Welcome to SPAIS
(School of Sociology, Politics and International Studies)
Why study Sociology at Bristol?

- You’ll join a vibrant academic community – SPAIS is home to 25 sociology staff members and 250 students.

- You’ll have the chance to study sociology in different international contexts – we offer study abroad opportunities ranging from a semester to a full year.

- We encourage you to experience sociology outside of your degree – all our research seminars are open to all students and we hold a number of events through our SPAIS student societies.

- You’ll be taught by dedicated and expert staff – come and learn from those at the cutting edge of the discipline.

- We care about your wellbeing - you’ll be supported by a personal tutor, mentor and study skills tutors.
Join a community of scholars

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Course structure

*please note that course units vary between degrees and may change
The logic of the programme

- The first year is designed to develop your own sociological awareness – we want you to do sociology, not just learn sociology.

- More structure in the first year, gradually increasing independence in the second and third year, culminating in the final year dissertation.
First year units

- Four core units:
  - Thinking Sociologically
  - Social Identities and Divisions
  - Doing Social Research
  - Key Social Thinkers
- Single Honours students take all four units, plus two further sociology units (or can choose units from other subjects).
- Joint Honours students take three of the four core units, plus three units in their joint subject.
Second year units

- Second year: students take a further ‘core’ units in first semester, before progressing to ‘specialist’ units that reflect the research specialisms of Bristol staff.
Second year core units
20 credit points each

- Investigating the Social
- Conceptualising the Social

Second year specialist units
20 credit points each – choose four units for Single Honours)

- Ethnicity & Racism
- Sociology of Crime and Justice
- Digital Society
- Sociology of Childhood and Rights
- The Sociology of Gender
- East Asian Societies
- Class and Social Divisions
- Sexuality & Society
- Sociology of Health & Illness
- Environment & Society
- Art and Society
Third year

- Third year: students take a number of specialist units and a dissertation (optional for JH students).

Third year specialist units (20 credits each):

- Modern Slavery: Issues and Debates
- Gender and Migration
- Perspectives on Power
- Feminist Sociology of Food
- Consumption, Consumer Culture and Sustainability
- Risk, Danger and Disaster
- The Sociology of Popular Music
- Nations and Nationalism
- Religion and Politics in the West
- Theory and Politics of Multiculturalism
Final year dissertation

- Independent research project, supported by individual supervision and group workshops
- Can be on any sociological topic you want
- Dissertation conference in final term
Graduate prospects

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Sociological careers

Public sector: teaching, health, youth, social work, prisons, charities, government

Media: publishing, journalism, BBC, creative industries, events management.

Business: accounting/management, public relations, retail, insurance, IT, hospitality, property, market research.

Further study: higher degrees, conversion courses, professional qualifications
Graduate prospects

Six months after graduating:

- Over **60%** of our graduates are in **paid work**.
- Around **20%** are **undertaking further study** (based on careers service data for sociology students graduating in the last five years).

- **4th most targeted university by Times Top 100 Employers**
  (Graduate Market 2019-20, High Fliers 2020)
Professional Liaison Network

- Engages School of Sociology, Politics and International Studies students with companies and organisations that are relevant to your academic subject
- Develops a range of specialist activities to support you:
  - **Mentoring Scheme** - Be matched to a professional working in a relevant field to provide you with insight into an organisation linked to your studies
  - **Q-Step Internship Scheme** - Gain quantitative skills via experience of using data in real work contexts through paid internships in areas that are relevant to – and complement – your degree
- Benefits:
  - reflection on, and enrichment of, your academic study
  - really engage with different possible paths to support your plans after graduation
"Enthusiastic and intelligent and caring tutors. If you ask for the help they will give it to you. There is a broad array of choices within my discipline making it varied and personal."

"Broad range of option choices. Specialist teachers are invaluable!"

"It's interesting and I feel has shaped my opinions and values as an adult. I feel that I have matured during the course and realised what is important to society and me in general. It provided me with a critical understanding of the world we live in."

"Interesting and enthusiastic lecturers with genuine passion and knowledge of the subject."

"I feel immensely pleased and grateful overall. I have loved nearly every minute of learning, and will genuinely treasure the new perspective it has given me."

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Student Life and Student Support

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Student support at Bristol

- Academic schools, esp Personal Tutor
- Residential Life Team
- Student Services
- Wellbeing Service

Different forms of professional support for student self-referral or by staff

- Students’ Union - Advice, support, representation, events and social opportunities
Personal Tutor

- Personal tutor:
  - Advice on all academic and personal matters.
  - Six scheduled meetings in first year, plus ad-hoc meetings as you need them.
  - Drop-in office hours

- Senior Tutor: oversees PT, separate support

- Academic Writing Advisors: Advice on how to prepare, research, write and present essays. Weekly drop-ins

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Transition to university

- Welcome week Personal Tutor induction

- Start of First Year – one-hour sessions with Personal Tutors
  - Academic and social support
  - Focus on university teaching & learning practices, also opportunity to meet other students doing same degree
  - Study Skills: critical reading & writing skills; presentations; referencing, etc.

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Staff Student Liaison Committee

- Reps for each year group plus mature and international student reps.
- Four meetings each year
- Share information and gather student views/suggestions.
- Opportunity for students to gain insight into the running of the School.
- Key mechanism for student feedback
  - (+ Unit Evaluation Forms, comments box, informal staff-student communication)

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You said, we did

We care about your student experience – below are examples of how we’ve responded to undergraduate feedback so that we can provide the best environment for SPAIS students.

**YOU SAID**
“We need more interaction with staff.”

**WE DID**
We introduced staff coffee mornings and bite-sized lectures to enable more frequent opportunities for interaction between staff and students.

**YOU SAID**
“We want more information when making our options choices.”

**WE DID**
We provided a common room for SPAIS undergraduates in 11 Priory Road. We also introduced extra first year units so that students spend more time with their peers.

**YOU SAID**
“The e-reserves system makes access to core reading complicated and can cost a lot to print.”

**WE DID**
We have introduced free course packs to provide easy and printed access to essential readings – while still maintaining e-reserves for those who want them.

**YOU SAID**
“We need more careers advice and guidance.”

**WE DID**
We have introduced more structured provisions for careers advice:
- A bespoke Careers Service session on ‘Constructing Job Applications’
- Dedicated personal tutor sessions on careers
- A range of careers events, including a SPAIS Alumni Careers Afternoon
- The appointment of an undergraduate careers and employment adviser for SPAIS running weekly drop-in sessions open to all SPAIS students.

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Thank you