HI201-15 A Short History of Neoliberalism: Market, State and Human Nature, 1920 to Today

25/26

Department
History
Level
Undergraduate Level 2
Module leader
Claudia Stein
Credit value
15
Module duration
10 weeks
Assessment
100% coursework
Study location
University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

“Neoliberalism” seems to be the catch word, the linguistic omnivore of our times. Twenty years ago, the term “neoliberalism” barely registered in English-language debates, including academic discourse. Perhaps not surprisingly, the use of the term exploded after the financial crash of 2007-8, the most severe worldwide economic crisis since the 1929 Wall Street crash. Almost overnight, the use of the term ‘neoliberalism’ became ubiquitous. Public debate and academic research began to seriously investigate the economic, political and socio-cultural conditions of ‘neoliberalism’ its potential and challenges.
But what exactly hides behind the term ‘neoliberalism’? Based on recent research from history, philosophy, political science, sociology, history of economics, cultural studies, and cultural anthropology, this module examines the history of ‘neoliberalism’, its ideas and practices, its promises and challenges. It introduces a critical understanding of neoliberal ideas, from their first theoretical formulation at the beginning of the 20th century to their current application in today's neoliberal governance. At the core of the module's stands the exploration of neoliberal ideas on the market, the state, and human behaviour in the past and present.

Module aims

The module offers a historical understanding of the changing nature of ‘neoliberalism’, from its first theoretical formulation by European and American intellectuals at the beginning of the twentieth century to today. The module examines and explores the philosophical, political, sociological, psychological, economic, scientific, and social-cultural ideas and concepts that have informed neoliberalism since the 1920s. Designed as a ‘history of the present’, the module encourages students to examine and evaluate the historical conditions in which these theories emerged. The module also enable them to critically analyse how these theories have shaped the organisation of individual 'lived experience' and social life in liberal democracies. An important module focus is also the exploration how to effectively evaluate and critique the challenges that neoliberal ideas pose for current and future governance in liberal democratic societies and the well-being of its citizens.

Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

Week 1: Introduction: A Short History of Neoliberalism: Markets, States and Human Nature, 1920s to Today
Week 2: Historical Foundations: The Rise of Neoliberal Hegemony
Week 3: Organising, Institution Building and Knowledge Production
Week 4: Crisis Implementation: The Role of Crisis as a Central Tool in Neoliberal Governmentality
Week 5: ‘Never Let a Serious Crisis Go to Waste’: Crisis Ordinary today
Week 6: Reading Week
Week 7: A New Social Ontology and a New Regime of Truth
Week 8: Neoliberalism and Engineering of Human Behaviour: Example of National Education in UK
Week 9: Redefining Selfhood and Identity: The Emotional Entrepreneur
Week 10: Neoliberal Governmentality in Perpetual Crisis Management Today: Ruling Moods and Nudging
Citizens

Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Comprehension of the historical development of neoliberal thinking on the market, the state and human behaviour since the 1920
- Critical analysis of neoliberal concepts on the market, state, and human behaviour
- Critical evaluation of the possibilities and challenges of neoliberal governmentality in the past and present
- Develop interdisciplinary research and evaluation skills
- Critical analysis of how neoliberalism has shaped the individual and social experience of

citizens in liberal democracies
- Improve study, research and communication skill

Indicative reading list

Reading lists can be found in Talis

Research element

The module researches the understanding of the past and present of neoliberal governmentality by collecting, examining, evaluating, and interpreting of a variety of primary and secondary source materials (e.g. texts, visual and materials objects, oral history).

Interdisciplinary

The module examines and applies methods and insights deriving from several academic disciplines, specifically history, law, political science, philosophy, sociology, economics, cultural studies, and cultural anthropology. The respective methods and insights are combined in pursuit of the exploration and analysis of the historical development of the strategies and technologies of neoliberal governmentality since 1920. The module crosses the ‘traditional boundaries’ between academic disciplines and schools of thought to address new and emerging issues in the discipline of history and in neighbouring disciplines on the subject of neoliberalism. The module encourages students to weave these interdisciplinary methodologies together in order to challenge and impact the complex issue of neoliberalism in the past and present.

Subject specific skills

The module teaches history-specific skill such as critical reasoning and analytical skills, including the capacity for solving problems and thinking creatively about the past. The module also teaches and encourages intellectual and methodological rigour and independence in thinking, including the ability to conduct detailed research on the subject of neoliberalism.

Transferable skills

The module teaches a number of transferable skills such as critical, independent and creative thinking, effective communication, strong writing skills, time management, and independent project organisation. These skills enhance both students' personal development and their future employment opportunities.

Study

Study time

Type	Required
Lectures	9 sessions of 1 hour (6%)
Seminars	9 sessions of 1 hour (6%)
Private study	132 hours (88%)
Total	150 hours

Private study description

History modules require students to undertake extensive independent research and reading to prepare for seminars and assessments. As a rough guide, students will be expected to read and prepare to comment on three substantial texts (articles or book chapters) for each seminar taking approximately 3 hours. Each assessment requires independent research, reading around 6-10 texts and writing and presenting the outcomes of this preparation in an essay, review, presentation or other related task.

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

You do not need to pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Assessment group A

	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
Assessment component			
3000 word essay Students choose own title and subject.	80%		Yes (extension)
Reassessment component is the same			
Assessment component			
Seminar contribution	20%		No
Reassessment component			

	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
1000 word reflective essay in lieu of seminar contribution			Yes (extension)

Feedback on assessment

Written feedback provided via Tabula; optional oral feedback in office hours.

Availability

Courses

This module is Optional for:

- Year 2 of UENA-VQ32 Undergraduate English and History
- Year 2 of UENA-VQ34 Undergraduate English and History (with a term in Venice)
- Year 2 of UHIA-V102 Undergraduate History (Renaissance and Modern History Stream)

This module is Option list B for:

- Year 2 of UHIA-V100 Undergraduate History
- Year 2 of UHIA-V1V7 Undergraduate History and Philosophy (with a term in Venice)
- Year 2 of UHIA-VM13 Undergraduate History and Politics (with a term in Venice)

This module is Option list D for:

- Year 2 of UHIA-V100 Undergraduate History
- Year 2 of UHIA-V102 Undergraduate History (Renaissance and Modern History Stream)

This module is Option list E for:

- Year 2 of UHIA-V1V5 Undergraduate History and Philosophy
- Year 2 of UHIA-VM11 Undergraduate History and Politics
- Year 2 of UHIA-VL13 Undergraduate History and Sociology
- Year 2 of UHIA-VL15 Undergraduate History and Sociology (with a term in Venice)