a Word document (doc or.docx.). If you are permitted or required to submit in a different format, this will be detailed in your course handbook.

Extensions

If you have good reason for not meeting a coursework deadline, you may request an extension. Before you request an extension, make sure you have read all the guidance on our webpages and take note of the key points below. You will also be able to access the online extension request form through our webpages.

- Extensions are granted for 7 calendar days.
- If you miss the deadline for requesting an extension for a valid reason, you should submit your coursework as soon as you are able, and apply for Special Circumstances to disregard penalties for late submission. You should also contact your Student Support Officer or Personal Tutor and make them aware of your situation.
- If you have a valid reason and require an extension of more than 7 calendar days, you should submit your coursework as soon as you are able, and apply for Special Circumstances to disregard penalties for late submission. You should also contact your Student Support Officer or Personal Tutor and make them aware of your situation.
- If you have a Learning Profile from the Disability Service allowing you potential for flexibility over deadlines, you must still make an extension request for this to be taken into account.

Guidance on how to avoid academic misconduct (including plagiarism)

Academic misconduct is not just deliberate cheating; it can be unintentional and, whether intended or not, significant grade penalties can be applied. Academic misconduct comes in a variety of forms, including collusion (working together when not allowed), falsification (knowingly providing false information, data etc. in assignments), and the use of online essay mills or essay-writing services. The university takes a zero-tolerance approach to these forms of cheating, and students found guilty of these practices can be subject to formal disciplinary procedures and very heavy grade penalties.

The most common form of misconduct we encounter in the School of Social and Political Science is plagiarism. Plagiarism is giving the impression that something you have written is your own idea or your own words, when actually it is not. It can come from copying and pasting sections of text from books, articles, webpages or other sources into your assignments, or simply from poor standards of referencing. To avoid plagiarism, use a recognised referencing system such as the Harvard system or the Chicago/numbered note system. (The Harvard system is recommended because the reference list at the end is not included in assignment word counts. The numbered notes of the Chicago system are included, leaving you with fewer words overall to write the main body of your assignments). Whichever system you use, you must be open and honest about where you get your ideas from, and reference sources appropriately. Do this by referencing all works from which you have taken ideas or information, each time you use them in your assignments. Use quotation marks (" ") to indicate where you have quoted (used the exact words of) someone else, and provide page numbers from the original source when they are available. As far as
possible, paraphrase others by writing in your own words to avoid over-quoting, but provide a reference to show whose ideas you are using.

Copying from an assignment you previously submitted for credit – either at this university or another – is **self-plagiarism**, which is also not allowed. This is an important consideration if you are retaking a course; an assignment submitted the previous year cannot be resubmitted the next, even for the same course.

To detect plagiarism we use Turnitin, which compares students assignments against a constantly-updated global database of existing work. Students found to have included plagiarised (including self-plagiarised) material in their work will be reported to an Academic Misconduct Officer for investigation. In extreme cases, assignment grades can be reduced to zero. **Do not put your work through Turnitin yourself before submission.** This can lead to you being investigated for academic misconduct by making it seem that an identical assignment already exists.

For further details on plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct, and how to avoid them, visit the university's Institute for Academic Development webpage on good academic practice:  
https://www.ed.ac.uk/institute-academic-development/undergraduate/good-practice

Also see this useful video and further information on the University website:  
https://www.ed.ac.uk/arts-humanities-soc-sci/taught-students/student-conduct/academic-misconduct

If you would like to discuss anything related to matters of academic misconduct, speak with your personal tutor or the School Academic Misconduct Officer (SAMO), Dr Oliver Turner  
(Oliver.Turner@ed.ac.uk).

**Data Protection Guidance for Students**

In most circumstances, students are responsible for ensuring that their work with information about living, identifiable individuals complies with the requirements of the Data Protection Act. The document, *Personal Data Processed by Students*, provides an explanation of why this is the case. It can be found, with advice on data protection compliance and ethical best practice in the handling of information about living, identifiable individuals, on the Records Management section of the University website at:  
https://www.ed.ac.uk/records-management/guidance/data-protection/dpforstudents