

Social Research Institute

PGTA Opportunities: 2026/27

Below is a list of modules which have seminar leadership opportunities for the 26/27 academic year. Full module descriptions can be found below the bulleted lists on the subsequent pages.

Autumn term modules

(Teaching commences week beginning 5th Oct 2026 and ends week beginning 14th December 2026)

Undergraduate modules:

- Foundations of Psychology I (SOCS0023)
- Introduction to Economics I (SOCS0030)
- Introduction to Social Science Research (SOCS0022)
- Qualitative Research Methods (SOCS0034)
- Introduction to Sociology (SOCS0024)
- Historical Foundations of Sociological Thought (SOCS0099)
- Economics of Public Policy (SOCS0043)
- Thinking Through Identities (SOCS0092)
- Sociology of Childhood (SOCS0032)
- Social Science Seminar (SOCS0091)

Masters modules:

- Foundations of Qualitative Methods (SOCS0052)
- Foundations of Social Data Science (SOCS0053)
- Advanced Computational Techniques for Data Science (SOCS0055)
- Inclusive Research: Theory for Policy and Practice (SOCS0059)
- Social Problems and Intervention (SOCS0093)
- Principles of Sociological Explanation (SOCS0109)
- Researching Childhoods (SOCS0015)
- Understanding Data for the Social Sciences (SOCS0122)

Spring term modules

(Teaching commences week beginning 11th January 2027 and ends week beginning 22nd March 2027)

Undergraduate modules:

- Discovering Qualitative and Quantitative Methods (SOCS0026)
- Introduction to Economics II (SOCS0031)
- Social Change in Contemporary Society (SOCS0025)
- Economics of Education (SOCS0042)
- Quantitative Research Methods (SOCS0035)
- Social Psychology (SOCS0039)
- Sociology of Gender (SOCS0036)
- Love, Intimacy and Sexuality (SOCS0096)
- Religion and Society (SOCS0124)

Masters modules:

- Advanced Qualitative Methods (SOCS0016)
- Impact Evaluation Methods (SOCS0017)
- Longitudinal Data Analysis (SOCS0056)
- Policy Engagement for Researchers (SOCS0057)
- Comparative Social Policy (SOCS0094)
- Social Change in Contemporary Society (SOCS0110)
- Data Science Using International Data (SOCS0119)

Module descriptors:

Foundations of Psychology I (SOCS0023)

This module will introduce students to key concepts and ideas in the discipline of psychology. We start by investigating a brief history of psychology; learning about significant theorists and exploring psychological methods. We then investigate fundamental topics in psychology through four of the core perspectives in the field, namely: developmental, biological, social and cognitive psychology. The module encourages students to begin to think about links between psychology and other related disciplines in the Social Sciences. Topics which will be covered include: relationships, mental health, persuasion, identity and parenting. Throughout, we draw on past experiments and theories from an array of global scholars, as well as real life examples, to demonstrate how relevant psychology is in our day-to-day lives.

Introduction to Economics I

This module is a first year core course that prepares students for the second year optional module, 'Economics of Public Policy'. It is both an introduction to economic way of thinking, as well as a basic microeconomic theory module. It demonstrates how market-level phenomena is built up from individual decisions of economic agents, discusses when market forces work and when they fail. All topics will be covered with a strong policy focus and no advanced mathematics will be used. The module aims to familiarize students with basic concepts and principles of economic thinking, and also to teach students a solid understanding of a basic modelling toolkit to analyse how simple versions of public policies (e.g. taxes, antitrust regulations or insurance policies) may affect economic outcomes. Students will also get a flavour of how microeconomics is used in public policy debates.

Introduction to Social Science Research (SOCS0022)

This core year 1 module will provide you with an introduction to social science research and an understanding of the principles underlying social science research. You will explore what it means to do research, how research projects are designed and how previous knowledge helps researchers create a framework for their scholarly work. The module will draw on approaches to research from sociology, psychology and anthropology so that you have a well-rounded understanding of research in different social science disciplines. You will explore a variety of research designs inclusive of both quantitative and qualitative approaches and will use this to question how they might reflect different paradigms. In addition, this module will reflect on ethical issues in research and 'researcher positioning' and will provide you with study skills that you can take forward for your personal and working life.

