First Year Politics Handbook

Academic Year 2023-24

**Department of Sociology &
Centre for the Study of Politics**
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Maynooth University
Sociology.Department@mu.ie

Contents

A Message from our Head of Department, Prof. Mary Murphy and Our Key Principles

Dear Students,

My name is [Professor Mary Murphy](#) and as the Head of the Department of Sociology and Centre for the Study of Politics, I would like to welcome you to our department. Whether you are a first-year undergraduate, a returning student or beginning your postgraduate studies, we hope you have a rich and fulfilling life here in Maynooth University.

Our approach to the study of both Sociology and Politics is informed by our commitment to public sociology and to being engaged and relevant to the world we live in. Our approach is to be interested, creative, critical, and engaged active citizens interested in shaping the world we share. We encourage you while you are here to get involved with student life, sports, clubs and societies, and particularly to join the [MU Politics and Sociology Society](#) and to engage with us through social media (Twitter: [@MU_Sociology](#) and [@MU__Politics](#)).

 As you get to know us, our work, and publications, you will find we [research](#) across a broad and diverse range of local, national and international topics. We bring this research to our teaching offering you a very broad choice of modules and subjects, enabling you to craft your own pathway through your degree programme. You can find out more about this year's choices and modules in our exciting [Undergraduate](#), [Masters](#) and [PhD](#) programmes through the relevant pages on our website - and also read about [what you can do with a degree in Politics or Sociology](#) as well as the work of our [Centre for the Study of Politics](#)

You will find all you need to know on the different sections of the website and through our social media. You can also email our incredible admin team (sociology.department@mu.ie), our accessible [lecturers](#) and tutors, and you can communicate through your class representative.

This year, all our lectures and tutorials are live on-campus, and we will do all we can to ensure you are safe and comfortable. Our door is always open, talk to us and tell us what you are thinking and what you might need, we are happy to support you in any way we can.

Most of all, enjoy your time here in Maynooth!

All the best

Mary

SOCIOLOGY & POLITICS @MU

OUR LEARNING COMMUNITY
KEY PRINCIPLES

Our Department is a community of teachers and learners who endeavour to learn from each other through relationships that are open respectful and engaging.

We respect others by avoiding disrupting their teaching and learning, we try to avoid talking during lectures, arriving late and/or leaving early from lectures, and other disruptive actions.

We understand that the staff of the department are concerned for the welfare of all students, for integrity, fairness and inclusiveness in our work and overall to promote learning in the ways that are judged to be most effective.

We are a diverse group of people who respect each other's varying experiences and perspectives.

We engage in active discussion and debate in an atmosphere of civility and mutual respect, in-person and online, inside and outside of the formal classroom and campus.

We respect the policies of each lecturer and tutor regarding classroom and module policies and practices, including the use of technology in the classroom.

We understand that we can bring concerns we might have to academic and administrative staff, and in particular to the Head of Department.
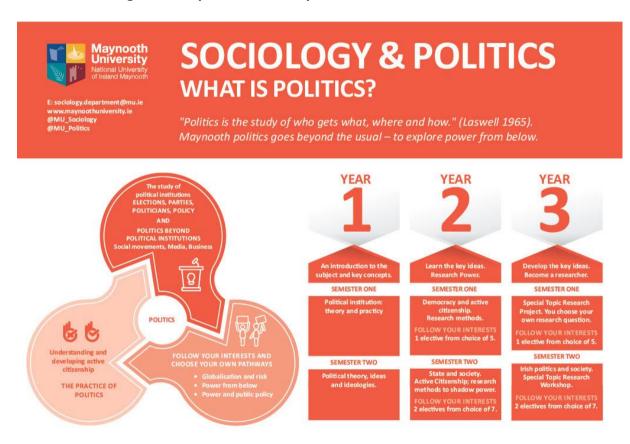
Maynooth University
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E: sociology.department@mu.ie
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@MU_Sociology   @MU__Politics

About Sociology and Politics at Maynooth.

The subject matter of politics and sociology is diverse, and our programme at Maynooth University reflects the varied interests of the members of the Department which can be viewed also on the Our People page.

2. The Politics Degree at Maynooth University

Teaching and Learning Formats

Welcome to our Department. We strive to ensure our communication with students is clear and consistent. Our **'Undergraduate Information and Learning Hub'** on the department website will be updated regularly with relevant departmental teaching and learning information, as well as useful resources and supports.

Timetables

Please refer to Course Finder for up-to-date information on module venues and times.

First Year Politics module descriptions

PO152 Political Institutions - Nessa Ní Chasaide

Who decides, what, how and why? Studying political institutions reveals a lot about where power is concentrated and how people interact to produce outcomes that shape the world we live in. This module introduces students to government and politics. It focuses on the key institutions to be found in modern political systems, what they contribute to processes of governance, and how power and interests are distributed across and among those institutions. Political institutions can be formal and informal, national and international. In this module, we primarily focus on political institutions as formal mechanisms and instruments used to manage power relations and enable decision-making at national levels. For example, we will examine key political mechanisms and instruments including constitutions and laws, executives and legislatures, political parties and electoral systems. We contextualise this exploration within the wider dynamic of national and international politics. Recent years have witnessed crises in political institutions with a growth of 'anti-politics' sentiment. This can be seen in declines in electoral support for established parties, rising support for populist alternatives of both the 'left' and the 'right', and significant protest movements. In the context of these trends we examine whether, and how, political institutions stand up to the pressures of contemporary politics. This exploration will support the critical examination of the question 'what is politics in today's world?', and, in turn, invite consideration of what it could be.

