

SELF AND SOCIETY

MODULE CODE: CSPH7041

MODULE TUTOR: DR REBEKAH HUMPHREYS

EMAIL: r.humphreys@uwtsd.ac.uk

TEL: 01570 424975

Course Overview

This module addresses the relation between self and society from a variety of angles afforded by modern theoretical traditions. Understandings of the conditions, sources and determinants of selfhood and identity will lie at the root of debates across social studies, as will assumptions about the nature of ‘the individual’ and its relation to those ‘socializing’ factors – class, culture, gender and others – which place a given individual within a particular set of social relations.

In taking a critical look at such concepts, this module will explore some or all of the following:

Block 1:

The Self in Philosophy: the body, the mind and personal identity.

Block 2:

Modernity and its contradictions: the optimism of theory and the sublimation of the individual.

Block 3:

Durkheim collective subject and the individual, Marxism and methodological individualism, human nature and the self, individualism or collectivism.

Block 4:

Selfhood and identity, as seen in different philosophical traditions.

Block 5:

Language, inclusion and exclusion: the relation between ‘self’ and ‘other’, understandings of social justice, social, ethical and political philosophy and theory.

Module Information

The course is taught by blocks with notes & readings. The notes & readings for each topic will be available on Moodle. You will need to login using your TSD username and password, and then select “Self & Society (CSPH7041)” from “My modules.” Relevant readings for blocks will also be available via Moodle.

You should not feel restricted to these readings only – the library holds numerous books on the topics and the philosophers covered in this module (please refer to the Library website about postal loans). Also there are plenty of relevant journal articles available. Despite being distant students you should be prepared to discuss the topic and/or with questions about the reading/lecture & such questions will in the main be disseminated throughout the notes.

Topics and questions may also be posted to the online Forum; the Forum is for you to use to discuss the module content with other students on the module. Feel free to use the Forum to post your own questions too

Assessment Information

The assessment for this module is 100% coursework: Two assignments both 2500 words and both worth 50%.

Essay Questions

For essay 1 and essay 2, please choose from the following questions:

1. “There is still a significant amount of confusion about what modernity is and whether postmodernity is merely an extension of the self-critique begun in the Enlightenment.” Critically examine and assess the validity of this statement using your understanding of its terms.

2. Can we defend Marxism against the charge of anti-humanism by allowing that it posits a form of methodological individualism?
3. Action in society is 'individual' as well as 'social.' Discuss this statement with reference to the course material.
4. Contemporary discourse on 'social justice' owes much to Rawls' 'theory of justice' for the moral justification of its approach. Do you agree?
5. 'Personality is neither quantifiable nor measurable.' Discuss in relation to the course material.
6. Critically evaluate the relationship between the values of individual autonomy, freedom and equality?