

## PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

Course record information

Name and level of final award:	BA Honours Sociology
Name and level of intermediate awards:	Diploma of Higher Education Certificate of Higher Education
Awarding body/institution:	University of Westminster
Teaching Institution:	University of Westminster
Status of awarding body/institution:	Recognised Body
Location of delivery:	Central London
Language of delivery and assessment:	English
Mode, length of study and normal starting month:	Three years full time, four years part time day. September start.
<a href="#">QAA subject benchmarking group(s)</a> :	Sociology
Professional statutory or regulatory body:	Not applicable
Date of course validation/review:	February 2015
Date of programme specification approval:	April 2016
Valid for cohorts :	2016/17 level 4/5, 2017/18 level 4,5 and 6
Course Leader	Dr Francis Ray White
UCAS code and URL:	L300 <a href="http://westminster.ac.uk/courses/undergraduate">westminster.ac.uk/courses/undergraduate</a>

## What are the minimum entry requirements for the course?

There are standard minimum [entry requirements](#) for all undergraduate courses. Students are advised to check the standard requirements for the most up-to-date information.

[westminster.ac.uk/courses/undergraduate/how-to-apply](http://westminster.ac.uk/courses/undergraduate/how-to-apply)

For most courses a decision will be made on the basis of your application form alone. However, for some courses the selection process may include an interview to demonstrate your strengths in addition to any formal entry requirements.

More information can be found here: [westminster.ac.uk/courses/undergraduate/how-to-apply](http://westminster.ac.uk/courses/undergraduate/how-to-apply)

## Aims of the course

The BA Honours Sociology has been designed to produce graduates who are inspiring, active and informed global citizens, interested and engaged with social issues in their communities and beyond, and equipped with the knowledge and attributes to make a difference personally, socially and professionally in their worlds. By encouraging students' excitement about sociological knowledge the course aims to develop the questioning disposition and capacity for critical thinking necessary for meaningful intellectual enquiry into how societies operate.

Investigation into the nature of societal structures and their impact on people's everyday lives and interactions is central to the course's aims. Questions of how power is exercised and normalised at all levels of society, from the state to individual emotions, are developed through explorations of, amongst other factors, social class, gender, race, ethnicity and sexuality. Students gain a sensitive understanding of diversity as well as a keen self-awareness and ability to make sense of their own social location in terms of identities, culture, beliefs and values.

The course also aims to engage practically with the sociological research strategies that are employed to undertake, evaluate and conduct sociological research competently. Research and methods training is included at every level of the course to equip students with the skills to formulate research questions, retrieve and manage information, design and conduct research and analyse data. Emphasis is placed on questioning, deconstructing and evaluating accounts and using research to propose alternative solutions and explanations. The knowledge and skills acquired through the course allow students to gain a critical and imaginative edge over their peers in securing and succeeding in future work.

The programme is led by sociologists who are specialists in their fields and whose interests include theory, methodology, identity, cultural studies, race and ethnicity, gender and sexualities, families, education, religion, migration, the body, work and leisure, social activism and the media.

## What will you be expected to achieve?

Learning outcomes are statements on what successful students have achieved as the result of learning. These are threshold statements of achievement the learning outcomes broadly fall into four categories:

- The overall **knowledge and understanding** you will gain from your course (KU);

- **Graduate attributes** are characteristics that you will have developed during the duration of your course (GA);
- **Professional and personal practice learning outcomes** are specific skills that you will be expected to have gained on successful completion of the course (PPP);
- **Key transferable skills** that you will be expected to have gained on successful completion of the course (KTS).

#### **Level 4 learning outcomes**

Upon completion of level 4 you will be able to:

- 4.1. Describe a range of key concepts and theoretical approaches in sociology;
- 4.2. Recognise patterns of social diversity and inequality;
- 4.3. Recognise the nature of social relationships between individuals, groups and social institutions;
- 4.4. Identify sociologically informed explanations and questions;
- 4.5. Summarise the findings of empirical sociological research including identification of the methodological framework used and the ethical dimensions of social research;
- 4.6. Apply basic research tools in a preliminary way;
- 4.7. Recognise ways in which sociology can be distinguished from other forms of understanding and explanation;
- 4.8. Retrieve information, cite evidence/sources and produce coherently structured arguments and written work.
- 4.9. Reflect on their own work and participate in group work and discussion.