PO151 Introduction to Political Ideas – Dr. Barry Cannon

The main aims of this course are to introduce students to some of the principal ideologies and concepts in politics, and to relate these to a number of important contemporary issues in order to contextualise theory better. The course is divided into three main themes as a result: ideologies, ideas, and issues. The first will introduce the concept of ideology and will examine and interrogate some of the main ideologies shaping current political thought: liberalism, conservatism, socialism, nationalism, fascism, populism, feminism, ecologism, and Islamism. Then, four key political ideas will be introduced and discussed from the perspectives of some of these ideologies: justice, liberty, equality and democracy. Finally, students will be asked to examine some contemporary issues from the perspectives of some of these ideas and ideologies to help frame debate on these. In this way students will receive an overview of some of the most important ideologies and ideas guiding politics today and be encouraged to actively link these to concrete questions affecting the "real", contemporary world, revealing links between theory and practice.

Assessment

See Results Information for further information on grading.

Details of assessment will be provided through modules with an overview on the website in due course.

Essay assessment

The main criteria in assessing an essay are:

- level of understanding of the issue
- number of readings and the use which is made of such readings
- logical development of the discussion
- awareness and discussion of alternative arguments or viewpoints
- clarity of the writing and citation style.

A first-class essay or paper will show an excellent understanding of the issue; demonstrate an ability to use analytical reasoning; mobilise a good range of readings; and it will be written in a clear and concise style. An essay will fail if it does not address the question; reveals a fundamental lack of understanding of the issue; or is based on far too limited a range of readings.

Key Dates for Students

Mon Sept 25	Lectures commence
Mon Oct 30 – Fri 3 Nov	Study week
Fri 22 Dec	Conclusion of first semester classes

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Fri 12 January 2024	January examinations commence
Mon February 6	Semester 2 Lectures commence
Mon March 25 – Fri March 29	Study week
Mon April 1 – Friday April 5	Easter Vacation
Fri May 10	Conclusion of second semester classes
Fri 17 May 2024	Summer examinations commence

First Year Tutorial Sign-Up

PO152 Tutorial sign-ups will commence on the PO152 Moodle page on Thursday 28th of September 2023 at 11am and will run until Tuesday 3rd of October 2023 at 11am.
Tutorials begin week beginning 9th October 2023. Please ensure that you choose a tutorial time that does not clash with times for your modules in your other subjects.
PLEASE NOTE THAT YOU WILL NEED TO KEEP THIS TUTORIAL TIME FREE FOR TERM 1 AND TERM 2 TUTORIALS.

Consultation

It is vital that we are made aware, as soon as possible of any difficulties you may have in relation to your work or with any aspect of the first-year Politics programme. If you have a problem or question which relates generally to the first-year programme, or to your participation in it, please contact Politics co-ordinator Dr. Barry Cannon at barry.cannon@mu.ie.

If you have a query in relation to a particular lecture course, please contact the lecturer who is giving that course. Staff members are available for consultation at various hours during each week of term. It is difficult to hold regular in person office hours during these times but staff will post contact times on the module Moodle sites. Alternatively, you may make an appointment by email or by contacting the department administration team - Sociology Department, Room 2.11, 2nd Floor, The Technology, Society and Innovation Building (TSI), North Campus Tel: 01 708-3659.

In addition to consulting with individual lecturers or the Politics co-ordinator, students may communicate with the Sociology Department through the Staff Student Consultative Committee. The purpose of this body is to provide a forum where the concerns and interests of students can be raised. The committee consists of the staff year co-ordinators and student representatives of the various years who will be elected by students after the beginning of term.

Should you wish to raise a matter at the Staff-Student Consultative Committee you can do so in the following ways:
1. Talk to the staff member who has administrative responsibility for Politics (Dr. Barry Cannon)
2. Talk to your first-year student representative once he or she is elected.

For more information on contacting staff in the department and university, please go to: Undergraduate Learning & Information Hub | Maynooth University and click on the *Who Should I Contact?* tab

Communications

It is assumed that you will attend your module. It is also assumed that you will check the relevant departmental webpages once every two or three days.

You are responsible for familiarising yourself with announcements or notices provided during periods of time that are absent from class or from campus. It is assumed that you check your MUMAIL email account every two to three days (even if you primarily use another email account) and that you check module Moodle sites regularly.

All Lecturer and Department announcements go to your Maynooth University email account only. Please make sure that you check your Maynooth University email account every two to three days (even if you primarily use another email account). Please also enable your Moodle account to receive messages from the sociology department and check your module Moodle sites regularly.

