

Programme Specification

1	Awarding body	University of London
2	Teaching Institution	Birkbeck College
3	Programme Title(s)	MA Psychosocial Studies
4	Programme Code(s)	TMAPSYSL_C
5	UCAS code	N/A
6	Home Department	Psychosocial Studies
7	Exit Award(s)	PG Dip Psychosocial Studies (exit award only, after successful completion of core module1 and 2 and optional modules 1 and 2) PG Cert Psychosocial Studies (exit award only, after successful completion of two modules at least one of which is a core module)
8	Duration of Study (number of years)	1 year full-time; 2 years part-time
9	Mode of Study	FT x PT x DL
10	Level of Award (FHEQ)	7
11	Other teaching depts or institution	N/A
12	Professional, Statutory Regulatory Body(PSRB) details	N/A
13	QAA Benchmark Group	N/A

14	Programme Rationale & Aims
	<p>Psychosocial Studies is a leading department in this interdisciplinary field that brings together social, cultural and psychosocial researchers. The Department has developed a distinctive approach to research and teaching that draws on a range of critical frameworks including psychoanalytic theory, social theory, feminist and queer theory, cultural and post-colonial studies and qualitative psychosocial methodologies. In our research we aim to connect discussions of our precarious and increasingly interconnected collective fates with our most intimate personal and psychic life.</p> <p>Some of the research strands in the department include: violence, state violence and conflict; intimacy, parenting, care and personal life; human rights, social responsibility and helping behaviour; public cultures, social movements, citizenship and social identities; postcolonial urban cultures and histories of 'race' and racism; gender and sexuality; emotional development, psychic change and aging.</p> <p>The MA Psychosocial Studies is designed for graduates with a wide range of backgrounds, who are looking to develop an in depth understanding of the relation between individual subjectivities and identities, and historical and contemporary social and political formations.</p>

15	Entry Criteria
	This is a theoretically demanding Masters level course, and applicants are normally required to have achieved a first degree at second class honours level as a minimum requirement.