#### **Level 5 learning outcomes**

Upon completion of level 5 you will be able to:

- 5.1 Describe, examine and compare a range of key concepts and theoretical approaches in sociology;
- 5.2. Examine patterns of social diversity and inequality;
- 5.3. Examine the dynamics of social relationships between individuals, groups and social institutions;
- 5.4. Distinguish between and investigate sociologically informed explanations, and construct sociologically informed questions;
- 5.5. Critically assess diverse research strategies, ethical issues and methodological frameworks and illustrate their use in gaining sociological knowledge;
- 5.6. Understand the selection and use of appropriate research tools;
- 5.7. Analyse ways in which sociology can be distinguished from other forms of understanding and identify the value of sociological work with regard to social, public and civic policy issues;
- 5.8. Produce clear, fluent and coherently structured written work that draws on and cites evidence from a range of sources demonstrating an ability to synthesise and evaluate competing explanations.
- 5.9. Work collaboratively, reflectively, and participate in group discussion.

### Level 6 learning outcomes

Upon completion of level 6 you will be able to:

- 6.1. Describe, examine and compare a range of key concepts and theoretical approaches in sociology and evaluate their application to sociological questions;
- 6.2. Provide an analytical account of social diversity and inequality and their effects;
- 6.3. Analyse and evaluate the changing nature of social relationships between individuals, groups and social institutions;
- 6.4. Investigate and evaluate sociologically informed explanations and generate appropriate sociologically informed questions;
- 6.5. Discuss sociological topics with appreciation of theory, methodology, evidence and relevance to current debates and present the conclusions in a variety of appropriate sociological formats;
- 6.6. Evaluate, select and use appropriate research tools to produce a piece of sociological research;
- 6.7. Illustrate the relationship between different kinds of sociological argument and evidence and identify and comment on the value of sociological work with regard to social, public and civic policy issues;
- 6.8. Draw on and cite evidence from a wide range of academic sources and demonstrate an ability to synthesise and evaluate competing explanations to make coherent arguments and draw reasoned conclusions.
- 6.9. Write or orally present arguments with clarity, fluency and coherence to a professional standard.

### How will you learn?

At the heart of the degree is its learning and teaching strategy which encompasses a wide variety of teaching methods designed to accommodate the diverse learning needs and experiences of our students. Students are supported and encouraged to develop into autonomous, self-directed learners through experiential, reflective and research-based learning. During the course your learning will be facilitated through a combination of:

- **Lectures:** Hour-long lectures are used to provide a core of knowledge as a basis for further guided independent study. . In addition to providing a common foundation of learning they also develop the skills of listening, note-taking and reflection. We encourage deep learning in lectures through interactive engagements and the use of a variety of audio-visual and presentational methods.
- **Seminars:** These provide opportunities for student-centred and active learning and are used to examine and discuss material covered in lectures, to broaden debates around issues raised in lectures or set readings, and to provide support and guidance on the preparation of coursework. Individual or group exercises are a key element of seminars, providing an opportunity for students to rehearse and revise ideas in interaction with others, to benefit from the diversity of others' experience and to develop skills in oral presentation and communication. Seminars also provide opportunities for early formative assessment and feedback, a vital component of the learning experience and a means for developing sociological skills and analysis.
- **Workshops and Practical Classes:** Different kinds of workshops and practical classes are used on some modules and encompass a varied range of activities designed to allow students to practice new ways of thinking, work with new

techniques of data collection or analysis, or to engage in close analysis of texts or case studies. Some workshops will be taught in computer laboratories where specialist methods software packages are available, to provide the opportunity for practical, hands-on learning. Other workshops may take place online, in the library or off-campus and/or involve film screenings, guest speakers, presentation of student work-in-progress, or the execution of set tasks prepared by students in advance.

