



## PSYCHOLOGY AND SOCIAL ISSUES: BRITISH PERSPECTIVES CAS PS 365 (*Core course*)

### Course Description

The course draws on British contributions to psychological theory and research to promote **social inquiry** into selected current social issues facing Britain today, together with an appreciation of the experiences and roles of the **individual in community** settings. We will consider contemporary challenges relating to issues such as, e.g, intergroup conflict, the influence of bias in policy and decision-making, socioeconomic factors' impact on outcomes, the impact of innovation and technology on psychology, social media, climate change, equality, activism, violence, crime, social disorder (the 2011 riots), immigration and asylum seeking, gender and attitudes to sexuality and sexual diversity, sexual exploitation and abuse, health, wellbeing and emotions. The course will also serve to develop skills in **teamwork and collaboration**, through group projects focused on the **social policy impacts** of the work of high-ranking psychology departments and academics in British universities. This exercise will be assessed both with respect to **content** but also in terms of the **skills** demonstrated by students in collaborative teamwork and effective presentations. You will be encouraged to **think critically about the extent to which contemporary psychological theory and research can provide us with insights and solutions to such pressing social issues**. Visits, visiting speakers and critical examination of recent examples of British research, together with group presentations drawing on the national *Research Excellence Framework 2021* (REF21), will help to inform your understanding of the theoretical and applied issues addressed during the course.

Substantively, you will gain increased knowledge of a range of selected contemporary social challenges, and the ways in which psychological research has influenced government policy and practice. In addition to academic study, you will have the opportunity to learn directly from field visits and meeting people working in communities addressing the very issues discussed in the classroom. An emphasis will also be placed on students **reflecting** on their learning, their **individual work** and their **collaboration** with fellow students in the group presentation exercise.

### Hub-aligned course objectives

#### 2) Scientific and Social Inquiry: Social Inquiry II

##### Social Inquiry II Outcome 1

You will evidence your knowledge of the British contribution to the development of psychology as a discipline, and awareness of the work of some leading historical and contemporary British social psychologists.

##### Social Inquiry II Outcome 2

You will demonstrate your knowledge and analytic skills for the critical evaluation of the contributions and limitations of selected examples of social inquiry in understanding contemporary social issues and in informing potential intervention strategies.

#### 4) Diversity, Civic Engagement, and Global Citizenship: Individual in Community

##### Individual in Community Outcome 1

You will reflect on your own world view and beliefs relating to the role of social categories and individuals in contemporary society, as well as evidencing an understanding of current issues relating to class, gender and ethnicity in the UK.

##### Individual in Community Outcome 2

You will evidence your increased insight in relation to the challenges facing individuals in community contexts through careful reflection on fieldwork visits to meet individuals working in communities and organisations in London to address contemporary social issues.

#### 5) Intellectual Toolkit: Teamwork/Collaboration

##### Teamwork/Collaboration Outcome 1

You will demonstrate your skills in small teams working through creating a presentation on the work of, for instance, a selected UK university psychology department, individual academic, the Behavioural Insights Team, and/or or reputable sources of similar academic standing, whilst highlighting the contributions made by the department/organisation as a whole, and critically evaluating the work of a selected academic or project within it, together with raising probing questions to stimulate discussion in the wider group.

##### Teamwork/Collaboration Outcome 2

You will demonstrate your ability to use the tools and strategies of working successfully with other students, in working towards outcome 1 related to recent British contributions to the field of psychology. This includes assigning roles and responsibilities, reflection on the process of creating the presentation and on the presentation itself and audience response.

### Additional Course Objectives

On completion of this course, you will be able to:

- Demonstrate a knowledge of the historical development of psychology as a field of study in Britain, the role of the British Psychological Society;
- Appreciate the distinctive contributions that British psychology has made and is making to psychology as a discipline internationally, particularly in the field of social psychology;
- Understand the place of historical change and political factors in the generation of developments in psychological theory, research and professional practice in Britain;
- Show an understanding of the operation and outcomes of the *Research Excellence Framework* in the assessment of research outputs and impact of the work of psychologists in British Universities;
- Evidence improved knowledge of selected social challenges facing Britain today relating to: gender and sexuality, civil disorder and violence; immigration and prejudice, health and wellbeing, and the policies and strategies currently pursued by government to address them.

### Other Outcomes

- This course is part of the BU Study Abroad London Internship Programme, and as such, it takes into account the fact that students will have psychology-relevant placements in London, working in universities, charities, schools, hospitals and private companies. You

will be working directly with people facing challenges such as: physical and mental ill-health, addiction, social displacement, learning difficulties, and domestic violence. The issues raised in the course, and the material assigned for reading, will take account of the challenges and opportunities provided by these placements.

## **Grading**

The following Boston University table explains the grading system that is used by most faculty members on Boston University's Study Abroad London Programmes.

Grade	Honour Points	Usual %
A	4.0	93-100
A-	3.7	89-92
B+	3.3	85-88
B	3.0	81-84
B-	2.7	77-80
C+	2.3	73-76
C	2.0	69-72
C-	1.7	65-68
D	1.0	60-64
F	0.0	Unmarked

## **Grading Criteria**

**'Incomplete'** or **I** grades are not permitted because of the obvious difficulty in making up missed work once the student has left the country. All work must be completed on time. We also do not allow **'Audits'** (AU), **'Withdrawals'** (W), or **'Pass/Fail'** (P) grades.