	<p>In exceptional circumstances, the Admissions Tutor will consider applicants who have substantial professional experience (e.g. teaching, social work, counselling & psychotherapy, mediation, development 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.</p>
16	<p>Learning Outcomes</p>
	<p>On successful completion of this programme a student will be expected to be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate a firm grasp of a range of interdisciplinary theoretical approaches to understanding the psychosocial constitution of the human subject and the relationship between the psychic and the social in the wider social formation. • Demonstrate the capacity to apply a psychosocial understanding to key problematics and phenomena. • Demonstrate a conceptual grasp and practical understanding of psychosocial epistemologies and methodologies for empirical and theoretical research • Carry out a piece of independent research (either empirical or theoretical) on a psychosocial topic of their choice. • Work effectively in a small-group so as to perform a number of small-group tasks including group oral presentations. • Manage their own independent reading and learning outside staff contact-time so as to produce assignments of the required standard.
17	<p>Learning, teaching and assessment methods</p>
	<p>The programme is designed to develop psychosocial skills and knowledge in order to prepare students to work with a psychosocial lens in a range of future employment situations (e.g. psychological, psychotherapeutic and counselling settings; health and social care; education; social and psychological research; social policy; international development, human rights; the cultural industries; social research, including further study at MPhil/PhD levels). To this end the course utilizes a range of learning and teaching methods. Teaching and learning methods include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal teaching and lecturing by specialist staff in the Department of Psychosocial Studies • Specialist workshops run by external or associate staff on specialist topics, including ‘Masterclasses’ with world-renowned scholars such as Professor Judith Butler (Visiting Professor associated specifically with the programme) and Professor Slavoj Zizek • Seminars, tutorials, group and individual supervision provided by staff in the Department of Psychosocial Studies • A research training programme comprising 11 Psychosocial Research Methods sessions in the Autumn term. • A Summer Programme comprising a range of teaching and learning modes, including masterclasses, film screenings, specialist workshops, research training and dissertation support sessions • A range of small-group work carried out by students outside of teaching time in order to develop research and writing skills, document preparation, and oral presentation.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A range of writing, documenting and recording projects fully integrated in the teaching and learning strategy for specific courses (core courses and option courses) that may include the production of reflections on weekly readings, field notes/observations, and visual and electronic media hybrid objects (in the option course on Visual Culture), using Moodle and other e-learning technologies. • Student teaching experience in the form of small-group mini-lectures to fellow students on developing research topics, in the context of an ad hoc year-long programme of research training. • The Department of Psychosocial Studies has a formal link with the University of São Paulo, Brazil. This link enables students on this programme to undertake an optional module at the University of São Paulo as part of their programme of study at Birkbeck. Further information about this opportunities for studying abroad can be obtained from the Head of Department. <p>These learning and teaching methods are designed to take seriously the need for a wide variety of generic and specialist skills provision beyond the specialist focus of a student’s academic and intellectual engagements with Psychosocial Studies, and are tailored to skill students with transferable skills for future employment.</p> <p>Regarding assessment, this is structured manly through written assignments for each module (4000 words) and a dissertation of 10.000-12.000 words.</p>
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18	<p>Programme Description</p> <p>Genuinely interdisciplinary, the MA Psychosocial Studies combines core taught courses and optional modules, as well as the opportunity for independent research supervised by staff members and advanced doctoral students.</p> <p>Core modules</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theories and Sites of the Psychosocial • Texts and Interpretation • Independent Research Module <p>Optional modules – Psychosocial Studies</p> <p>Each year we offer a variety of option modules within the Department and we cross-list as well available courses from the School of Social Science, History and Philosophy. Our options have included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture, Community, Identity • Psychoanalysis and Culture • Lacanian Psychoanalysis: Theory and Practice • Violence, Conflict and Genocide • Sexing the Body: Psychoanalytic and other Framings • Visual Culture: Power and the Image <p>Further details on the two core courses and the research training programme are as follows:</p> <p>Theories and Sites of the Psychosocial - Module Convenor Dr. Silvia Posocco</p> <p>The course provides an introduction to the domain of psychosocial studies. The emphasis is on a broad field of theory, analysis and critique that is concerned with understanding the relations between power and subjectivity.</p>
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The aim is to introduce students to a plurality of interventions through which the psychosocial can be understood and combine a wide range of cutting-edge perspectives in social and cultural theory, notably contributions in feminist, postcolonial and queer studies, with readings of classic texts by, for example, Freud, Lacan, Fanon, Foucault and Butler.

The course adopts an interdisciplinary approach to the psychosocial, with a strong emphasis on theory. Interdisciplinarity is a mode of knowledge production which does not assume a shared disciplinary history as a context for analytical interventions, but rather, works towards generating knowledge across disciplinary contexts, histories and domains. It values perspectives which may be located in-between more traditionally constituted fields and is therefore dependent upon knowledge-practices of crossing, traversing and connecting for the generation of understanding and critique. This approach is reflected in the course teaching team, whose expertise in sociology, social psychology, social anthropology, psychoanalysis and cultural studies intersects productively with the fields of feminist, gender, postcolonial and queer studies.

Weekly lectures and seminars cover a wide range of analytical tools and review key debates over the meanings and uses of key concepts such as subjectivity, anti-subjectivity, genealogy and worlding; the unconscious, repression, drives and objects; psychoanalysis, racism and racist imaginaries; colonizing gaze, epidermalization, lactification, racist desire; spatial subjectivity and heterotopias; ideology, interpellation and subject formation; power, discourse and subjectivation; gender, identity, identification and fantasy; the panopticon, surveillance and the gaze; kinship, heterosexist imaginaries, and the 'non-reproductive'; affect, feelings and emotions; biopolitics, necropolitics, exception and immunity.

Lectures and seminars draw on social and cultural theory to explore how theoretical accounts connect to the analysis of specific social processes and political contexts.