- **Field Trips:** London is used as a rich resource for students to engage with and investigate sociologically and many modules include field trips to support learning or as part of assessments. Previous field trips have included: walking tours of Black London, leisure sites in Clerkenwell, LGBT History in Soho and street art in the Brick Lane area; exhibition visits to the Museum of London, the Museum of London at Docklands and the Victoria & Albert museum; visits to archives at the Stuart Hall library, the Women's Library and the Wellcome Collection; and various theatre and cinema outings.
- **Individual Tutorials:** Individual tutorials are used to support group sessions on some modules, especially as students progress through the course and are expected to undertake more independent work such as small scale research and selecting topics/ texts/images for analysis. Individual tutorials are used most heavily in the final year honours dissertation, where students are assigned a supervisor who they meet at regular intervals to discuss their dissertation research.

In addition to the above modes of learning and teaching, the course provision also includes resources and guidance for independent learning which is supported through: advice and support from research-active teaching staff; access to a range of paper and electronic resources (books, journals and other sources); access to IT resources including hardware, software and the necessary technical support. The course also makes extensive use of:

- **Virtual Learning Environment:** The virtual learning environment, Blackboard, is used as a central communication point between staff and students and is used for the following purposes:
  - To supply readings, lecture notes, module documents, assessment guidance and seminar materials, thus increasing students' access to key resources;
  - To link to/embed audio, visual and web content, including module-specific podcasts, lecture recordings, video content and task information;
  - To provide reading lists with hyperlinks and downloadable module handbooks;
  - To allow online submission of assessments via Turnitin, and online provision of feedback and marks;
  - Discussion boards, Wikis and blogs for use in online workshops and to enable students to work together in preparation for classes and assessments;
  - To provide links to other sources of study skills and learning support within the university;
  - To keep students up to date with module events or changes via announcements.
- **Guides to Study:** In their first year, every student is issued with a copy of the 'Guide to Writing and Referencing in Sociology', also known as 'the red book'. It provides a clear guide to academic referencing and bibliography formatting, as well

as guidance on structuring essays, interpreting assessment guidelines and how to avoid common usage and grammatical errors. The 'red book' has been identified as an example of good practice by the department and it has been adapted for use in a number of other HE institutions. For every module students take there is a comprehensive module handbook which contains details of lecture, seminar and workshop schedules, module learning outcomes, assessment instructions and criteria and full reading lists.

### **How will you be assessed?**

The course offers a variety of assessment to students which aim to stimulate, motivate and challenge. Formative, summative and synoptic assessments are carried out across the course. Assessment offers a way of measuring whether the learning outcomes at module and course level have been achieved and to what standard. At each level and within each module, assessments have been designed which assess not only knowledge, but skills. The range of assessment methods used on the course includes:

- Essays;
- Autobiographical and self-reflective analyses;
- Critical literature reviews and commentaries;
- Policy reports, manifestos and campaign design;
- Case studies;
- Oral presentations (group and individual);
- Analytical exercises including deconstruction of images and discourses;
- Practical research tasks (designing materials, collecting data and analysis);
- Computer-based assessments;
- Portfolios;
- Learning plans, logs, diaries and reflections;
- In-class tests;
- Exams (unseen, take-home and open-book);
- Dissertation.

### **Synoptic Assessment**

Synoptic assessment is included on the course at each level and is assessment which links more than one module and is designed to meet the course learning outcomes. In synoptic assessments students draw on knowledge and skills developed in the subject as a whole and as such demonstrate the links and deeper connections between different approaches and topics within Sociology.

### **Formative Assessment and Feedback**

Formative assessments are an important part of the assessment strategy. Students are given opportunities to undertake formative assessment on all modules. Formative assessment takes place in seminars and workshops, and through assessed work that rehearses skills required at a more advanced level in subsequent assessments or modules.