Qualitative Research Methods (SOCS0034)

This second year module builds on methods teaching in year 1, and consolidates students' skills and knowledge of qualitative research. The module will provide students with the ability to apply different approaches to data collection, generation and analysis. Through the module the students will learn about interpretation and presentation of qualitative data. They will learn to exercise reflexivity, develop an ability to interrogate the research process and findings, and to critically appraise rigour in qualitative research. Topics covered include interviewing, ethnography, visual methods, narrative research, ethical challenges in research, and presentation of research insights. The module also introduces students to different approaches to the analysis of qualitative data including content, thematic, discourse and narrative approaches.

Introduction to Sociology (SOCS0024)

This undergraduate module is designed to introduce students to sociological thought and to encourage them to use their sociological imagination to see how aspects of their

everyday life are linked to ongoing process of social organisation and coordination. The themes covered in this course will highlight the interplay between the individual and society, how society is both stable and changing, the causes and consequences of social inequality, and the social construction of human life. Understanding sociology will make vivid to the student the social basis of everyday life, this course will also develop their critical thinking by revealing the social structures and processes that shape diverse forms of human life.

Historical Foundations of Sociological Thought (SOCS0099)

What are the great transformations that gave rise to our global society? How did the emergence of industrialisation and imperial capitalism change the world around us and our thinking about power, injustice and global inequalities? How have the big revolutions of the 18th-20th centuries re-shaped the way we think about modernity, democracy and the nation state? This module offers a critical introduction to the historical antecedents of sociological theory. The module moves beyond conventional Eurocentric and chronological accounts of key historical events, processes and structures of the modern era. The module explores the ways in which 20th century sociological thinking developed as a way to understand these changes and the advent of modern ideologies such as liberalism, socialism and fascism. In doing so it illuminates the historic dimensions of a globalizing present, preparing students to engage with ideas around today's interconnected yet greatly unequal global society. The module's seminars interrogate further these topics, debating de-centred perspectives on historical turning points that drove global change, and encouraging rigorous criticism of the continuing global effects of colonialism, imperialism, and racism today.

Economics of Public Policy (SOCS0043)

This module provides students with a broad, up-to-date introduction to the economic analysis of public policy issues including some guest lecturers from the Institute for Fiscal Studies on current public policy issues. The module will draw on microeconomic tools learnt in the first year Economics modules and will expand these analytical tools, including empirical tools, to allow a sound economic analysis of key public policy issues.

Thinking Through Identities (SOCS0092)

This module provides a broad introduction to the ways in which social identities have been studied in the social sciences. It will present key debates and the disagreements and areas of overlap between different theories. It offers students an opportunity to explore cutting edge research on social identities and the fact that everybody has multiple identities but tends to think of themselves in singular ways. It will explore the relevance of different theories for understanding the place of identity in social life by applying theories to everyday situations.

Sociology of Childhood (SOCS0032)

This module provides a comprehensive introduction to key trends and debates in the sociological study of childhood. It offers students an opportunity to explore cutting edge research on the diversity of children's lives across time and place. Drawing on the work of leading scholars in the field, the module will prompt consideration of the contradictions and continuities in ways children are positioned in different contexts. This will enable exploration of adult-child power relations, unequal childhoods, and the intersections of local and global childhoods, children's rights, and children's contributions to their social, political and economic worlds. Students will examine a variety of representations of childhood (e.g. in film, advertisements, policy) and their social and political implications. The module will encourage reflection on the significance of sociological understandings of childhood for research, professional practice, and policy.

Social Science Seminar (SOCS0091)

This third year, interdisciplinary, core module revolves around a series of key note lectures by leading policy makers and academics in the realm of social science. Each session will focus on a topical area within the social sciences. Key note lectures will vary from year to year and will reflect current social and policy issues. Each lecture will be followed by a debate between the students of the issues raised.