The grades reflect the quality of the work. Lecturers and students should use the following criteria for an understanding of what each grade means.

**A** This exceptional grade is assigned only to work that has persistently outstanding quality in both substance and presentation. The student must demonstrate a sustained capacity for independent thought and extensive study, producing rigorous and convincing analyses in well-ordered prose.

**A-** Awarded to work that is clearly focused and analytical, and based on wide reading. The student must cover all the principal points of a question and systematically develop a persuasive overall thesis, allowing for one or two venial omissions or inapt expressions.

**B+, B, B-** This range of grades indicates that the student has shown some evidence of original thought and intellectual initiative. The student has cited sources beyond the class materials, and shown a degree of originality in perception and/or approach to the subject. The work will show thoughtful management of material, and a good grasp of the issues. The differences between a B+, a straight B and a B- may reflect poor presentation of the material, or mistakes in punctuation, spelling and grammar.

**C+, C, C-** Work in this grade range is satisfactory, but uninspiring. If the work is simply a recitation of the class materials or discussions, and shows no sign of genuine intellectual engagement with the issues, it cannot deserve a higher grade. Should an essay fail to provide a clear answer to the question as set, or argue a position coherently, the grade will fall within this range.

Quality of presentation can lift such work into the upper levels of this grade range. Work of this quality which is poorly presented, and riddled with errors in grammar, spelling and punctuation,

will fall into the lower end of the range. To earn a C grade, the work must demonstrate that the student is familiar with the primary course material, be written well enough to be readily understood, be relevant to the assignment, and, of course, be the student's own work except where properly cited.

**D** A marginal pass can be given where some but not all the elements of the course have been completed satisfactorily.

**F** The failing grade indicates the work is seriously flawed in one or more ways:

- Obvious lack of familiarity with the material
- So poorly written as to defy understanding
- So brief and insubstantial that it fails to properly address the subject
- Material presented is not relevant to the assignment
- Demonstrates evidence of plagiarism (see following section in Academic Conduct Code)

Please refer to the Academic Handbook for detailed grading criteria and policies on plagiarism. This can be accessed via Blackboard Learn: <http://learn.bu.edu>

*\* Final Grades are subject to deductions by the Academic Affairs Office due to unauthorised absences.*

## **Attendance Policies**

### **Classes**

All Boston University London Programme students are expected to attend every class session, seminar, and field trip to fulfil the required course contact hours and receive course credit. Any student that has been absent from two class sessions (whether authorised or unauthorised) will need to meet with the Directors to discuss their continued participation on the programme.

### *Authorised Absence:*

The Authorised Absence Approval Request Form is available through the Academic Affairs section of the BU London Personal Page: <https://fm.bu-london.co.uk/fmi/webd/>

**Please note: Submitting an Authorised Absence Approval Request Form does not guarantee an authorised absence**

Students who expect in advance to be absent from any class should notify a member of Academic Affairs and complete an Authorised Absence Approval Request Form ten working days in advance of the class date.

Students may apply for an authorised absence only under the following circumstances:

- **Illness (first day of sickness):** If a student is too ill to attend class, the student must notify Academic Affairs as soon as possible by submitting an Authorised Absence Approval Request Form in advance of the class. If it is the student's first absence of the semester (from any class) a doctor's note is not required.
- **Illness (multiple days):** If a student is missing more than one class day due to illness, the student must complete an Authorised Absence Approval Request Form and a sick note from a local doctor excusing their absence from class. Once well enough, the student will need to meet with Academic Affairs.
- Important placement event that clashes with a class (verified by internship supervisor).

- Special circumstances which have been approved by the Directors (see note below).

**The Directors will only in the most extreme cases allow students to leave the programme early or for a significant break.**

#### *Unauthorised Absence:*

Any student to miss a class due to an unauthorised absence will receive a **4% grade penalty** to their final grade for the course whose class was missed.

This grade penalty will be applied by the Academic Affairs office to the final grade at the end of the course. As stated above, any student that has missed two classes will need to meet with Academic Affairs to discuss their participation on the programme as excessive absences may result in a 'Fail' in the class and therefore expulsion from the programme.

#### **Religious Holidays**

Boston University's Office of the University Registrar states:

'The University, in scheduling classes on religious holidays and observances, intends that students observing those traditions be given ample opportunity to make up work. Faculty members who wish to observe religious holidays will arrange for another faculty member to meet their classes or for cancelled classes to be rescheduled.'

#### **Special Accommodations**

Each student will need to contact the Disability & Access Services to request accommodations for the semester they are abroad. Students are advised by BU-DAS not to expect the same accommodations as they receive on campus.

BU London can only uphold special accommodations if we have received the appropriate documentation from the BU-DAS. We cannot accept letters from other universities/centres.

All disabilities need to be known to the DAS in Boston if they are to be used as a reason for requiring a change in conditions, i.e. reduced internship hours or special accommodations for the internship schedule.

#### **Lateness**

Students arriving more than 15 minutes after the posted class start time will be marked as late. Any student with irregular class attendance (more than two late arrivals to class) will be required to meet with the Academic Affairs and if the lateness continues, may have their final grade penalised.