Central to the effectiveness of formative assessment is the provision of feedback to students. Formative feedback that 'feeds forwards' enables students to measure their progress, reflect upon the effectiveness of their learning and to make appropriate improvements in their work. This feedback may be given via comments on planned or draft work, in response to workshop presentations/tasks, via peer-assessment and class discussions or online via discussion boards and blogs. More formal, written feedback is provided to students on summative assessments (those which contribute to the mark on a module). Such feedback is designed to be constructive, forward-looking and formative in

character. We expect students to reflect on their feedback and integrate it into future work on the course.

### **Employment and further study opportunities**

University of Westminster graduates will be able to demonstrate the following five Graduate Attributes:

- Critical and creative thinkers
- Literate and effective communicator
- Entrepreneurial
- Global in outlook and engaged in communities
- Social, ethically and environmentally aware

University of Westminster courses capitalise on the benefits that London as a global city and as a major creative, intellectual and technology hub has to offer for the learning environment and experience of our students.

The BA Honours Sociology aims to create graduates who have acquired core competencies through practice-based learning. Embedded in the content and assessment of our sociology degree are the opportunities to acquire attributes much sought after by employers, namely:

- Thinking creatively or 'outside the box' in solving problems and displaying initiative and willingness to tackle a problem or issue;
- The ability to work effectively both independently and as part of a team with minimal supervision;
- Numeracy and ICT skills including information retrieval and data management;
- Research, evaluation and analytical skills;
- Verbal and written communication skills;
- The ability to present an evidence-based argument;
- Awareness of issues around diversity and difference;
- Time management.

A degree in Sociology prepares students for a diverse range of professional careers because it develops high level critical analytical and evaluative competencies, self and social awareness. Many Sociology students enter what might be described as people-related professions such as human resources, marketing, teaching or social work, or they join private companies, national or local government or voluntary organisations. Their interest may have been sparked by specific modules in areas such as youth policy, inequality or education. A significant number of students are inspired to continue to further study for Master's degrees and PhDs at prestigious institutions and subsequently make the transition to academic jobs in teaching and/or research at this or other universities.

Students on the course are encouraged from the first year onwards to develop career management skills and to identify skills gaps and remedy them through further training provided by the university e.g. in IT, modern languages and academic literacy or through voluntary or paid work. At Level 5 students have the opportunity to take a work experience module which requires them to research and negotiate a suitable work placement and gain valuable experience in applying their knowledge and skills in a workplace setting. For many students the work experience placement has been crucial in making connections in a field of work and has led to enhanced employment opportunities after graduation.

### Course structure

This section shows the core and option modules available as part of the course and their credit value. Full-time Undergraduate students study 120 credits per year. Course structures can be subject to change each academic year following feedback from a variety of sources.

<b>Credit Level 4</b>				
<b>Module code</b>	<b>Module title</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>UK credit</b>	<b>ECTS</b>
4SOCL001W	Thinking Sociologically	Core	20	10
4RESO001W	Researching Society	Core	20	10
4SOCL002W	Identity and Society	Core	20	10
4CLST002W	Introducing Media and Cultural Studies	Core	20	10
4SOCL003W	London Explored	Core	20	10
4SOCL004W	Understanding Race	Option	20	10
4GNST001W	Introducing Gender	Option	20	10
<b>Award of Certificate of Higher Education available</b>				



<b>Credit Level 5</b>				
<b>Module code</b>	<b>Module title</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>UK credit</b>	<b>ECTS</b>
5SOCL001W	Modern Social Theory	Core	20	10
5CLST003W	Youth, Culture and Identity	Core	20	10
5RESO001W	Sociological Research Methods	Core	20	10
5SOCL002W	Education Now	Option	20	10
5MEDS001W	Globalisation and the Media	Option	20	10
5SOCL003W	Work Experience	Option	20	10
5SOCL004W	The Sociology of Religion	Option	20	10
5SOCL005W	Sexualities	Option	20	10
5SOCL006W	Emotional Life	Option	20	10
<b>Award of Diploma of Higher Education or Foundation Degree available</b>				