Foundations of Qualitative Methods (SOCS0052)

This module introduces students to different approaches to qualitative research design, data collection/generation and analysis. Students will develop presentation skills on initial ideas for their proposed research topic, learn about qualitative data collection and analysis, and undertake a small piece of qualitative research. On completion of the module, students should be able to demonstrate their ability to understand how methods and theory are linked in qualitative research; demonstrate an understanding of qualitative data interpretation, presentation and ethical awareness; apply different approaches to qualitative interviews and data collection/generation; exercise reflexivity and ability to interrogate the qualitative research process and findings; analyse qualitative data; and critically appraise and demonstrate rigour in qualitative research.

Foundations of Social Data Science (SOCS0053)

This module gives students a solid grounding on regression analysis. It is designed for students who have limited experience with quantitative methods but no knowledge of OLS. It is their first stepping stone to more advanced quantitative social data science modules in Term 2. The module starts with an introduction to multivariate Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression and the assumptions behind them and moves through topics on OLS violations, inference, transforming variables, non-linear effects, dummy variables and interactions. Each lecture will be mirrored by a practical workshop

seminar where students will put the analytical techniques introduced in the lectures to use. Students will analyse a large dataset using a statistical computer package (R) and will be encouraged to develop good practice in presenting and interpreting the statistics they produce. By the end of the course, students will be able to carry out an independent piece of research using regression techniques. Students should also be able to analyse critically the use of statistics in social research and to feel comfortable with using different regression techniques to answer questions about social phenomena.

Advanced Computational Techniques for Data Science (SOCS0055)

This module teaches students the central skills of modern computational social science. The first half of the course covers the necessary programming skills, including data preparation, producing outputs from statistical analyses (tables, text, and figures), writing functions and loops, and working with data from the internet. The second half of the course covers the statistical techniques and conceptual underpinnings of computational social science, including optimising for prediction (compared with inference), bias-variance trade-off, cross-validation and parameter tuning, machine learning (e.g., random forests) and deep learning (neural networks) algorithms, and ensemble methods.

Inclusive Research: Theory for Policy and Practice (SOCS0059)

This course introduces students to diverse rationales and critiques that relate to the involvement of the public and other interest holders in the oversight, design, conduct and interpretation of research. Students will also study strategies aimed at helping researchers and interest holders (e.g., people with lived experience of a topic or issue) work effectively together on initiatives that result in or make use of research findings, to ensure that research outcomes are relevant and meaningful to all. Students will develop their understanding of the interest holder's involvement and apply their learning in order to critically appraise involvement methods, the benefits and challenges of research engagement and potential impact.

Social Problems and Intervention (SOCS0093)

This module examines how social problems are constructed and defined and critically evaluates different approaches to intervention. Using real world case studies from diverse international contexts, the module addresses: How are phenomena identified and framed as 'social problems', and by whom? What role does power, position, and competing narratives play in problem construction? What are the ethical and ideological implications of different intervention approaches (including public health frameworks)? How can we model and critically evaluate how interventions are designed to work (theory of change and logic models)? What factors should inform decisions about intervention design and appropriateness? Students will develop skills in applying

theoretical frameworks to analyse problem construction and evaluate intervention appropriateness.

Principles of Sociological Explanation (SOCS0109)

This module explores key building blocks of sociological explanation and how evidence can be used to construct and evaluate such explanations, considering both qualitative and quantitative perspectives. It begins by examining the nature of explanation in sociology, focusing on mechanisms that link individual behaviours and interactions to social-level phenomena through potentially complex data collection and analysis processes. Different social mechanisms often produce distinct implications, which we assess using empirical evidence. Each week discusses a core element of sociological explanation and uses an applied topic to illustrate this type of explanation in practice, revealing its strengths and weaknesses. Some themes that will be explored in relation to examples from real life may include strategic interaction; micro-macro links; individual dispositions and preferences; social norms; and collective action.

