DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

MA in Sociology (Internet and Society) MAIS Student Handbook

2016/17

Head of Department: Professor Mary Corcoran
Masters Coordinator: Dr Aphra Kerr

Department Website: https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/sociology
Twitter: @MU_Sociology

Welcome to the Department

The staff in the Sociology Department would like to welcome you to the 2016-17 Academic Year at Maynooth University. We hope you will make excellent intellectual progress and meet all the challenges involved in moving from undergraduate to graduate education.

A strong taught postgraduate cohort is crucial to any department and we hope to both challenge and support you to continue developing your sociological interests, imagination, critical and practical research skills. The year ahead will no doubt be one of intensive study and personal career development, but it will take place in the supportive atmosphere provided by the department and the university.

We invite you to intensify your critical understanding of sociology, to deepen and extend the boundaries of your methodological skills, and to invigorate our teaching through your engagement with our pedagogies.

Please read this handbook to familiarise yourself with the department and university guidelines for taught postgraduate work. This handbook is intended to provide you with specific information on the MA in Sociology (Internet and Society) - and department policies on assessment and academic integrity. You should read it carefully at the outset and keep it for ongoing reference during the year.

You will find additional information about the Sociology Department on our website
https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/sociology.

An electronic copy of this handbook will be posted at
https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/sociology/ma-programmes-201617

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Drop in Office Hours:
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For more general queries contact the Department Office:
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Office Hours:
Monday - Thursday : 9.30am - 4.30pm
Friday : 9.30am - 4pm

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Introduction to the Sociology Department at Maynooth

The Department you are about to join is an exemplar of public sociology and engagement. A quick overview of our staff's research and publishing profiles (https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/sociology/our-research) should assure you that you will find our Department a distinctive and stimulating place within which to learn and to practice sociological and political analysis.

Staff engage directly with the transformations in contemporary Irish, European and Global society and politics. They carry out research that combines theoretical concerns and critique with sustained empirical research. Prof. Mary Corcoran is currently Head of the Department.

Student Involvement in the Department

An ethos of co-operation and exchange of ideas and knowledge among students is encouraged. Professional behaviour, including regular and punctual attendance at all timetabled sessions and punctual presentation of all assignments, is required.

As a postgraduate student you will be invited to specialist modules led by subject experts, regular departmental seminars and symposia featuring the work of advanced students, staff and invited speakers, and university wide seminars and workshops. You are encouraged to take advantage of all of these opportunities to advance your knowledge.

In addition to evaluating the programme at the end of the academic year, the Department normally carries out a short evaluation exercise during the first semester. This helps us to get a feel for how the class is managing. The Department also organizes an evaluation of the M.A. programme at the end of the year. In addition, we have a staff-student consultative committee in the Department on which postgraduate students are represented. Finally, the university runs a short online survey of students through moodle each semester.

The department strives to maintain good communications between staff and postgraduate students. In addition to open informal relationships, communications are also maintained through:

(a) The Postgraduate Liaison Committee: This committee consists of postgraduate students (2 research postgraduate and one M.A. student) and staff (the M.A. coordinator, the Research Postgraduate Coordinator and the Head of Department) and meets regularly to review issues relating to the postgraduate programmes.

 (b) Staff office hours: All staff have weekly office hours during semester when you can just pop in. These are posted on their office doors and usually on course outlines. Otherwise email the lecturer directly to make an appointment.

 (c) Digital: (Website, email, twitter, moodle) Course announcements will be emailed to students using their Maymooth email address and posted on the forums in moodle. Most Department and university wide event announcements will be posted on the university home page, the notice boards in Auxilia, the Sociology department home page and on twitter. Follow us on twitter @MU_Sociology

Your Maynooth email address is your primary mode of communication with the Department. Please ensure that you access it regularly, or forward emails to the email account that you regularly use.

It is assumed that you will check your email and/or the departmental notice board every two to three days. Please inform the department if you have a change of address or contact phone number.

Student Responsibilities and Submission Procedures

Student responsibilities include the following:

- Attend the full range of modules provided during the academic year. Contact the lecturer in advance if you cannot make a class.

- Read assigned texts in **advance** of class

- Be prepared to participate in classroom discussion

- Be prepared to work together on certain tasks and projects

- Submit all written work by the due dates.

- Check your university email account and moodle regularly, and at least weekly.

If you are having difficulty keeping up with your assigned work please speak with the relevant lecturer and make an appointment with the MA coordinator immediately.

Assessment Submission Procedures

- All written work must be submitted with a green colour-coded cover sheet to the Departmental Office by the due date or electronically as required through moodle. Cover sheets are available from the Department office or on the ground floor of Auxilia beside the assignment submission boxes.

- There is a late work policy in operation in the Department of Sociology and if coursework is submitted after the deadline 10 marks will be deducted. No coursework will be accepted 14 calendar days after the deadline.

- These penalties will apply except upon presentation of a medical certificate covering the relevant period or in other extremely extenuating circumstances, which must be communicated to, and accepted by, the lecturer/tutor prior to, or immediately after, the relevant deadline.

- **Note - submission guidelines and late work policies for modules offered by staff from other Departments may have different procedures. For example Media operate a 5 credit per day deduction for late work. Please check with your lecturer.**

- Students must retain a copy of all work submitted to the Department.

- Students will be given feedback on their projects/assessment work within a reasonable time period.

Staff will be available to work with students on dissertation supervision until Friday, June 30th 2017, but the Department cannot guarantee supervisor's availability after this date.

For this reason, you are required to meet with your supervisor before June 30th, 2017 and have them "sign off on" your plans for work over the month of July prior to submission of the thesis on July 28th, 2017.

Statement on plagiarism

Plagiarism involves an attempt to use an element of another person's work, without appropriate acknowledgement in order to gain academic credit. It may include the unacknowledged verbatim reproduction of material, unsanctioned collusion, but is not limited to these matters; it may also include the unacknowledged adoption of an argumentative structure, or the unacknowledged use of a source or of research materials.