<b>Credit Level 6</b>				
<b>Module code</b>	<b>Module title</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>UK credit</b>	<b>ECTS</b>
6SOCL001W	Sociology Dissertation	Core	40	20
6SOCL002W	Contemporary Social Theory	Core	20	10
6MEDS001W	Making the News	Option	20	10
6GNST001W	Contemporary Gender Studies: Feminist Theory and Beyond	Option	20	10
6CLST004W	Consuming Race	Option	20	10
6CLST001W	Crossing Borders and Boundaries: Migration, Identity and Culture	Option	20	10
6SOCL004W	Life and Death: The Medicalisation of the Body	Option	20	10
6GNST002W	Gender, Education and Identity	Option	20	10
6SOCL005W	Politics, Protest and the Public Sphere	Option	20	10
6SOCL006W	Perils and Pleasures: A London Sociology of Leisure	Option	20	10
6SOCL003W	Families, Intimacies and Personal Life	Option	20	10
<b>Award /BA/BSc/LLB available</b> <b>Award /BA Honours/BSc Honours available.</b>				

## **Academic regulations**

The current Handbook of Academic Regulations is available at [westminster.ac.uk/academic-regulations](http://westminster.ac.uk/academic-regulations)

## **How will you be supported in your studies?**

### **Course Management**

The BA Honours Sociology and all the Sociology modules that make up the degree are managed by the teaching team and co-ordinated by the Sociology course leader. Students will meet the course leader during Orientation week and thereafter they will be available either by email, during weekly office hours, or by appointment. The degree is part of a suite of BA Honours degrees in the Department of Social and Historical Studies, for which the head of department is ultimately responsible. Regular course team meetings are held and attended by full-time, fractional and part-time Visiting Lecturer staff to discuss course content, learning and teaching, academic and social activities and deal with any concerns.

Individual modules have a module leader who is responsible for the smooth running of that module. Module leaders are available in term-time in their office hours or by appointment. All staff are committed to a collaborative and reflexive engagement in learning and teaching as an academic and social community, where mutual respect and peer support are core values. To this end we ask all students to observe the Sociology policy for respect in the learning environment whereby mutual responsibilities for engagement in the course are clearly set out for staff and students alike.

Each student is assigned a personal academic tutor to whom they may turn for advice on academic or pastoral matters. At Level Four and Five (years one and two) tutors will be staff on one of the core modules. At Level Six (year three) students' dissertation supervisors will also act as their personal tutor. During March of the first and second year students will have the opportunity to choose their option modules for the subsequent year following consultation with academic staff.

### **Academic Support**

Upon arrival, an orientation programme will introduce you to the staff responsible for the course, the campus on which you will be studying, the Library and IT facilities, additional support available and to your Faculty Registry Office. You will be provided with the Course Handbook, which gives detailed information about the course. You have a course leader and you will be assigned to both an academic tutor to support you in your studies and a personal tutor who can provide guidance on other matters. The University uses a Virtual Learning Environment called Blackboard where you can access your course materials and can communicate and collaborate with staff and other students.

### **Learning Support**

The Academic Learning Development Centre supports students in developing the skills required for higher education. As well as online resources in Blackboard, students have the opportunity to attend study skills workshops and one-to-one appointments.

Learning support includes four libraries, each holding a collection of resources related to the subjects taught at that site. Students can search the entire library collection online through the Library Search service to find and reserve printed books, and to access electronic

resources (databases, e-journals, e-books). Students can choose to study in the libraries, which have areas for silent and group work, desktop computers, laptops for loan, photocopying and printing services. You can also choose from several computer rooms at each campus where desktop computers are available with the general and specialist software that supports the course. You can also securely connect your own laptops and mobile devices to the University wireless network.

