

**MODULE: Understanding Society (course code BAJH-US)**

**Griffith College Dublin – Journalism and Visual Media**

**Fall Semester**

**This module has no pre-requisites.**

### **Introduction**

Humans are social and relational beings. This module will enable students to think through the socio-economic roots of contemporary problems and the socio-economic basis of human activity. It is necessary to develop a sociological outlook when confronted with social institutions, processes and problems. It is also necessary to understand the economic realities that contribute to problem formation and problem resolution in society and the roots of human action and understanding in groups.

### **Module Aims**

This module aims to enable the student to:

- Acquire an insight into the working of socio-economic processes.
- Acquire the conceptual tools required to understand the reasons for social and economic action and the formation of human social understanding
- Relate ideas in this field to the main strands of socio-economic thought.

### **Module Learning Outcomes**

On successful completion of this module, the student should be able to:

- Think through the social origins of actions by individuals and groups
- Relate group activity to its social class or other socially or economically based origins
- Understand the value of, and begin to replicate, academic research

### **Indicative Module Content**

#### **The Enlightenment and the Emergence of Economic Thought**

The Enlightenment as the precursor of modern social science and the beginning of 'modernity'. The birth of the social and the systematic analysis of social life. The emergence of the economy as a distinct sphere of social existence and economics as a science

#### **The Critique of the Market Economy**

Classes under capitalism, the emergence of the working class and class-consciousness. Marx's critique of capitalism: historical materialism and the Marx's labour theory of value. The Utopian Socialists

### **Emergence of sociology**

An introduction to Durkheim's pioneering work and contemporary critical analysis. Contrast between Marx, Durkheim and Weber and key sociological theories.

### **Stratification, Class Structure and Poverty**

The differing approaches of Marx and Weber. The social reproduction of identity. Income inequality and trends in income distribution.

### **Conformity and deviance**

The evolution of attitudes to law, crime and punishment.

### **Gender and sexuality**

The interaction between the biological and social conditioning of behaviour. Changing attitudes to women in western society. Women in the workforce; treatment of; and inequalities in.

### **Power and Legitimation**

How power operates at different levels and in different societies; relations between economic, political and cultural power; forms of political legitimisation; Who rules and how; Weber and Gramsci on modes of legitimation and hegemony:

### **Social change and the globalisation of social life**

Theories of social change - economic, political and cultural influences. The formation of nations, the nature of colonialism, the difficulties in the transition from agricultural to industrial society.

### **Self interest and morality in society**

The economic origins of self interest and individualism. An introduction to the philosophy of the Classical Liberalists including Jeremy Bentham and Adam Smith. Theories of morality, good and evil society including the work Aristotle, Nietzsche and Confucius

### **From Factions to Federalisms**

The organisation of society in terms of electoral systems and institutional, the idea of democracy from the US constitution in the 1780s up to the formation of the Irish state and the EU today.

### **Assessment**

This module will be assessed by one academic essay (Continuous Assessment 40%) based on module content, and by a written exam (60%).