When you directly copy another person's text without placing it in quotation marks and without acknowledging the source, you are plagiarising. The same is true when you present someone else's original idea, research or argument as though it were your own. Plagiarism is strictly forbidden. It reveals an unwillingness to think for oneself and is both unethical and illegal under copyright laws.

The direct copying of passages (including illustrations) from a book, an article or the Internet without adequate references being made will be heavily penalised. Submitting essays or projects written by anyone other than you will also result in heavy penalties. As your final assessment is partly based on written assignments, plagiarism is equivalent to cheating at examinations.

Maynooth University considers plagiarism to be a serious academic misconduct, deserving of academic penalties. This document sets out the procedures for dealing with cases of plagiarism or suspected plagiarism in taught programmes of the University. See the document at this link - https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/sites/default/files/assets/document/NUIM%20Policy%20on%20Plagiarism%20May%202014_0.pdf

Please familiarise yourself with this policy. Please note that if a finding of plagiarism has been upheld against a student, any subsequent finding of plagiarism is automatically referred to the Academic Disciplinary Board.

Research Ethics

You should also familiarise yourself as soon as possible with the university guidelines on research ethics. This information is available from the Office of Research, online at: https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/research/research-development-office/research-ethics

and on the Department of Sociology website at https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/sociology/ma-programmes-201617

Sociological Association of Ireland

For information on professional activities of sociologists in Ireland we would like to guide you to our professional organisation the Sociological Association of Ireland (SAI). The current President of the SAI is Dr. Paul Ryan from our Department.

The SAI has published a booklet titled Ethical Guidelines, which you may wish to consult. You will find this a most useful handbook of general principles and statements of ethical practice concerning the professional activities of sociologists in Ireland, practices that now are of direct concern to you as a research student of Sociology. These guidelines are available on line at the SAI website at www.sociology.ie.

Key Dates 2016/17

This MA will run from September 2016 to August 2017, with the thesis due at the end of July 2016. Further information at https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/registrar/key-term-dates

Sept

- September 13th Maynooth Postgraduate Induction (Taught Masters) Morning
- Sept 13th September: Taught Postgraduate Sociology Students Induction Afternoon
- Monday 19th September: Start of Semester 1 – Commencement of lectures

Oct

- Monday 31th October - Friday 4th Oct: Study week/Note lectures on Thurs 3rd this week.
- **Monday 31 October 2016 - Registration Deadline for Postgraduate Modules (Semester 1)**
- Monday 31 October 2016 - Deadline to withdraw from studies without losing "Free Fee Status" for following year

Dec

- Friday 16th December: Last day of Semester 1 lectures
- 19-30 December - Christmas Vacation (students)

Jan

- Monday 6th January: Commencement of Semester 1 exams
- 30 January 2017 - Start of Lectures – Second Semester
- 31 January 2017 - Deadline for withdrawing from studies and retain 50% "Free Fee Status"
- **31 January 2017 - Registration deadline for Postgraduate Modules (Semester 2)**

March

- Monday 13th – Friday 17th March: Study week

April

- 14th of April. Good Friday. No lectures
- Monday 17th-21st April : Easter vacation
- 24 April 2017 – Lectures Resume

May

- 1 May – Bank Holiday
- 2-5 May – Last week of Lectures for Second Semester
- 12 May – Summer examinations commence

June

Thesis meetings with supervisor

July

- Friday 30th June, 2017: Staff no longer available to supervise thesis.
- Friday 28th July, 2017: Submission of theses by 12pm – End of programme

Masters in Sociology (Internet and Society) Course Overview

It is 25 years this year since the internet arrived in Ireland. Indeed you may be a digital native – someone who has grown up with the Internet in your life. Even if you have not, how much do you know about the political economy and governance of the internet? Have you considered how it shapes your work, leisure, social relationships, citizenship and politics? It is no longer possible to talk about offline and online life, they are increasingly enmeshed and mutually shaping. What are the social, political, economic and cultural implications of this?

The MA in Internet and Society aims to provide a learning environment in which students can critically engage with the opportunities and challenges of social life online, and develop an analytical skill set that focuses on the application of both established sociological qualitative and quantitative research methods, and new digital research methods, to this domain.

This one-year programme offers (1) critical examination of the political economy and cultures of the internet; (2) knowledge of the latest research that engages with the social, cultural and legal aspects of internet use; (3) advanced social and digital research skills that will prepare graduates for researching offline and online, and using user data appropriately. The M.A. seeks to equip graduates with the intellectual and practical research skills to understand social behaviour and the performance of identity online.

The Department of Sociology at Maynooth has strong expertise and a proven research track record in studies of new media and technology in everyday life, the sociology of work (e.g. software and digital media work), sustainable communities, active citizenship and in data infrastructures and research methods. We are also committed to public sociology and working to bring sociological perspectives to bear on contemporary social issues. This includes internet policy and governance.

This MA is delivered in association with the Departments of Law and Media Studies. The Law Department at Maynooth has an active research profile in the areas of Technology and Internet Law. Students have the opportunity to explore the interaction between law and the internet and develop their understanding of pressing current issues, including the protection of internet privacy and the regulation of cybercrime. The Module offered by the Department of Media Studies provides an opportunity for students to explore the textual and cultural significance of digital media. A particular emphasis is given to matters of gender and sexuality. In these options students will be in classes shared with students from other Departments and will encounter perspectives from other disciplines.

This M.A. prepares students not only to work in academic and non-academic research positions, but also in emergent roles which require knowledge of social behaviour online, including on social media and in large transnational online communities.