### **Study Community**

Outside of formal learning and modules the Sociology course has a lively community of staff, students and alumni that new students are encouraged to get involved in, and which offers alternative sources of support and engagement on the course.

- Sociology in the City, the name of our Facebook page and Twitter feed, is an excellent and easy way to stay connected to Sociology. We use it to highlight happenings in the department, staff and student news, as well as external academic and cultural events around London.
- The Sociology in the City wordpress blog contains longer pieces by or about staff and issues relating to Sociology.
- Sociology Open Research Series public events take place two or three times a semester and are a chance for students to hear researchers talk about their work in different areas of Sociology. Events are very informal and a great opportunity to discuss ideas outside the classroom!
- The Students' Union Sociology Society is run by and for students, and does the things that Sociology students want to do – trips, film screenings, debates, campaigns, parties.

### **Support Services**

The University of Westminster Student Affairs department provide advice and guidance on accommodation, financial and legal matters, personal counselling, health and disability issues, careers, specialist advice for international students and the chaplaincy providing multi-faith guidance. The University of Westminster Students' Union also provides a range of facilities to support students during their time at the University.

### **Disability Support**

The Disability Service plays a crucial role in the experience of students across a spectrum of learning needs. Central to our disability policy is an inclusive curriculum and delivery, which meets the needs of all students without discriminating against students with disabilities. In Sociology, we have adjusted our pedagogic delivery and materials for the benefit of all students, knowing that learning support required for students with disabilities will help everyone. It is important within the social justice pedagogic framework in which we operate in Sociology, that everyone feels entitled and able to achieve their potential.

### **How do we ensure the quality of our courses and continuous improvement?**

The course was initially approved by a University Validation Panel in 2001. The panel included internal peers from the University, academic(s) from another university and a representative from industry. This helps to ensure the comparability of the course to those offered in other universities and the relevance to employers.

The course is also monitored each year by the Faculty to ensure it is running effectively and that issues which might affect the student experience have been appropriately addressed. Staff will consider evidence about the course, including the outcomes from Course Committees, evidence of student progression and achievement and the reports from

external examiners, to evaluate the effectiveness of the course. Each Faculty puts in to place an action plan. This may for example include making changes on the way the module is taught, assessed or even how the course is structured in order to improve the course, in such cases an approval process is in place.

A Course review takes place periodically to ensure that the curriculum is up-to-date and that the skills gained on the course continue to be relevant to employers. Students meet with review panels to provide feedback on their experiences. Student feedback from previous years e.g. from Course Committees is also part of the evidence used to assess how the course has been running.

### **Sociology Student Forum**

The Sociology Student Forum meets twice a year (just before the Course Committee) and is open to everyone on the course. Students can raise any issues about the course and how things might be improved or new ideas and these are discussed, actions proposed and then fed back to everyone via email. Some of the issues we have addressed include co-ordinating coursework deadlines, a common format for presenting modules on Blackboard and the 'Respect' policy.

### **How do we act on student feedback?**

Student feedback is important to the University and student views are taken seriously. Student feedback is gathered in a variety of ways.

- Through Course Committees students have the opportunity to express their voice in the running of their course. Student representatives are elected to Committee to expressly represent the views of their peer. The University and the Students' Union work together to provide a full induction to the role of the student representatives.
- Each Faculty also has its own Faculty Student Forum with student representatives; this enables wider discussions across the Faculty. Student representatives are also represented on key Faculty and university committees.
- All students are invited to complete a questionnaire before the end of each module. The feedback from this will inform the module leader on the effectiveness of the module and highlight areas that could be enhanced.
- The University also has an annual Student Experience Survey which seeks the opinions of students about their course and University experience. Final year Undergraduate students will be asked to complete the National Student Survey which helps to inform the national university league tables.

**Please note:** This programme specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the course and the learning outcomes that a student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if s/he takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. This specification should be read in conjunction with the Course Handbook provided to students and Module Handbooks, which provide more detailed information on the specific learning outcomes, content, teaching, learning and assessment methods for each module.

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