

**Part IIA Paper 5(b) Modern Societies**  
**Human, Social and Political Sciences Tripos – Part I SOC1**  
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**Aims and Objectives**

The course has three interconnected aims and objectives:

- to introduce students to the systematic study of society and social life
- to introduce students to the central debates concerning the nature of the modern era and its social consequences by exploring a selection of key sociological texts by Karl Marx, Max Weber and Emile Durkheim
- to provide students with a fundamental understanding of the major institutions that comprise, and issues that confront, modern societies

**Course Content**

The course introduces students to the discipline of sociology in two parts. In the Michaelmas term students are thoroughly acquainted with core sociological concepts and concerns (e.g. class, bureaucracy, social solidarity, social change). We do this through a critical engagement with the ideas of three central figures in the history of modern sociological thought: Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Emile Durkheim. Towards the end of Michaelmas and throughout Lent, we build on the foundations laid by the classical theorists and develop a systematic analysis of key institutions and aspects of modern societies including the following: the modern state and the rise of nationalism; citizenship and the welfare state; the media and public life; class and inequality; gender and sexual divisions; race and ethnicity. We conclude with a broader reflection on the changing nature of modern societies in our contemporary global age.

**Mode of Teaching**

The paper is taught through 18 two hour lectures over three terms. A list of supervision topics is included in this paper guide and will also be available from the Faculty Office. Students will be expected to supplement the material acquired in lectures through their own reading of the literature recommended here and by supervisors. Required reading is starred.

**Supervision**

Supervision is essential for this paper and will be arranged by Directors of Studies in the Colleges. It is recommended to have six to eight supervisions in total for this paper (including revision supervisions), covering six of the topics in this paper guide. A list of qualified supervisors is provided by the supervisions coordinator.

**Mode of Assessment**

There is one three-hour written examination at the end of the year. Candidates must answer three questions from an undivided paper.

**For further information, please contact [enquiries@hsps.cam.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@hsps.cam.ac.uk) or visit**

**<http://www.hsps.cam.ac.uk/undergraduate/>.**