Researching Childhoods (SOCS0115)

Researching Childhoods is a foundational qualitative methods module that focuses on conducting research with children and about childhood. It introduces you to a range of current social research about childhood and with children in global contexts and enables participants to critically reflect on the relationship between theory and research methodology as a basis for the appraisal of the politics and ethics of childhood research. Analysing contemporary methodological developments and debates in childhood research (e.g. creative and participatory methods; power relations; ethics in research with children) will lay the foundations for participants to design and conduct their own research, both as part of this module and in their dissertations. The course covers the following: introduction to research and paradigms of childhood research; ethical issues; differing methods used in research with children and on aspects of childhood, with a particular focus on qualitative methods, including interviewing, observation, visual and creative methods, documentary, and policy-related research, and research with children and young people in majority and minority world countries. Each session involves input from an experienced researcher, followed by active learning, group exercises.

Understanding Data for the Social Sciences (SOCS0122)

This module will provide students with an introduction to different sources of data utilised in the social sciences. Specifically, the module aims to familiarise students with the following data sources: Survey data, Administrative data, Geo-spatial data, Genetic data, Web and social media data. There will be a focus on the data generating processes underlying each data source and on understanding data quality and the types of error in these data, specifically in terms of representation (who is observed)

and measurement (how they are observed). The module will therefore give students an understanding of the opportunities, strengths and limitations of different types of data. Students will also be familiarised with the processes of integrating, linking and augmenting different data sources. There will be an emphasis throughout on real-world examples, including surveys and data linkages within the UCL Social Research Institute.

Discovering Qualitative and Quantitative Methods (SOCS0026)

This module will introduce you to both qualitative and quantitative research methods and data analysis. The course focuses on how to design and conduct a research project and so you will learn to formulate research questions and link them to appropriate methods. You will conduct interviews and focus groups and you will learn the preliminary steps of qualitative and quantitative data analysis including the use of the software SPSS. You will also engage with relevant scholarly work to be able to critically evaluate your own research practices. As part of the assignment you will design and conduct a research project including primary research and secondary data analysis. You will then prepare an outline of your research project and produce a paper where you will bring together the experiences of data collection and analysis gained during the course. The module comprises lectures, seminar groups and IT workshops.

Introduction to Economics II (SOCS0031)

This module familiarises students with the basic concepts and principles of how economic thinking builds market-level phenomena from the individual decisions of economic agents. It introduces students to how economists analyse and model real-world situations and highlights the synergies between economics and related disciplines such as psychology and sociology. The module is organised around two core pillars. The microeconomic component focuses on how markets function and why they may fail, equipping students with the analytical toolkit to examine issues such as market power, externalities, taxation, and insurance markets, and to assess the role of policies such as commodity and income taxes or antitrust regulation. The macroeconomic component centres on economic policy and economy-wide outcomes, introducing students to the main tools used to understand aggregate fluctuations and evaluate the effects of fiscal and related policy interventions in public policy debates.

Economics of Education (SOCS0042)

The economics of education applies the principles of economics to the analysis of education and education policy. This course is designed to give an overview of the entire field of economics of education to students who are new to economics, as well as to those who have previously studied economics. The module introduces the most fundamental and important concepts in economics and explains how they relate to education.

Social Change in Contemporary Society (SOCS0025)

This first-year module will provide students with an understanding of international differences across a range of important policy-relevant areas, from family life to employment to political engagement, and the key factors that underpin these differences. It will focus in detail on the UK to explore how it has changed (and remained stable) over time, exploring the factors that underpin this and their consequences, particularly in terms of public policy. The module will introduce students to different ways of thinking about and assessing evidence, including consideration of practical issues to do with how data is collected, how different phenomena can be measured, and the issues that emerge when comparing data from different sources. The evidence considered in the module will be predominantly but not entirely statistical in nature.

