

University of the West of Scotland

Module Descriptor

Session: 202425

Title of Module: Contemporary Social Issues & Policy Responses					
Code: SOCY09054		SCQF Level: 9 (Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework)		Credit Points: 20	ECTS: 10 (European Credit Transfer Scheme)
School:		School of Education & Social Sciences			
Module Co-ordinator:		L Poole			
Summary of Module					
This module explores in detail the idea of social policy as a contested terrain. Students engage with a problem-solving approach to present-day social issues by focusing on dominant constructions and discourses and identifying the assumptions that underpin them. The module explores the links between explanations of social issues, powerful constructions/discourses and the shape and focus of the policy responses of government policymakers. Students will be asked to deconstruct 'social issues' and policy responses, critically assess them and consider alternative ways of conceptualising, understanding and tackling these 'problems' in society, with reference to competing constructions and counter discourses. In doing so, they will also be asked to consider the strengths and weaknesses of particular approaches and the barriers to adopting new ones. The issues that are explored vary from year to year depending on what is of contemporary interest and the focus of public debate as well as staff research and expertise. Examples of possible topics include: • asylum and refugee policy • Drug use and drug deaths • Economic change, labour markets and basic income • unemployment and welfare to work strategies • policy responses to benefit fraud and tax avoidance • food poverty, food insecurity and the rights-based approach to food • constructions of 'crises' and policy responses to the politics of austerity • Urban policy and city regeneration Each topic/case study example is examined with reference to the concepts of social divisions, inequality, power and contestation with a view to widening the student's critical gaze. Learning materials are delivered face-to-face, on campus, through a mix of interactive lectures, seminars/workshops, independent learning and reflection activities and guided independent study.					
Module Delivery Method					
Face-To-Face	Blended	Fully Online	HybridC	Hybrid 0	Work-Based Learning

☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
See Guidance Note for details.					

Campus(es) for Module Delivery						
The module will normally be offered on the following campuses / or by Distance/Online Learning: (Provided viable student numbers permit) (tick as appropriate)						
Paisley:	Ayr:	Dumfries:	Lanarkshire:	London:	Distance/Online Learning:	Other:
☒	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Add name

Term(s) for Module Delivery					
(Provided viable student numbers permit).					
Term 1	☒	Term 2	☐	Term 3	☐

Learning Outcomes: (maximum of 5 statements) These should take cognisance of the SCQF level descriptors and be at the appropriate level for the module. At the end of this module the student will be able to:	
L1	Develop knowledge about a range of current social issues.
L2	Understand the process through which certain issues are defined as social problems in particular societies at particular times.
L3	Understand the relationship between how a social problem is defined and understood, and the policy responses that may follow
L4	Critically assess the policy responses to these problems, including financial and other constraints, and identify alternative responses that may be available to policymakers.
L5	Engage with the idea that social policy is a contested terrain that can be understood and analysed through the lenses of social division, inequalities and power.

Employability Skills and Personal Development Planning (PDP) Skills	
SCQF Headings	During completion of this module, there will be an opportunity to achieve core skills in:
Knowledge and Understanding (K and U)	SCQF Level 9 A broad understanding of social policy debates in present-day Britain. Specific knowledge about of key areas of current social policy.

Practice: Applied Knowledge and Understanding	SCQF Level 9 Analysing documents relating to social issues and policy critically. Retrieving a variety of secondary sources on social policy.	
Generic Cognitive skills	SCQF Level 9 Analysing academic and government policy documents and interpreting issues relating to social policy.	
Communication, ICT and Numeracy Skills	SCQF Level 9 Present complex arguments and data in seminars settings; engage in critical debate about policy options; word process; use the internet for research purposes; interpret and understand statistical information; write essays and précis complex academic analysis.	
Autonomy, Accountability and Working with others	SCQF Level 9 Demonstrate a capacity for independent research using internet and library sources of data. Demonstrate a capacity for time management in meeting formal deadlines for the submission of written work.	
Pre-requisites:	Before undertaking this module the student should have undertaken the following:	
	Module Code:	Module Title:
	Other:	Any social science modules at level 8 modules or equivalent
Co-requisites	Module Code:	Module Title:

Learning and Teaching	
In line with current learning and teaching principles, a 20-credit module includes 200 learning hours, normally including a minimum of 36 contact hours and maximum of 48 contact hours. Weekly three-hour sessions across the teaching period will comprise a mix of interactive lectures, group discussion and student-led activities. Seminar-style and workshop activities will be facilitated through the provision of core readings and visual resources made available to students via the VLE, one week in advance of each session. These sessions will embody both subject-specific and study skills elements, the latter including reading with questions, identifying competing perspectives and theories, using key concepts, assessing evidence and analysing policy outcomes, critical analysis and evaluation of policy, synthesizing alternative policy ideas.	
Learning Activities During completion of this module, the learning activities undertaken to achieve the module learning outcomes are stated below:	Student Learning Hours (Normally totalling 200 hours): (Note: Learning hours include both contact hours

	and hours spent on other learning activities)
Lecture/Core Content Delivery	24
Tutorial/Synchronous Support Activity	12
Independent Study	164
	200 Hours Total