Graduates of this course should be able to interface with programmers and designers and with those working on the deep statistical analysis of user data. They will be able to develop, execute and report on internet based research projects for a range of public and private sector employers. There is a demand for digitally literate graduates who understand the social, cultural, political, legal and business aspects of transnational online users.

Calendar Year

Classes run from Monday, September 19th 2016 to Friday, May 5th 2017, inclusive.

The thesis must be submitted by July 28thth, 2017 at 12 am. Students are expected to work full-time on their thesis from the end of the teaching period in May until the submission date although you will have carried out significant work on the thesis before then.

Continuous assessment work deadlines have been staggered to enable you to work at a steady pace throughout the academic year.

Work on the thesis during the year is supported throughout the teaching year in a special seminar designed to help you develop your research topic and methodology.

You will write a thesis on a topic of your choosing, agreed with a supervisor within the Department. Please note that you must pass both the coursework/module component and the thesis component of the programme in order to successfully complete the M.A.

During the reading weeks and the inter-semester break period postgraduate students are expected to read widely in the subject area, prepare their assignments and work on the minor dissertation. Some extra classes/seminars may be scheduled in those weeks so it is expected that you will be on campus.

If you are having difficulty keeping up with your assigned work please speak with the relevant lecturer or with the coordinator **immediately**.

Course Structure

Semester 1:

SO610, SO612, (Compulsory)
Choice between SO620A **or** LW647

Semester 2:
SO613 (Compulsory)

Choose 2 from SO602A*, GY624, LW685, MD620, NIR606

Both Semesters: SO690 (Semester 1 & 2) Compulsory

Note

- All rooms located on North Campus unless otherwise stated.
- All classes are Thurs and Friday except for MD620.
- **SO602A will only run if there is a minimum of 5 students**.

MA Internet and Society 2016-17 Timetable & Modules

Semester 1 SO610 Analytical reasoning in the social sciences (Jane Gray) Thurs 11-1pm Nirsa Conference Room, top floor, Iontas	**10 ECT**
SO612 The Political Economy and Cultures of the Internet (Aphra Kerr) Thurs 3-5pm Sociology Seminar Room, ground floor, Auxilia	**10 ECT**
Choice Between SO620A Qualitative methods (Honor Fagan) Thurs 9-11am Nirsa Conference Room, top floor, Iontas **OR** LW647 Information Privacy Law (Maria H Murphy/Law) Thurs 1-3pm John Hume 6 (JH6)	**10 ECT** **10 ECT**
SO690 Thesis preparatory seminars (Seán O Riain) 4 x Fridays (10-12pm) Dates & Venue TBC	
Semester 2 SO613 Advanced Digital Research Methods (Aphra Kerr) Thurs 3-5pm Sociology Seminar Room, ground floor, Auxilia	**10 ECT**
CHOOSE TWO FROM THE FOLLOWING FIVE SO602A Political Economy (Seán O Riain) 4 x Fri. Nirsa Conference Room, top floor, Iontas 9:30-3.55pm GY624 Quantitative Analysis (**Fionnuala Ní Mhórdha**/Geog) Thurs 9-11 Location TBC (dependent on numbers) NIR606 Critical Data Studies (Rob Kitchin/Geog) Thurs 10-12pm. Location TBC LW685 Information Technology Law (Maria H Murphy/Law) Thurs 12-2pm T10, tutorial Room, first floor, John Hume. MD620 Digital Bodies Digital Selves (Kylie Jarrett/Media) Monday 1-3pm Location TBC (usually Iontas)	**10 ECT** **10 ECT** **10 ECT** **10 ECT**
SO690 Thesis preparatory seminars (Seán O Riain) 4 x Fridays 10-12pm Dates & Venue TBC	**30 ECT**
TOTAL	**90 ECT**

First Semester Compulsory Modules

SO612 Political Economy and Cultures of the Internet (Dr. Aphra Kerr)

Increasingly the internet provides an infrastructure for work, socialising, education, active citizenship and surveillance. What are the social, political, economic and cultural implications of this? Is the internet the same everywhere? This module will provide a broad theoretical and conceptual grounding to help students to understand these questions and to critically interrogate the emergence and ongoing development of the internet as a socio-technical institution. Students will be required to investigate contemporary social practices online and examine a range of topics including: network/information/knowledge societies, internet governance, the attention and sharing economy, digital work, identity and play online, digital inequalities, digital literacy and online politics.

On successful completion of the module, students should be able to:
- Detail and evaluate the major theories used to analyse the social, economic and political factors shaping the internet.
- Evaluate existing empirical data and social trends in relation to the internet
- Critically assess the influence of the internet at a national, regional and transnational level
- Develop an independent and critical perspective on the internet and its relationship to social practices and social change

SO610: Analytical Reasoning in the Social Sciences (Dr. Jane Gray)

This module is intended to equip students with an epistemological foundation in the thinking and reasoning processes applicable in the social sciences. This module develops the necessary skills and strategies for critical reading and original research in the social sciences. Students learn how to analyze texts as well as how to develop, support and verbally present precise, logical and compelling arguments. On completion of the module students will be able to:

- understand the relationship between argument and evidence

- frame original research questions and develop approaches to answer them

- locate, interpret, and assess primary and secondary sources

- be familiar with the mechanisms for accessing data through archives, libraries, websites and to adjudicate the relative worth of sources.

SO690 Thesis Seminar Workshops (Semester 1 and 2 - Prof. Sean O Riain)

The purpose of this module is to prepare you to write your Master's thesis proposal and to acquaint you with the process involved in writing your master's thesis. Our workshops are designed to help you in the process: identifying a topic, choosing a research question, identifying appropriate evidence, connecting to theories, collecting data, making sense of the data, and writing up the thesis. The first semester is mainly devoted to preparing the thesis proposal and the second semester to refining the proposal through feedback.