Quantitative Research Methods (SOCS0035)

The module aims to give students a solid understanding of the principles and practice of quantitative research methods. The emphasis is on the application of statistical models to large-scale datasets and the interpretation of the results. It builds on the first-year modules Introduction to Social Science Research and Discovering Qualitative and Quantitative Methods. During the first six weeks, the module introduces the principles and practice of data handling, a review of probability and statistics, comparison of two groups with t- and non-parametric tests, comparison of multiple groups with ANOVA/ANCOVA, and measures of association. The last four weeks treat the regression framework which is a generalization of the methods discussed in the first six weeks. Within the regression framework, the analysis of binary outcomes is also discussed (i.e., logistic regression). Through weekly tutorials, students gain hands-on experience with the data analysis software (SPSS) and of applying quantitative methods to real-world datasets.

Social Psychology (SOCS0039)

Social Psychology explores how individuals think, feel and behave in social contexts. Building on first-year psychology foundations, the module provides an in-depth understanding of core theories, concepts and empirical methods in social psychology. It emphasises the application of social psychological theory and empirical research to analyse pressing social issues, and highlights links with cognitive, applied and political psychology to show how psychological processes interact with broader social systems. Topics covered within the module include social cognition, identity, intergroup processes and social change. The module encourages interdisciplinary thinking and supports students to apply evidence-based insights to real-world social phenomena and debates.

Sociology of Gender (SOCS0036)

This module explores gender and how it plays a role in everyday lives across the life-course. The module will take students through the various academic conceptualisations of gender and sex – what these terms mean – and the ways in which gender cross-cuts with other social and cultural identities, such as ‘race’, ethnicity, age, sexuality, class, and religion. During the module, students will explore the relationship between gender and social structures (including sociology itself), and on relationships and experiences. They will learn to challenge ‘common sense’ understandings of gender using theoretical frameworks and drawing on empirical examples from across the world. The module will cover themes such as: sex/gender debates; Feminist histories; Femininities and masculinities; Intersectionality and gender; Gendered bodies; Gender identities, Gender at work and in the home.

Love, Intimacy and Sexuality (SOCS0096)

This module explores the debates and social research evidence around personal relationships in contemporary society. The module will mainly draw on sociological and anthropological scholarship. Students will learn about the interplay between intimate life and social organisation, to understand better how wider social forces shape the most personal of experiences. Drawing on scholarship from across the globe, the module will explore how intimacy and love differ across the cultural, socio-economic and political contexts in which individuals live. The module will explore different kinds of ‘intimate relationships’, whether romantic, family or friendship based. Sexuality will be explored as a practice of intimacy. Students will also explore the range of methodological approaches and ethical dilemmas involved in researching personal life and sexual practice.

Religion & Society (SOCS0124)

After a period during which religion seemed of marginal interest to scholars and policymakers, the field is undergoing a resurgence. Religion plays a central role in international conflicts, domestic social divisions, and both global and local solidarities. This module examines the role of religion in society, drawing from both empirical and theoretical sources. It explores how religion intersects with individual identities, beliefs, and behaviour, as well as with norms and institutions. The focus is on developing the knowledge and skills necessary to critically engage with the significance of religion in the contemporary world, both within and beyond the West. The module adopts a global perspective, incorporating decolonial sociology, and methodological pluralism, drawing on examples from different religious affiliations and supporting an interdisciplinary dialogue.

Advanced Qualitative Methods (SOCS0016)

This module aims to enable a deeper understanding of qualitative approaches and methods in the social sciences as introduced in Term 1. Students will review a selection of approaches to research design and data analysis to enable an appreciation of the challenges of triangulation within qualitative methods. Learning in this module will provide students with skills needed to undertake advanced qualitative analysis of social science data. By the end of the module, students should be able to critically apply appropriate modes of qualitative analysis to research data, interpret the findings and be able to account for their conclusions. Themes will vary year to year but indicative areas include: narrative research; discourse analysis; grounded theory and thematic analysis.

Impact Evaluation Methods (SOCS0017)

This interdisciplinary module introduces students to Impact Evaluation Methods and their use in the social sciences. The module emphasises the application of quasi-experimental evaluation methods in the 'real world', and its potential impact upon government policy. Students learn about key elements of experimental and quasi-experimental methods, and be able to critically evaluate their strengths and weaknesses. The module has a high practical element, with students regularly analysing data. Topics to be covered include: designing a randomised control trial, regression methods for causal analysis, propensity score matching, regression discontinuity designs, difference-in-difference, instrumental variables and cost-benefit analyses. Upon completing the module, students will be able to design an effective experimental or quasi-experimental impact evaluation, and understand how the results can influence public policy.

