

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

Name, title and level of final qualification(s)	MA Sociology (Level 7)
Name and title of any exit qualification(s)	PG Dip, PG Cert;
Awarding Body	University of London
Teaching Institution(s)	Birkbeck, University of London
Home school/other teaching departments	School of Social Sciences
Location of delivery	Central London
Language of delivery and assessment	English
Mode of study, length of study and normal start month	Full-time (1 year) Part-time (2 years) October, January
Professional, statutory or regulatory body	N/A
QAA subject benchmark group(s) Higher Education Credit Framework for England	N/A
Birkbeck Course Code	TMASOCLG_C TMASOCLJ_C (January start)
HECoS Code	100505, 101307
Start date of programme	October 2022
Date of programme approval	January 2022
Date of last programme amendment approval	November 2022
Valid for academic entry year	2025-26
Date of last revision to document	22/07/2024

Admissions requirements

Applicants are normally required to have achieved a first degree at second class honours level as a minimum requirement. The Admissions Tutor will consider applicants who have substantial professional or community-based experience (e.g. teaching, social work, youth work, etc) without a first degree, and who can demonstrate through interview and a written assignment that they have the required academic abilities to complete a Masters level course.

Course aims

MA Sociology will offer a critical, politically engaged sociology that is global and historical in its perspectives, emphasizing the role of colonial structures and processes in the making of the contemporary world. Situated in the Department of Psychosocial Studies, the programme will give students the unique opportunity to enhance their engagement with sociology through the mutually enriching insights of psychosocial studies.

While the MA Sociology is new, the department has long-standing contributions to the discipline of sociology that are rich and varied. Research strands include violence and trauma; human rights and migration; social (in)justice and (in)equalities; race, racialization, racism and hate – including antisemitism and Islamophobia; mental health; psychotherapy and psychoanalysis; and transformations in education. The department also has expertise in critical social research methods that put it in an excellent position to support student research: including ethnographies and autoethnographies of place, culture and community; experience as a site of knowing and knowledge production; creative, visual and practice-based methods; archival methods; and mixed methods.

The MA Sociology is designed for students from a wide range of backgrounds, including those who have not studied sociology previously. The aims of the programme are to enable students to develop a deeper understanding of the social and political complexities of the contemporary social world; to enable them to contribute to our knowledge of the social world; and to facilitate them in understanding how the world can be changed and how they might contribute to this. To meet these aims the programme will provide an advanced introduction to a range of critical sociological theory and empirical research on contemporary and historical social relations and forms of power; it will introduce students to key concepts and debates in sociological methodologies; and it will equip students to design and carry out theoretically informed, empirically rigorous and ethically sound sociological dissertation projects.

Course structure

Level	Module Code	Module Title	Credit	Comp Core/ Option	Likely teaching term(s)
Full-time – 1 year					
7	SSPA152S7	Sociology for New Worlds	30	Compulsory	T1
7	SSPA085D7	Independent Research Module/Dissertation	60	Core	T1-3
7	SSPO263S7	Investigating the Social World	30	Compulsory	T2
7		Option 1	30	option	T1
7		Option 2	30	option	T2

Part-time – 2 years					
Year 1					
7	SSPA152S7	Sociology for New Worlds	30	Compulsory	T1
7	SSPO263S7	Investigating the Social World	30	Compulsory	T2
Year 2					
7	SSPA085D7	Independent Research Module/Dissertation	60	Core	T1-3
7		Option 1	30	optional	T1
7		Option 2	30	optional	T2

Core: *Module must be taken and passed by student*

Compulsory: *Module must be taken but can be considered for compensated credit (see CAS regulations paragraph 24)*

Option: *Student can choose to take this module*

Note: the January start route is the same as the October start route but with the compulsory modules taken in a different order, and with the dissertation submitted in January 12 months or 2 years after the start of the programme instead of September.

Indicative Options

Autumn Term

FDGD012S7 Queer Histories/ Queer Cultures

HICL001S7 Africa Imagined

SSGE111S7 Living with Climate Change

SSPA078S7 Psychoanalysis and Culture

Spring Term

FDDV024S7 Development, Aid and Power

FDLL003S7 Education, Power and Resistances

Summer term

SSGE109S7 Cities in the Global South

SSPA067S7 Lacanian Psychoanalysis: Theory and Practice

Exit Awards: PG Dip Sociology – The PG Dip Sociology is available as an exit award only for students on successful completion of the two compulsory modules and two 30-credit optional modules. PG Cert Sociology – The PG Cert Sociology is available as an exit award only for students who have successfully completed two 30-credit modules, at least one of which must be a compulsory module

How you will learn

Your learning and teaching is organised to help you meet the learning outcomes (below) of the course. As a student, we expect you to be an active learner and to take responsibility for your learning, engaging with all of the material and sessions arranged for you.

Each course is divided into modules. You will find information on the virtual learning site (Moodle, see Academic Support below) about each of your modules, what to expect, the work you need to prepare, links to reading lists, information about how and when you will be assessed.

Your learning for this course will be organised around the activities outlined below.