****Indicative Resources: (eg. Core text, journals, internet access)**

Given the focus on contemporary issues, reading lists are provided for each individual topic. These are updated each year in line with developments in research, theory and commentary. Academic journals will be key, including:

Critical Social Policy
Journal of Poverty and Social Justice
Social Policy and Society

(*N.B. Although reading lists should include current publications, students are advised (particularly for material marked with an asterisk*) to wait until the start of session for confirmation of the most up-to-date material)

Attendance and Engagement Requirements

In line with the Academic Engagement Procedure, Students are defined as academically engaged if they are regularly engaged with timetabled teaching sessions, course-related learning resources including those in the Library and on the relevant learning platform, and complete assessments and submit these on time. Please refer to the Academic Engagement Procedure at the following link: [Academic engagement procedure](#)

Where a module has Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body requirements these will be listed here:

All fulltime students (part-time and distant learning students should check with their programme leader for any queries) are required to attend all scheduled classes and participate with all delivered elements of the module as part of their engagement with their programme of study. Consideration will be given to students who have protection under the appropriate equality law. Please refer to UWS Regulations, Chapter 1, 1.64 – 1.67, available at the following link: <http://www.uws.ac.uk/current-students/rights-and-regulations/regulatory-framework/>

Equality and Diversity

Aligned with the overall commitment to equality and diversity stated in the Programme Specifications, the module supports equality of opportunity for students from all backgrounds and with different learning needs. Using Moodle, learning materials will be presented

electronically in formats that allow flexible access and manipulation of content (part-time and distant learning students should check with their programme leader for any queries). The module complies with University regulations and guidance on inclusive learning and teaching practice. Specialist assistive equipment, support provision and adjustment to assessment practice will be made in accordance with UWS policy and regulations. The University's Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Policy can be accessed at the following link: <http://www.uws.ac.uk/equality/>

Our partners are fully committed to the principles and practice of inclusiveness and our modules are designed to be accessible to all. Where this module is delivered overseas, local equivalent support for students and appropriate legislation applies.

[UWS Equality and Diversity Policy](#)

(N.B. Every effort will be made by the University to accommodate any equality and diversity issues brought to the attention of the School)

Supplemental Information

Divisional Programme Board	Social Sciences
Assessment Results (Pass/Fail)	Yes ☐ No ☒
School Assessment Board	UG Social Sciences
Moderator	L F Tellez Contreras
External Examiner	E Matchett
Accreditation Details	
Changes/Version Number	

Assessment: (also refer to Assessment Outcomes Grids below)

Assessment 1 – Short answer questions 25%

Assessment 2 - Essay (2000 words 50%)

Assessment 3 - Slide summary 25%

(N.B. (i) **Assessment Outcomes Grids** for the module (one for each component) can be found below which clearly demonstrate how the learning outcomes of the module will be assessed.

(ii) An **indicative schedule** listing approximate times within the academic calendar when assessment is likely to feature will be provided within the Student Module Handbook.)

Assessment Outcome Grids (See Guidance Note)

Component 1							
Assessment Type (Footnote B.)	Learning Outcome (1)	Learning Outcome (2)	Learning Outcome (3)	Learning Outcome (4)	Learning Outcome (5)	Weighting (%) of Assessment Element	Timetabled Contact Hours
Short answer questions	x	x	x	x	x	25	

Component 2							
Assessment Type (Footnote B.)	Learning Outcome (1)	Learning Outcome (2)	Learning Outcome (3)	Learning Outcome (4)	Learning Outcome (5)	Weighting (%) of Assessment Element	Timetabled Contact Hours
Essay	x	x	x	x	x	50	

Component 3							
Assessment Type (Footnote B.)	Learning Outcome (1)	Learning Outcome (2)	Learning Outcome (3)	Learning Outcome (4)	Learning Outcome (5)	Weighting (%) of Assessment Element	Timetabled Contact Hours
Slide summary	x	x	x	x	x	25	
Combined Total for All Components						100%	XX hours

Change Control:

What	When	Who
Further guidance on aggregate regulation and application when completing template	16/01/2020	H McLean
Updated contact hours	14/09/21	H McLean
Updated Student Attendance and Engagement Procedure	19/10/2023	C Winter
Updated UWS Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Code	19/10/2023	C Winter
Guidance Note 23-24 provided	12/12/23	D Taylor
General housekeeping to text across sections.	12/12/23	D Taylor

Version Number: MD Template 1 (2023-24)