Longitudinal Data Analysis (SOCS0056)

This module is an introduction to longitudinal data and analysis methods for people who have quantitative background or for those who want to brush up on these skills having not studied them for a while. It will familiarise students with different longitudinal designs, longitudinal data available for secondary analysis and methodological issues of longitudinal research, including handling missingness and attrition. The module introduces students to different longitudinal analytic techniques such as fixed effects and random effects models, structural equation modelling and latent growth modelling and event history analysis. Each lecture will be mirrored by a practical workshop where students will put the analytical techniques introduced that week to use. Using the Centre for Longitudinal Studies (CLS) British cohort studies data, students will learn how to handle and analyse large datasets using a statistical computer package and develop good practice in presenting and interpreting their results.

Policy Engagement for Researchers (SOCS0057)

We will discuss what policy engagement is, explore different ways of knowing, types of knowledge and how this relates to providing evidence for policy. You will learn about the world of policy making and explore the difference between evidence based and evidence informed approaches. We will examine the diverse types of evidence that may be most useful to policy makers, with a number of guest speakers from the policy arena as well as academics who have had success in influencing policy sharing through their research.

Comparative Social Policy (SOCS0094)

This course aims to provide students with a broad introduction to the study of social policy in comparative perspective. It begins by laying out a range of methods and theoretical approaches used for comparative policy analysis, encouraging a critical appreciation of the advantages and challenges of comparisons in policy analyses. It then shifts to consider various key actors and institutions that shape social policy in diverse contexts, before concluding with a closer examination of several policy areas of international and global significance. This course takes an explicitly international approach to the study of comparative social policy, drawing on conceptual approaches and illustrative policy examples that represent diverse social, geopolitical and economic policy spheres.

Social Change in Contemporary Society (SOCS0110)

This module examines social change in contemporary society. It is designed to introduce students to the meaning of social change, different theories of change, different patterns of change and the mechanisms behind social change. Students will also discuss the role sociology plays in social change, and consider how academic evidence, collective action and social movements may act as mechanisms of change. Discussions will focus on applied examples, and may include demographic shifts and their impact on gender, families, and immigration; AI's influence on education, work, and daily life; mental health awareness and policy expansion; religion as both a response to and driver of change; climate activism and its role in raising awareness; and racism in the criminal justice system.

Data Science Using International Data (SOCS0119)

Embark on a ten-week journey exploring this course in international comparative data analysis, a module designed to enhance your skills in effective cross-country data interpretation. Commencing with the basics, we delve into international comparisons, understanding their essence and exploring various cross-national data types. Practical seminars provide hands-on experience in conducting cross-national comparisons. As the course progresses, attention turns to intricate sample design in international studies, covering aspects such as stratified and cluster sampling. Real-world examples

drawn from international data sources enrich your understanding through interactive seminar activities. Week by week, navigate challenges arising from exclusions, non-response, and biases within international assessment data. Engage in seminars illustrating the practical implications of these challenges on cross-country comparisons of social phenomena. Addressing the technicalities of cross-national comparisons using quantitative data, the course explores country selection, statistical testing, standardisation techniques, and “senate weights.” Practical insights into these aspects are gained through seminar activities. Delve into psychometrics underpinning international studies, exploring complexities in comparing survey responses across countries. Familiarise yourself with psychometric methods in constructing international survey scales through practical seminars. Explore the intricacies of establishing causality using international data, engaging in practical examples during seminar activities. Data visualisation techniques for international comparisons are covered, providing practical skills in presenting multiple data points effectively. In the penultimate week, a guest lecture presents a real-world analysis using international comparative data. Small group discussions allow for a detailed examination of technical decisions. Culminating with a comprehensive recap and hands-on practical session, this course equips you for informed and effective data analysis across borders.