The task of situating 'the psychosocial' spatially, temporally and conceptually entails grappling with the very emergence of the psychosocial in modernity/coloniality, configuring the psychosocial as a domain of knowledge production concerned with the critical analysis of subjectivity as socially, culturally and historically located experience. Participants are invited to situate, mobilise and deploy theoretical constructs to examine and understand key aspects of contemporary life such as the fluctuating gendered dimensions of desire, identification and belonging, alongside the dynamics of racism, political violence, conflict, crisis and endurance.

Texts and Interpretation - Module Tutor: Dr Margarita Palacios

The main aim of this module is to gain understanding of the different philosophical traditions which inspire research and interpretation within the field of psychosocial studies. Leaving behind metaphysical notions of truth and objectivity, this module explores different hermeneutical traditions which acknowledge the centrality of contexts, power structures and subjective/discursive positions in the process of meaning formation and production of knowledge. Key concepts to be discussed in this module are language, discourse, meaning, context, desire and power.

Syllabus Overview

Week 1: De-colonising knowledge: power, context and the idea of interpretation

Week 2: De-colonising knowledge II

Week 3: De-colonising knowledge III

Week 4: Dialogical Approaches: Hermeneutics, Pragmatism and Phenomenology

Week 5: Dialogical Approaches II

	<p>Week 6: Reading Week (no class)</p> <p>Week 7: Marxist Tradition: Ideology, Alienation and Hegemony</p> <p>Week 8: Marxist Tradition II</p> <p>Week 9: Semiotics, Structuralism and Deconstruction</p> <p>Week 10: Semiotics II</p> <p>Week 11: Psychoanalysis: Being, Language and Desire.</p> <p>Independent Research Module - Team-taught</p> <p>This module gives students the opportunity to undertake a piece of supervised independent research of your choice in the field of psychosocial studies. It allows students to test and develop their knowledge and understanding of the field gained in the prior core and optional modules and represents the culmination of students' learning. The research topic must be relevant to Psychosocial Studies and students are encouraged to undertake a piece of qualitative empirical research or a theoretical research project. The module is divided into two parts: a taught element, Psychosocial Research Methods, and individual supervision.</p> <p>The Psychosocial Research Methods element of this module will be taught over 11 weeks in term 1 of full time study or term 4 of part time study, leading into the proposal stage for the dissertation. All sessions of the taught element will attend to issues of reflexivity, ethics, power and inequality in the research process as an integral element of the teaching; all sessions will also attend to the epistemological and ontological assumptions of the particular method(s)/ approach; all sessions will interrogate what validity and reliability mean in relation to the particular method(s)/approaches being discussed; and all will have a focus on exploring answers to the module's central question, "what is psychosocial research?"</p> <p>Following completion of the taught element, students will be allocated supervisors to support the development of their dissertation proposal and then would pursue research for their dissertations over terms 2 and especially term 3 of full time, or terms 5 and 6 of part time study.</p>
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19	Programme Structure			
Full Time programme				
Year 1				
Level	Module Code	Module Title	Credits	Status*
7	PSSL040S7	Theories and Sites of the Psychosocial	30	Core
7	PSSL039S7	Texts and Interpretation	30	Core
7		Option 1	30	Option
7		Option 2	30	Option
7	SSPA085D7	Independent Research Module	60	Core
Part Time programme				
Year 1				
Level	Module Code	Module Title	Credits	Status*
7	PSSL040S7	Theories and Sites of the Psychosocial	30	Core
7	PSSL039S7	Texts and Interpretation	30	Core

Year of entry: 2021/22

Year 2				
Level	Module Code	Module Title	Credits	Status*
7		Option 1	30	Option
7		Option 2	30	Option
7	SSPA085D7	Independent Research Module	60	Core

Status*

CORE – Module must be taken and passed by student; COMPULSORY – Module must be taken, mark can be reviewed at sub-exam board; OPTIONAL – Student can choose to take this module

20	Programme Director	Dr Silvia Posocco
21	Start Date (<i>term/year</i>)	Autumn 2009
22	Date approved by TQEC	Spring 2009
23	Date approved by Academic Board	Summer 2009
24	Date(s) updated/amended	26 September 2017