

Understanding Processes of Social Change

Module Tutor: Dr Alice Wilson

e-mail: Alice.Wilson@sussex.ac.uk

Module content

This module explores debates in the study of social, political and economic change. While development projects envisage planned social change, by no means all change in society arises from planned development. Social, cultural, economic and political changes also occur through less planned means. It is with processes of the latter kind that this module will primarily be concerned.

During the module, we will critically examine theoretical insights into social change as well as concrete examples drawn from different disciplines, such as anthropology, history and sociology. Students will engage in current debates about modernisation and change, and use their analytical skills to relate wider theories to specific, concrete ethnographic case studies.

The aims of the module are, firstly, for students to engage with classical sociological theories informing mainstream anthropological analyses of social change. The focus here is on theorisations of modernisation and structural, political and economic change. Secondly, the module will consider debates concerning the effects and consequences of modernisation processes on social, political and economic realms, such as the formation of nation states, state bureaucracy and civil society; the development of markets and the commoditisation of economic, social and cultural relationships. Thirdly, the module will reflect on recent critical approaches to the study of modernity and change as represented by theoretical trends from within feminist theory, postmodernism, postcolonial studies and contemporary social theory. Particular attention will be paid to issues of globalization and transnationalism; colonial and postcolonial relationships; and the discursive constitution of practices and representations of modernity.

Module Format

The course will be taught by means of a one-hour lecture and a two-hour seminar every week. Lectures will take place on **Tuesdays from 12.00 to 13.00** in **SB309**. Seminars will take place on Wednesdays in two groups. For the time and place of the

seminar group in which you will participate please check your Sussex Direct site. The seminar will be led and developed by students through a mix of presentations and reviews of readings. **Preparation for seminars is essential: each week you will be expected to read and discuss the set essential readings.**

My office hours for comments, feedback and questions will be on Wednesdays from 11am to 1pm in room C224.

Module Assessment

This module is examined via a short essay of 1,000 words (due in week 6) and a long essay of 4,000 words (due at the end of the module). For the short essay, students will choose from a range of themes suggested by the tutor. For the long essay, topics should reflect the subject matter of the course and will be chosen in consultation with the tutor. Supervision and advice for individual students will be provided during weeks 11 and 12. You will be expected to have identified the general topic of your term paper and to have researched its principal elements by this date. The detailed research for the paper, its drafting and final writing will take place during the winter break.

Timetable

Every week there will be a lecture of one hour, and a seminar lasting two hours. For more information please check your Study Direct web page.

The schedule of lectures will be as follows:

Week 1: Introduction

Week 2: Modernization and Urbanization

Week 3: From Field to Factory

Week 4: State and Civil Society

Week 5: Exchange, Money and Markets

Week 6: Commodities and Consumption

Week 7: Globalization and Migration

Week 8: Family, Gender and Social Change

Week 9: Modernity, Rationality and the 'Problem' of Religion

Week 10: **Consolidation week (no class)**

Week 11: Crises, Catastrophes and Late Modernity

Week 12: Essay clinic