On successful completion of the module, students should be able to:
- Identify and develop sociologically and empirically significant and interesting research questions
- Develop, assess and apply a research design appropriate to a research question
- Review and assess the relevant research literature in specific sub-fields
- Carry out primary research to a high standard, even if on a small scale
- Analyse evidence within a sociological framework
- Integrate theory, methods and data to analyse a problem, process or phenomenon sociologically

First Semester Optional Modules – Choose One

SO620A: Qualitative Methods (Prof. G. Honor Fagan)

This course offers students a theoretical and practical guide to qualitative research methods. It locates these methods within an interpretivist tradition which explores the meanings with which people attach to human behaviour. It facilitates a greater understanding of the subjects perspective. The course explores human behaviour through methods such as participant observation, interviewing and focus groups and also how social action is represented through visual methods. The course offers practical experience to students in these methods but also focuses on the analysis and writing of qualitative research.

On successful completion of the module, students should be able to:
- Understand the epistemological foundations behind qualitative research
- Assess which qualitative methods are the most appropriate to answer particular research questions
- Demonstrate a knowledge of various qualitative research methods
- Understand how qualitative data is analysed and written up

ASSESSMENT

Assessment One: Students will be required to write a critical review of the research design component of a qualitative research article which will be provided in class in Week Two (30%: due in Week Four - October 11th)

Assessment Two: Students will be provided with an interview transcript selected from the Irish Qualitative Data Archive (IQDA) and will be required to develop a thematic analysis of the data using codes, categories and themes (35%: due in Week Seven- October 25th)

Assessment Three: Students are required to write field notes when/after visiting a social setting (approved in class) for 45 minutes OR transcribe and analyse an interview (45 minute long) OR transcribe and analyse a focus group (45 minutes long) (35%: due in Week 12 - December 15th)

LW647 Information Privacy Law (Dr. Maria H Murphy – Law)

Throughout history, the protection of privacy has faced an ongoing challenge to keep pace with developments in technology. Never has this challenge been more apparent than in the current digital age where technological innovation is constant and the accumulation of electronic information is massive. Accordingly, appreciation of the technological context is an essential aspect of this course.

The growth of the internet has led to a certain globalisation of privacy issues that poses both opportunities and threats for the protection of privacy. With the lack of jurisdictional boundaries online, internet companies can be compelled to comply with local privacy and data protection regulations worldwide. Differences in regional understandings of privacy remain however, and the study of different approaches to the protection of privacy can enable better understanding of privacy and its role in society.

Several different fields of law are relevant to the issue of privacy and suitable topics have been selected

to explore how privacy operates in these distinct contexts. Topics to be studied include:
(1) The foundations and history of the right to privacy: US, UK, Irish, and European approaches
(2) Data Protection and the global reach of privacy laws
(3) Developments in technology: a comparison of US and European approaches
(4) Government surveillance
(5) Privacy and the Press
(6) Social networks and privacy
(7) Access to Information Law

Questions of policy are central to the course and students are encouraged to consider the political, economic, and technological issues that inevitably surround the regulation of privacy issues. Critical engagement with the debate taking place in both the academic literature and the general press will be encouraged through assigned readings.

Any aspect of this module may be changed in any given academic year, subject to the discretion of the module lecturer.

On successful completion of the module, students should be able to:
- Critically discuss the foundations and development of the right to privacy globally.
- Identify the key challenges to the protection of privacy within the international
- political and technological context.
- Demonstrate detailed knowledge and understanding of the various fields of law where
- privacy rights are relevant.
- Analyse, debate and critically evaluate relevant legal materials and draw supported conclusions.
- Develop the capacity to conduct independent legal research.

Second Semester Compulsory Module

SO613 Advanced Digital Research Methods (Dr. Aphra Kerr)

The aim of this module is to build upon prior learning in methods in semester one and to explore how to 1) adapt existing qualitative and quantitative methods and 2) apply emerging digital research methods to the collection and analysis of social research data.

The module will critically explore the strengths and limitations of different digital research approaches and methods from a sociological perspective, explore emergent ethical issues and examine new data presentation and archiving techniques.

On successful completion of the module, students should be able to:
- Develop an understanding of digital sociology and best practice in digital social research methods
- Understand the strengths and limitations of emergent digital methods and tools
- Understand the ethical challenges of advanced digital research methods
- Develop an ability to apply select approaches appropriately in an applied social research context.

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Second Semester Optional Modules – Choose Two

NIR621A Quantitative Analysis (Dr. Fionnuala Ní Mhórdha/Geography)

The aims of this module are to: enable the student to understand and appreciate the critical role that statistical science can play in geographical and sociological research; stimulate an inherent interest in statistical thinking; develop a base for further exploration of other statistical methods; introduce students to basic GIS skills.

On successful completion of the module, students should be able to:
- Recognise and explain the basic terms of statistics
- Organise their research data in numerical and tabular form
- Represent data in graph / chart form
- Calculate the measures of central tendency and dispersion
- Prepare a statistical investigation, including constructing Null and Alternative hypotheses, analysing, representing and interpreting sociological and geographical data
- Confidently apply inferential statistical techniques to their own research question and research data
- Perform simple GIS analysis

SO602A: Political Economy (Prof. Seán O Riain)

The starting point of this module is that economic action is embedded within social structures and, therefore, that economic development may take different forms depending on the social context and political forces that shape it.

The module explores the Irish experience of economic development, through comparisons with other advanced capitalist and newly industrializing countries.

In analysing these comparative cases, we examine topics such as: historical patterns of economic development; explanations of growth and inequality across countries; recent changes in the economy, including globalization, financialisation, and the growth of an information economy; the role of the state, labour and households in shaping economic development; how markets work and the sources of the contemporary financial and economic crisis.