The programme is designed to develop sociological knowledge and skills – including analytical and communication skills- that students can apply in range of future employment situations.

To this end the course utilizes a range of learning and teaching methods. Teaching and learning methods include:

- Formal teaching and lecturing by specialist staff in the Department of Psychosocial Studies
- Seminars, tutorials, group and individual supervision provided by staff in the Department of Psychosocial Studies
- Workshops run by external or associate staff on specialist topics. This will include 3 invited talks from non-academics working in sociologically relevant capacities in the community each year.
- A research training programme comprising taught sessions and workshops on method and methodology, research design and constructing a dissertation.
- A Summer Programme comprising a range of teaching and learning modes, including masterclasses, film screenings, specialist workshops, and dissertation support sessions.

How we will assess you

The course will use a variety of assessment methods. Assessment is used to enhance your learning rather than simply to test it. For most of the modules associated with this course, your assessment will be through the following types of assessment.

The compulsory modules of the programme will be assessed through a range of written assessments designed to hone different analytical skills and abilities. These will include traditional academic essays, a theoretically informed piece written for a non-academic audience, and a methodological review.

Students will also complete a dissertation of 10,000-12,000 words. Those who choose to do so can also submit a practice-based dissertation, comprised of a piece of practice work (a film; a series of photographs; a curated exhibit, for example) accompanied by a 4,000 word written component.

Learning outcomes (what you can expect to achieve)

'Learning outcomes' indicate what you should be able to know or do at the end of your course. Providing them helps you to understand what your teachers will expect and also the learning requirements upon which you will be assessed.

At the end of this course, you should be able to:

- Demonstrate a nuanced understanding of key concepts and areas of debate in contemporary critical sociology
- Demonstrate the capacity to apply sociological understanding to a range of contexts and phenomena
- Demonstrate a firm grasp of a range of theoretical approaches to sociological knowledge production
- Demonstrate a conceptual grasp and practical understanding of sociological methodologies for empirical research
- Carry out a piece of independent research on a topic of their choice
- Communicate complex sociological ideas to a range of audiences

- Work effectively in a small-group to discuss ideas and concepts and apply them to a range of materials
- Manage your own independent reading and learning outside staff contact-time so as to produce assignments of the required standard.

Careers and further study

You will find Sociology graduates in the following kinds of roles: health and social care; education; social research; social policy; civil service; international development and human rights; youth and community work; the cultural industries; as well as further study at MPhil/PhD levels.

Birkbeck's MA Sociology graduates will complete with a set of valuable attributes, for example:

- The ability to assess and evaluate a range of social issues and problems
- High-level oral and written communication skills in English
- The ability to design and complete research projects
- The ability to present yourself and communicate an argument to a range of audiences

Birkbeck offers a range of careers support to its students. You can find out more on [the careers pages of our website](#).

Academic regulations and course management

Birkbeck's academic regulations are contained in its [Common Award Scheme Regulations](#) and Policies published by year of application on the Birkbeck website.

You will have access to a course handbook on Moodle and this will outline how your course is managed, including who to contact if you have any questions about your module or course.

Support for your study

Your learning at Birkbeck is supported by your teaching team and other resources and people in the College there to help you with your study. Birkbeck uses a virtual learning environment called Moodle and each course has a dedicated Moodle page and there are further Moodle sites for each of your modules. This will include your course handbook.

Birkbeck will introduce you to the Library and IT support, how to access materials online, including using Moodle, and provide you with an orientation which includes an online Moodle module to guide you through all of the support available. You will also be allocated a personal tutor and provided with information about learning support offered within your School and by the College.

[Please check our website for more information about student support services](#). This covers the whole of your time as a student with us including learning support and support for your wellbeing.

Quality and standards at Birkbeck

Birkbeck's courses are subject to our quality assurance procedures. This means that new courses must follow our design principles and meet the requirements of our academic regulations. Each new course or module is subject to a course approval process where the proposal is scrutinised by subject specialists, quality professionals and external representatives to ensure that it will offer an excellent student experience and meet the expectation of regulatory and other professional bodies.

You will be invited to participate in an online survey for each module you take. We take these surveys seriously and they are considered by the course team to develop both modules and the overall courses. Please take the time to complete any surveys you are sent as a student.

We conduct an annual process of reviewing our portfolio of courses which analyses student achievement, equality data and includes an action plan for each department to identify ongoing enhancements to our education, including changes made as a result of student feedback.

Our periodic review process is a regular check (usually every four years) on the courses by department with a specialist team including students.

Each course will have an external examiner associated with it who produces an annual report and any recommendations. Students can read the most recent external examiner reports on the course Moodle pages. Our courses are all subject to Birkbeck Baseline Standards for our Moodle module information. This supports the accessibility of our education including expectations of what information is provided online for students.

The information in this programme specification has been approved by the College's Academic Board and every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information it contains.

Programme specifications are reviewed periodically. If any changes are made to courses, including core and/or compulsory modules, the relevant department is required to provide a revised programme specification. Students will be notified of any changes via Moodle.

Further information about specifications and an archive of programme specifications for the College's courses is [available online](#).

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