You are responsible for keeping up to date with announcements or notices provided during periods of time that you are absent from class or from campus.

Support Services

Maynooth University provides a wide range of support services to its students. A document listing and describing these services can be accessed through the [Undergraduate Information and Learning Hub page of the Department's website](#) or by searching the Maynooth website.

Deadlines, Late Work and Penalties

We understand that students will face multiple challenges this year and we will do whatever we can to facilitate your completion of all your work and your programme as a whole. However, our approach is to work to the programme deadlines, more or less as usual, and then provide accommodations and supports as needed. Otherwise, it will become very difficult to manage all the competing demands on your studies. We encourage you to manage your schedule of assessment, as well as of teaching and learning, very carefully. We will provide resources at the [Undergraduate Learning and Information Hub](#) to help you do this.

[Our policy on extensions for all undergraduate modules (including for special topics) can be found here.](#)

Requirements for Autumn Supplemental Examination

Details of Autumn resit assessment will be provided during the year, depending on the changing circumstances. However, the basic principles will remain that assessment completed during the year can be carried forward towards the resits. All continuous assessments to be submitted by July 31, 2024 as part of the repeat process.

Plagiarism and academic integrity

Plagiarism involves an attempt to use an element of another person's work, without appropriate acknowledgement in order to gain academic credit. It may include the

unacknowledged verbatim reproduction of material, unsanctioned collusion, but is not limited to these matters; it may also include the unacknowledged adoption of an argumentative structure, or the unacknowledged use of a source or of research materials.

For example, when you directly copy another person's text without placing it in quotation marks and without acknowledging the source, you are plagiarising. The same is true when you present someone else's original idea, research or argument as though it were your own.

Plagiarism is strictly forbidden. It reveals an unwillingness to think for oneself and is both unethical and illegal under copyright laws. Please do not make the mistake of assuming that we won't recognise plagiarised material – we know how to use Google too. It is almost always possible to identify text that has been professionally copy-edited, or is different in style from your own. The direct copying of passages (including illustrations) from a book, an article or the Internet without adequate references is a serious breach of academic trust and practice. Submitting essays or projects written by anyone other than yourself will also result in heavy penalties – including receiving a 0 (zero). As your final assessment is partly based on written assignments, plagiarism is equivalent to cheating at examinations.

Maynooth University considers plagiarism to be a serious academic misconduct, deserving of academic penalties. This document sets out the procedures for dealing with cases of plagiarism or suspected plagiarism in taught programmes of the University.

The Department of Sociology operates an "early warning" system. If a student is suspected of plagiarism, the student is required to meet with the appropriate lecturer to discuss the problem. If this is a first instance, the student will receive a warning but will be allowed to resubmit their work.

Second and subsequent instances of this kind will be dealt with strictly in accordance with the procedures outlined in the Maynooth University Policy on Plagiarism.

[The Maynooth University policy guidelines on plagiarism are available here.](#) You should note that when you submit work you sign a cover sheet statement that this work is original and does not constitute plagiarism under the Maynooth University Policy on Plagiarism. Any thesis found to be plagiarized in part or whole will be given a mark of zero (0).

Use of AI (Artificial Intelligence) (i.e. ChatGPT etc.)

The use of generative Artificial Intelligence (e.g. ChatGPT etc.) is strictly forbidden on all assignments, assessments, and academic work that you do within the department unless otherwise specified by your lecturer. To take credit for another person's or machine-generated words, writing and thoughts, and to present that as your own work, is plagiarism and will be subject to the policies of the university on plagiarism (see section on plagiarism above). The department reserves the right to ask students for an in-person meeting to account further for the assessment. Use of Artificial Intelligence in one module does not give permission for its use in any other assessment or modules**.**

Guidelines for Citation

The Department has prepared specific guidelines for citation, please see here. You may also find the library helpful in finding, using and citing resources. They also have printers, laptops and other helpful resources on avoiding plagiarism.

USEFUL LINKS:

Library homepage; Politics Subject Guide; LIST online;

Undergraduate library contact: Áine Carey, aine.carey@mu.ie & Niall O'Brien,

niall.obrien@mu.ie

Venues and Locations, Maynooth University

A comprehensive list of all classroom locations and venues, including timetable codes, can be found here.

Experiential Learning

The routes available to Maynooth students to experience more from their degree programme are diverse, enabling the development of rich learning experiences that connect classroom content with real-world experience. The Experiential Learning Office connects Maynooth students to a range of opportunities in the following areas.

Professional Development and Employability
Experiential learning professional development and employability modules are available to eligible second year students. The key purpose of these modules, involving a number of employers, is to facilitate students in their academic, personal and professional career development, so that they will be well equipped to secure internships and to successfully enter the graduate labour market.

See Skills for Success for more details

Community Based Service Learning
Community Based Service Learning presents a credit-bearing academic experience that empowers students to engage with their surrounding communities, which often results in enhancing student's academic, civic, social and personal development, whilst they contribute to the common good. The experiential learning office facilitates academic staff in offering community-based service learning experiences with their students.

For further information, refer to:
Website: https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/experiential-learning-office

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