On successful completion of the module, students should be able to:
* Detail and evaluate the major theories and key concepts used by sociologists to analyse the social and political factors shaping economic development.
* Critically assess the contribution of sociological analyses to an understanding of issues including: how economic action is embedded within social structures and how the social context and political forces shape economic development in advanced capitalist and newly industrializing countries.
* Evaluate the empirical trends and patterns identified by sociologists exploring issues such as: the Irish experience of economic development in comparative context, historical patterns of economic development; explanations of growth and inequality ; globalization, financialisation, information economy; the role of the state, labour and households in shaping economic development; how markets work and the sources of the contemporary financial and economic crisis.
* Develop an independent and critical perspective on the sociological analysis of economic development and social change.

LW685 Information Technology Law (Dr. Maria H Murphy/Law)

The goal of this module is to develop an understanding of the legal implications of technological advancement. This module will provide a survey of information technology law covering aspects of data protection, computer crime, intellectual property law, and internet regulation.

Any aspect of this module may be changed in any given academic year, subject to the discretion of the module lecturer.

On successful completion of the module, students should be able to:
* Display an in-depth knowledge of Information Technology Law;
* Interpret a given factual matrix in light of the relevant law, summarise the main legal issues involved, and construct an opinion as to the legal position;
* Display the ability to independently research legal questions;
* Analyse the effectiveness and fairness of specific aspects of IT Law, and consider potential courses for reform;
* Place legal issues in the appropriate economic, political, and social context;
* Identify current areas of debate that are of importance to Information Technology Law and be able to assess competing arguments and adopt an original perspective.

MD620 Digital Bodies, Digital Selves: Sex and Gender on Line (Dr. Kylie Jarrett/Media)

This module will provide a broad exploration of the significance of digital technologies in mediating culture, gender and sexual identity. Students will explore feminist perspectives on digital technologies and consider the shaping of subjectivity and feminist/queer politics by the affordances of digital media. They will also investigate theoretical frameworks for understanding gendered and sexualised representation within digital media practices, but move beyond this to also consider the importance of technological shaping of the embodied subject using concepts from affect and queer theory. Students will be required to independently identify and interrogate a diverse range of texts and digital practices throughout this module.

On successful completion of the module, students should be able to:
- identify and interrogate the complexity of gendering and sexual identity practices in various digital media contexts.
- apply theoretical frameworks to interpret practices and texts related to digital media.
- contrast and/or synthesise theoretical positions.
- communicate effectively in a variety of formats, including digital media forms.

NIR606 Critical Data Studies (Prof. Rob Kitchin/Geog/NIRSA)

There is a long history of governments, businesses, science and citizens producing and utilising data in order to monitor, regulate, profit from, and make sense of the world. In general, data are taken at face value. This module, however, will critically interrogate the nature of data, how they are being produced, organised, analysed and employed, and how best to make sense of them and the work they do. In other words, it will employ a more philosophical approach to data.

The course will provide:

(1) a detailed overview of big data, open data and data infrastructures;
(2) an introduction to thinking conceptually about data, data infrastructures, data analytics and data markets;
(3) a critical discussion of the technical shortcomings and the social, political and ethical consequences of the data revolution;
(4) an analysis of the implications of the data revolution to academic, business and government practices.

The core book accompanying the course will be: Kitchin, R. (2014) *The Data Revolution: Big Data, Open Data, Data Infrastructures and Their Consequences*. Sage, London.

Upon completion of the module, students should be able to:

(1) have a thorough understanding of the nature of data and different types of data;
(2) be familiar with key philosophical debates concerning how to make sense of data;
(3) have a detailed knowledge of how big and open data are being used in context;
(4) be able to apply a critically reflexive analysis to datasets.

Assessment

Each course is assessed on the basis of the completion of one or more assignments. Requirements for each course are determined by the lecturer. Submission requirements and policies may also vary by Department.

The following summarizes the grade-related criteria that lecturers will use to guide the marking of coursework (essays, reports and presentations). These broad guidelines should be read in conjunction with any specific advice on assessment that may be provided by the module leader(s).

Written assignments:

The overall criteria used to arrive at the mark reflect the ability of students to:
- Respond to a specific question
- Think independently
- Structure an argument
- Support an argument with reference to different literature and examples
- Evaluate different kinds of evidence
- Undertake independent study of the topic in question
- Communicate effectively in writing
- Produce a well-presented, well-written piece of work

Oral presentations:

The overall criteria used to arrive at the mark reflect the ability of students to:
- Structure an oral presentation
- Compile suitable material
- Communicate effectively
- Deliver a balanced and complete presentation within a time limit
- Design and use visual aids
- Undertake independent study of the topic in question
- Respond to questions (when appropriate)

Moodle:

Many of our modules are moving towards online submission through moodle as well as online grading and feedback.

Please begin to familiarise yourself with Moodle if you have not used it before. There is online support through a help section within moodle and through email support. Moodle has its own internal forums which are often used for module announcements by lecturers.

