

<b>Module</b>	Understanding Society
<b>Course code</b>	BAJH-US
<b>Credits</b>	10
<b>Allocation of marks</b>	40% project 60% final examination

### **Intended Module Learning Outcomes**

On successful completion of this module, the learner will be able to

:Demonstrate critical judgement and analytical skills

1. Accommodate further study in related areas in years two and three
2. Apply sociological concepts to social issues and problems in society

### **Module Objectives**

- To make learners aware of how society affects the opinions and actions of groups and individuals;
- To examine the origins of the study of society, the changes brought about by the industrial revolution in western society and their impact on the rest of the world;
- To make learners aware of how society affects the opinions and actions of groups and individuals;
- To examine the impact of sociological research on some groups, events and issues in society and to explain its relevance.

### **Module Curriculum**

#### **STRAND A - Empirical Analysis of Society**

##### **(1) Social forces and influences – an introduction**

What is a 'social force'? Can we demonstrate how it might influence groups of people, large and small?

##### **(2) The origins of sociology and of industrial society, the rise of 'individualism'.**

What are the changes brought about by industrialisation? Why is it necessary to study society in its own right?

##### **(3) The founding figures in sociology: Marx Durkheim and Weber:**

**Durkheim – case study suicide:** how do social forces beyond the control or conscious awareness of an individual drive an individual to commit suicide

**Weber – case study social stratification:** The role of inequality in society – Weber's

explanation

**Marx – case study class society and inequality:** Inequality as a force for change -  
Marx's conception

#### **(4) Gender inequality – the social basis of patriarchy**

How and why did women change and challenge their role in society?

#### **(5) Crime & Deviance – the role of inequality and poverty**

Who are the criminals and how does society categorise socially harmful behaviour?

### **STRAND B - Ideas and Action**

#### **(1) The Origins of Self-interest**

Here we look at the economic origins of self-interest and individualism with an introduction to the philosophy of the Classical Liberalists who are the originators of market economics and monetarist philosophies prevalent today. We investigate the psychological, economic and political rationale of the classical liberal thinkers including Jeremy Bentham, Adam Smith and Robert Malthus.

#### **(2) The Utopian Socialists**

The ideological response to classical liberalism came from what we now loosely describe as the utopian socialists, groups of mainly European writers activists and agitators who wrote in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. We analyse their key arguments, comparing and contrasting their work and consider its influences on political thought from then to the present day.

#### **(3) From dictatorship to democracy**

How we organise a society in terms of electoral systems and institutional structures can have profound effects on the political cultures that subsequently grow out of such systems. In this topic we look at the idea of democracy and the role political systems and structures can have on political life, tracing the impact of the debate on the US constitution in the 1780s up to the formation of the Irish state as well the implications of the 2011 Arab Spring on how we in Europe value and understand our own democratic traditions and institutions.

#### **(4) Good and evil society**

In this topic we have an introductory look at the issues of power, authority and the philosophy of what is considered good and evil in modern society. We use the community of the Simpsons TV programme as our template. We want to see by using well known philosophers such as Aristotle, Nietzsche and Confucius what we can learn from the Simpsons about how our own societies work and interact.