Michael Rosie

Proposed Sociology Postgraduate course:

**SCOTLAND: SOCIAL STRUCTURE & SOCIAL CHANGE**

Credit: 20 units
SCQF Level 11
Optional course for MSc in Sociology and MSc in Nationalism Studies.

Please note – this course will parallel an existing Sociology undergraduate Honours option. The postgraduate course is distinctive in its mode of assessment, in having additional seminars and readings, and in different levels of attainment and learning outcomes.

It has been assigned the course code P03362

**Short description:**

Scotland has been an integral part of the United Kingdom, a highly centralised and unitary state, for nearly 300 years. Yet Scotland has survived the Union of 1707, and indeed flourished, as a distinctive nation with a distinctive and largely autonomous civil society. Scotland provides an important test case for the proposition that the quest for self-determination occurs in the context of major shifts in social and political arrangements at the global level. This course reviews the sociological concepts available to understand Scotland, examining issues such as social class and social mobility, economic development, heritage, the media, religion, identity and culture. The course also aims to move beyond any narrow conception of sociology to incorporate insights from other perspectives. This multidisciplinary approach will develop an understanding of Scotland’s place in the contemporary world which takes into account appropriate historical, political and theoretical perspectives.

**Summary of Intended Learning Outcomes:**

- Critically review and assess the sociological concepts available to understand contemporary Scotland
- Critically examine and explain the features of economic development/capitalism in Scotland
- Develop a critical appreciation of patterns of social mobility and class reproduction, with specific reference to social and educational ideologies
- Critically evaluate issue relating to Scottish identity, in particular gender, class, religion, ethnicity, language, culture and integration/exclusion
• Critically examine and explain the key features of, and controversies over, the mass media in Scotland

• Critically evaluate debates on how Scotland is represented in cultural terms, with reference to heritage and tourism

**Components of Assessment:**

Course assessment comprises a 4,000 word essay on a topic specifically concerned with explaining an aspect of Scotland’s contemporary social structure, politics, culture or the processes of change within them. Students will be expected to show initiative in going beyond suggested reading lists to identify appropriate sources, and to approach their chosen topic with explicit reference to its global context and consequences. In particular we expect students to demonstrate a critical understanding of conflicting theories and evidence, to carefully consider the empirical bases of these, and to thus rigorously assess the strengths and weakness of the most important positions.

**Format:**

The course is based around weekly core lectures (open to both Undergraduates and Postgraduates) and six dedicated Postgraduate seminars (see Illustrative programme below).

Lectures will be delivered by a team of expert contributors, and will raise key issues for further group discussion. The Postgraduate seminars will be based around student led presentations and in-depth reading based discussion.

Due to the team-taught nature of the course lecture topics will vary from year to year but will always cover:

• Definitions of Scotland and why ‘Scotland’ is of high contemporary sociological interest.
• Competing explanations for Scotland’s social and economic development.
• Patterns of national identities.
• Social mobility, class reproduction and egalitarian myths.
• The significance of mass media in Scotland ‘distinctiveness’
• Representations of Scotland and Scottish culture with specific reference to heritage and tourism.

The remainder of the lectures will focus on specific issues and case studies. Depending on staff availability these are likely to include:

• The development and significance of Scotland’s civil society
• Rural Scotland: Land, Incomers & Migrants
There will be a further six one-hour seminars for postgraduates in alternate weeks focussing on specific ‘key issues’ in Scotland’s social and political development. These will include, for example, explorations of the ‘myths’ of the Highland Clearances and of Egalitarianism; a close study of media narratives and its ‘wandering we’ in terms of addressing readers in nationalised ways; and the contribution of Highlandism and tartanry to ‘selling Scotland’. One postgraduate seminar will focus on a specific contemporary issue chosen by postgraduates themselves. In each session postgraduates will have responsibility for setting the precise topic and for structuring and provoking discussion.

Key Sources:

The following books serve as excellent introductions to the field and to the debates that we will be following. Additional sources specific to the Postgraduate seminars will be supplied during the course.

Craig Beveridge & Ronald Turnbull (1989) The Eclipse of Scottish Culture
Tony Dickson et al (1980) Scottish Capitalism
David McCrone (2001) Understanding Scotland: The sociology of a nation
Illustrative Course programme

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