See https://2017.moodle.maynoothuniversity.ie/

Class	Mark range	Grade-related criteria for written work
First class honours	80+	☐ Outstanding answer based on extensive reading that demonstrates an impressive ability to understand theoretical literature and to make connections between that literature and appropriate examples ☐ Exceptional insights and originality in the use of evidence ☐ Very well written with no grammatical or other errors ☐ Contains material of publishable quality, as a whole or in part, as a journal paper, and is worthy of retaining for reference
First class honours	70-79	☐ Excellent answer based on extensive reading and a clear understanding of theoretical debates ☐ Original or insightful answer drawing on own observations and critical treatment of literature ☐ Very well written with no grammatical or other errors ☐ Contains material that is potentially of publishable quality, in part, as a journal paper, and/or is worthy of retaining for reference
Second class honours - Grade I	60-69	☐ Very good answer that shows a thorough understanding of arguments, contributions and context, with pertinent use of relevant reading and examples ☐ Well-organized, clearly expressed, direct response to the question/topic ☐ Evidence of good analytical skills and reflection of wider reading ☐ Does not display the outstanding ability, critical insight and/or originality characterizing the award of first class honours
Second class honours - Grade II	50-59	☐ Competent treatment of ideas and concepts from classes and set reading ☐ Little evidence of independent critical assessment ☐ Evidence of good effort and reasonably solid argument, but little spark or critical insight
Pass	40-49	☐ Shows a basic understanding of the question/topic and of the broader subject area ☐ Little evidence of detailed knowledge or reading is partial and selective ☐ Contains mistakes, misunderstanding and/or irrelevant material ☐ Poor organization, poor expression and an uncritical approach
Fail	0-39	☐ At worst, nothing of relevance in answer to the questions/topic ☐ At best, not a direct response to the question/topic, but shows some basic understanding of the general field ☐ Likely to be muddled, incomplete, and/or poorly expressed ☐ Little evidence of reading or reading sources are trivial
Fail	0	☐ Copied or plagiarized answer with no intellectual input from student ☐ Work penalized for late submission without the granting of an extension (as per the course policy regarding deadlines and extensions) ☐ Plagiarized material may be reported to the University Authorities

Guidelines for the Thesis Component of Masters

Eight thesis preparation classes are scheduled across the first and second semesters, and will be led by the thesis co-ordinator. At the end of the first semester you will submit a **Research Proposal** upon which you will receive feedback. You will then be matched with an appropriate supervisor from staff within the Department who will work with you toward completion of the thesis component of the M.A. programme.

The following format is recommended for the completed thesis. Please note that these are general guidelines only. Depending on the nature of the project, some students may need to adapt these guidelines. This should be done in consultation with your supervisor and the thesis co-ordinator.

Presentation and Submission

In general the thesis is expected to be between 15,000 and 20,000 words in length which is between 60-80 double-spaced, typed pages. Please use font size of 12 points, double-spacing format, and include page numbers. Students should submit an electronic copy of the thesis through MOODLE on or before the submission date. In addition, two hard copies of the thesis should be submitted to the Department office, with a green cover sheet. The completed manuscript should be ring-bound but avoid the use of plastic covers if possible. Please ensure that you retain a secure copy of your thesis.

The completed thesis must be submitted by Friday, July 28, 2017

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1. Title page: Title of thesis, your full name and student ID, your taught M.A. programme title, and the name of your supervisor.
2. A signed declaration that the thesis constitutes your own original work.
3. Table of Contents: list each section and the page on which it begins.
4. Abstract
5. Introduction
6. Review of Literature
7. Research question(s) and methodology
8. Discussion of findings
9. Conclusion
10. Relevant bibliography
11. Appendices (if appropriate)

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4. Abstract
The abstract provides a one or two paragraph synopsis of the research project and should state clearly the nature and scope of the research undertaken. You should identify the key contribution your study makes to our knowledge of the subject. Identify, in particular, key findings.

5. Introduction
The purpose of the introduction is to set the research project in context, to define the relationship of this work to other work in the same field and to explain your own motivation in undertaking the research. You should clearly set out the aims and objectives of the study.

6. Literature Review

The purpose of the literature review is to identify the state of current knowledge in the area on which you have decided to carry out your research, and to form a foundation for the research you will carry out. It should:

- Establish the socio-historical context of the topic or question or problem
- Critically assess the significance of work already done in the field
- Illustrate the key ideas or theoretical concepts in the field that relate to your topic
- Justify the study that you are proposing

Carrying out a literature review calls for scholarship and time spent reading and reviewing relevant materials. Use the library facilities to research your chosen topic. The subject librarian (Rachel.hynes@nuim.ie) can help you in this task. Your discussion should be organised thematically addressing the points outlined above. **It is not acceptable** to simply summarise the content of a given number of books and articles.

7. Statement of research problem and methodological approach

Include a clear, concise statement of your research question(s) or objective(s). This should be followed by an outline of the research methodology you chose in order to address your research question(s). You need to explain the process by which you got from posing a question to finding out some answers. You should, therefore, address:

- How you identified the kind of data you would need to answer your question(s)
- How you selected your research technique(s) and why you consider this the most appropriate technique
- Identify the main sources of your data. You need to explain clearly here, if relevant, the type of sample which is being used, the size of the sample and the population from which the sample is being selected. If observation methods or interviews are being employed, outline clearly from whom, in what context, and for what purpose you are collecting the information. Likewise, if you are using secondary or documentary analysis you need to demonstrate what types of documents are required, where they are located, how they are accessed, and how you utilise them to answer your research question(s).
- Any special difficulties encountered in the course of the research, or any refinement of your original proposal should be briefly dealt with here.

Ethical issues

There are important ethical issues that must be taken into account in the conduct of research. These issues will be covered in class during the academic year. Among the key points of which you should be aware:

- Inform yourself of the University's ethics policy and of the ethical guidelines of the Sociological Association of Ireland. Be aware of how these ethical standards are to be maintained in the course of your research.
- Make explicit reference to the ethical issues specific to your research topic when writing up.
- Students must adhere to the principle of informed consent at all times.

- As a general principle, students are advised not to carry out research directly with people under 18 years old. Any such contact requires police vetting.
- Students wishing to carry out research with vulnerable groups must consult with their supervisor *in advance* on the feasibility or advisability of same.

Data requirements

Students should expect to spend up to 20 hours carrying out the empirical research for their research thesis. As a general guide this would translate into approximately:

- Up to 20 hours of participant observation (for which field notes must be recorded)
- Up to 20 semi-structured interviews (depending on the extent of transcription)
- 50-60 survey interviews

Empirical investigation can also be conducted through 20 hours of desk research such as:

- Content analysis of a discrete number of websites, or newspapers or magazines or some combination of those. Specific databases and tools are available locally for conducting this work. For example, Lexus Nexus provides a database of national and international newspapers.

- Analysis of visual materials (photographs, audio visual resources, etc.)

- Secondary analysis of existing open source data sets such as Central Statistics Office data, Growing Up in Ireland Longitudinal study, TILDA (Irish Longitudinal study of Ageing), etc.

- Public policy, historical or contemporary documents

- Irish social science data archive (ISSDA)

- Irish Qualitative Data Archive (IQDA) based at Maynooth University

- Administrative data for example materials on the HEA website, and Department of Education & Skills website, any government agency

- Eurostat, OECD, European Value Survey, Eurobarometer, UN

- Irish social and political values survey (IKSSDA)

8. Findings, Analysis and Interpretation
Apply the concepts and/or theoretical framework that you outlined in the literature review section to analyse and interpret your findings. Outline your key finding(s) and present some commentary and discussion that helps the reader to make sense of the finding(s). **Always refer back to the relevant sociological literature.** This is your opportunity to demonstrate how the sociological perspective can help to deepen and broaden our understanding of the particular phenomenon which is being researched. This is also your opportunity to identify where existing theory does *not* appear to fit your particular empirical case; if so, you should reflect on why this is and suggest either ways in which the theory can be refined or a more appropriate theoretical perspective than the one from which you started. This section will work well if it is organised under thematic (analytical) headings.

9. Conclusion
This is your opportunity to reflect on the research process from the conceptualisation of your research question(s) through collecting the data to analysing your key findings. You can discuss the implications of your research findings making recommendations as appropriate. You may comment on your own learning and point to avenues for further research in this field.
10. Bibliography

List the books, articles, reports, websites, etc. that you have consulted and which were relevant to the research. This should be presented using an approved format. See the *Maynooth University Guide to the Harvard Referencing System*, Second edition (2014).

System of referencing

The university (through the library) offers access to a number of software programmes (e.g. Endnote Online, Zotero) that you can use throughout the year to manage and store references to texts that you read. It may be useful to choose one and familiarise yourself with it. The library provides access, training and support. See http://nuim.libguides.com/sociology/referencing

In your assignments and your thesis you need to follow a standard form of academic referencing. A useful resource to download is the *Maynooth University Guide to the Harvard Referencing System*, Second edition (2014).

A copy of this is available online - https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/sites/default/files/assets/document/The%20Ref%20Point%202 nd%20ed%20final_0.pdf

Also useful is http://www.citethisforme.com/harvard-referencing

Please take careful note of the Maynooth University's policy on plagiarism when completing your thesis and take steps to reference your work appropriately. It is essential that you acknowledge the prior academic work that you are building upon.

Academic Staff - Contact and Research Interests

Dr. Mary Benson - mary.benson@nuim.ie
Cityscapes; gentrification; place; community; and visual representations. Current research focuses on urban agriculture.

Dr. Delma Byrne- Delma.Byrne@nuim.ie
Research interests include social stratification in education and the labour market spanning the primary, second-level and higher education sectors as well as post-secondary education and training; transitions between education and the labour market and the evaluation of educational interventions.

Dr. Barry Cannon- Barry.Cannon@nuim.ie
Research interests are on Latin American politics, with particular expertise on Peru, Venezuela and Central America, especially on issues of democratization, power relations, Left and Right politics, civil society, and development. Current research focuses on opposition politics in Venezuela; right wing politics in Latin America; and, comparisons between collective reactions to crisis in Latin America and in Ireland and Europe.

Dr. Brian Conway- Brian.Conway@nuim.ie
Research interests include sociology of religion; collective memory; history of Irish sociology. Current research focuses on examining Catholic public discourses and institutional arrangements, trends and patterns in the Catholic workforce, and religious institutional responses to scandal, all in comparative perspective.

Professor Mary P. Corcoran- Mary.Corcoran@nuim.ie
Research interests include the Irish migratory experience, urban transformation and change, and public cultures. Prof Corcoran is currently collaborating with artist Mary Burke on a set of visual and sociological studies of homescapes and townscapes.

Dr. Colin Coulter- Colin.coulter@nuim.ie
Research interests include development studies, global politics, Marxism, ethnicity and nationalism, popular culture and in particular popular music and Northern Irish politics and society.

Dr. Laurence Cox - Laurence.Cox@nuim.ie
Research interests include social movement research (movement waves, alterglobalization and anti-austerity movements, European social movements, movement theorising, protest policing, activist sustainability); Buddhist Studies; new religious movements; sociology of knowledge and culture (history of ideas, sociology of intellectuals, counter culture); working-class studies; social theory (western Marxism, socialist feminism); and methodology (participatory action research, community research).

Dr. Pauline Cullen- Pauline.Cullen@nuim.ie
Research interests include political sociology; gender inequality, social movements; civil society and state relations; nongovernmental organisations; social policy and European Integration; coalitions between diverse constituencies; activism on social rights beyond national settings.

Professor G. Honor Fagan- honor.fagan@nuim.ie
Research interests include Human Security, Gender and Development Governance, and Social Sustainability.

Dr. Jane Gray- Jane.gray@nuim.ie

Research and teaching interests include families and households, comparative-historical sociology, life history analysis. Her current research focuses on: life histories and social change in twentieth century Ireland; family and community, gender, household economies and social change.

Dr. Aphra Kerr- Aphra.Kerr@nuim.ie
Teaching and Research interests focus on technology and media in society and digital sociology. Current research explores data driven media production, new forms of virtual work, production in the global digital games industry, and gender and diversity in online culture. Recent projects have explored the design of future telecommunications network services and applications, gendered practices and representations in digital games culture, and broadcasting and diversity.

Dr. Rebecca King Ó Riain- Rebecca.King-ORiain [on leave first semester]
Research and teaching interests include globalization, emotions and technology; racial/ethnic beauty pageants; critical race theory; qualitative methods; interracial marriage and multiracial people. Her current research explores the 'Globalization of Love' through qualitative research with transnational, mixed couples and their children looking at uses of digital technology to create and maintain global emotional networks.

Dr. Mary Murphy - Mary.P.Murphy@nuim.ie [research leave second semester]
Research interests include the impact of globalisation on welfare states, the political mediation of social policy reform, local governance and institutional mechanisms to support social innovation, social inclusion and citizenship, gender and social welfare, commodification, conditionality and welfare to work policies.

Dr. Peter Murray- Peter.murray@nuim.ie
Research and teaching interests include political mobilisation and the growth of the modern state, industry, work and technological change, health, illness and healing.

Dr. John O'Brennan- John.OBrennan@nuim.ie
Research interests include the process and politics of European Union enlargement; the EU's relationship with the western Balkans and prospective enlargement to South Eastern Europe; the dynamics of EU external relations; EU-Russian relations; constructivist theories of International Politics; and the identity dimension to European integration.

Professor Seán Ó Riain- Sean.ORiain@nuim.ie [research leave first semester]
Research interests are in the sociology of work, economic sociology, comparative and global political economy and social inequality. Specific areas of interest include work organisation and workplace regimes; developmental states; the global knowledge economy; economic liberalism; changing European societies.

Dr. Paul Ryan- Paul.ryan@nuim.ie
Research interests include masculinities, gay and lesbian studies, social movements and qualitative research methods specifically the use of life history

Dr. Eamonn Slater- Eamonn.slater@nuim.ie
Research interests include the structure of modernity, the heritage industry (including tourism), the social construction of landscape and the environment, visual sociology and historical sociology. All of these sociological areas are investigated with a special emphasis on Irish society.

For more please see individual staff pages: https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/sociology/our-people

Department and Faculty Level Resources for MA Students

The department provides a variety of resources for postgraduate students' use:

- Computers: The Postgraduate Computer Room in Auxilia, contains nine networked PCs, with printing facilities and quantitative and qualitative data analysis software available. Seven of these PCs operate through a computing system controlled by the Computer Centre. Two of them operate through a 'local administrator' password, allowing students to install software directly when it is appropriate. The password is available to students from the department for suitable academic purposes. ID card access only.

- Kitchen: There is a designated kitchen for postgraduate students in the Small Tower, Auxilia. In deference to all users, students are asked to keep this room clean and tidy at all times.

- Resource Room Library: The resource room in the Small tower in Auxilia has a 'library' of methodology books, teaching binders and information on research and funding. This is a trust library and you are trusted to read and return. ID card access only.

- Interlibrary Loans: If a research paper or resource is not available in the University library or online the department typically pays interlibrary loans costs to source the material from another library. However, in order to manage these often heavy costs, students are required to contact the departmental office for the necessary permissions.

All these facilities are subject to restriction in line with the Department's financial situation and pressures on work-space.

The Department of Sociology undertakes a variety of activities that are aimed at promoting intellectual community within the department and more widely. While some of these are aimed specifically at postgraduate students, others promote sociological discussion more broadly within the department and the university.

You are welcome to participate in as many of these activities as possible, as they form a crucial part of your development. While many of these activities are targeted primarily at research postgraduates, M.A. students are very welcome and are encouraged to attend.

Seminars with guest speakers from across Ireland as well as international scholars are held regularly. Information on these seminars will be posted on institutional websites and will be circulated via email as well. Postgraduate students are expected to make every effort to attend seminars on a regular basis, as these represent great opportunities to expand knowledge, extend networks and to get involved in the life of the departments and the University at the same time.

MUSSI: Is the recently established research institute for social science research in Maynooth University. It is located in Iontas. It will be running seminars and events of interest to this course. See https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/social-sciences-institute

NIRSA: The National Institute for Regional and Spatial Analysis (NIRSA) is located on the third floor of Iontas. NIRSA is an interdisciplinary research centre mainly involving Geography and Sociology staff. It is part of MUSSI and Sociology students are encouraged to participate in its activities. Check out the NIRSA website for details of upcoming events. See https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/social-sciences-institute/about-us/history/nirsa-history

University Offices and Support for MA students

Our MA students have access to the many Student Services offered on campus. These services assist students during their time at Maynooth University and can help if you experience either academic or non-academic difficulties. The most recent information on services is available on the university website but the following are a good starting point.

- Graduate Studies: You will already have met them on registration/orientation day. Keep an eye on https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/graduate-studies

- Library: There are social science subject librarians in the library who can introduce you to the library resources in Sociology and the library offer useful short training sessions, including in using their databases. See their list of sessions at http://nuim.libguides.com/support_training

- Centre for Teaching and Learning: Need help writing essays? https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/centre-teaching-and-learning/student-learning-and-advice/academic-advisory-office

- Student Services: https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/student-services

- Career Development Centre: Provide regular training courses, many of which will be of interest. https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/careers

References and testimonials

Staff-members regard it as a pleasure as well as a duty to act as referees when requested to do so by students with whose work they are familiar. It should be remembered that recommendations normally take account of interpersonal as well as academic skills and thus it may be helpful to suggest ways in which consideration may be had of the anxiety of staff members to do justice to students' applications.

• Requests for references should be made in writing, full details being given of the nature of the course or appointment for which an application is being made.

• Full documentation relating to the course or appointment should be supplied, including all forms (duly completed) and envelopes that are required for the furnishing of references.

- Referees should have details of the applicants' address and telephone number to facilitate communication.

• As much notice as possible should be given to referees, the final date for the submission of the reference or testimonial being clearly specified.

• It is desirable for the referee to have an updated copy of the applicant's curriculum vitae to provide background to the writing of a reference.

• Staff-members always appreciate a brief note informing them of the outcome of applications for courses or appointments.

We hope you have an enriching and fulfilling academic experience at Maynooth University. Welcome!