

2025 AHSS International Summer School

Programme Topic: Identity and Intergroup Relations in Divided Societies	Academic Leads: Dr Danielle Blaylock Dr Cathal McManus	Dates: 23 June – 3 July 2025
Topic Summary This two-week module will bring together inter-disciplinary perspectives on the causes and consequences of division and conflict, and the processes that can be used to promote social cohesion. Students will have the opportunity to engage with representatives from key governmental, NGO, and community groups in Northern Ireland to discuss how the experiences from here might be applied to other contexts experiencing social division and polarization.		
Intended Learning Outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Understand how identity can be both a cause and consequence of conflict- Examine processes that can contribute to social division and polarization- Explore identity-based interventions designed to enhance social cohesion- Assess how experiences from a divided society like Northern Ireland can be applied to other contexts- Gain an understanding of the legacies of conflict and political division		



Monday 23 June 2025			
Time	Session/Activity	Academic Lead	Location
9.30am - 11.00am	Identity as a Cause and Consequence of Conflict (Part 1) This session will build an understanding of the development, maintenance, and reduction of conflict between social groups.	Dr Blaylock	
11.00am – 11.30am	Break		
11.30am – 1.00pm	Identity as a Cause and Consequence of Conflict (Part 2) The session will consider how one's own position in the social hierarchy influences intergroup responses and how threat and emotions may be experienced on behalf of one's group.	Dr Blaylock	
1.00pm – 2.00pm	Lunch		
2.00pm – 3.30pm	Identity as a Cause and Consequence of Conflict (Part 3) This session will dive deeper into group identities as a source and consequence of intergroup conflicts.	Dr Li	



Tuesday 24 June 2025			
Time	Session/Activity	Academic Lead	Location
9.30am - 12.30am	Walking Tour of Belfast This walking tour will explore how identity is expressed in Belfast through wall murals, memorials and other symbols, drawing attention to the continued political and social divisions of the city.	Dr McManus	
12.30pm – 2.00pm	Lunch		
2.00pm – 3.30pm	Group Discussion Symbols of nations and nationalism – representing conflicting narratives of “us”.	Dr McManus	



Wednesday 25 June 2025			
Time	Session/Activity	Academic Lead	Location
9.30am - 11.00am	Ideological Attitudes and Intergroup Behaviours The aim of this session will explore the psychological and social foundations of ideological belief systems which motivate intergroup behaviours. Together we will discuss how group-based beliefs and perceptions of threat can motivate more extreme belief systems and behaviours.	Dr Blaylock	
11.00am – 11.30am	Break		
11.30am – 1.00pm	An Introduction to Political Extremism in the 21st Century This session will explore the rise of political extremism in the 21st century and introduce students to concepts such as Othering and polarisation. The session – a combination of traditional lecture and group discussion – will provide an overview of these concepts and give the students an opportunity to reflect on how they manifest in contemporary society	Dr McManus	
1.00pm – 2.00pm	Lunch		
2.00pm – 3.30pm	Group Discussion – Polarisation in Contemporary Society The aim of this discussion is to get participants to think about their understandings of polarisation in society and how the programme has so far impacted their knowledge and understanding. We will use their experiences from field trips and lectures (Week 1) to generate a discussion on how political polarisation manifests itself.	Dr McManus	



Thursday 26 June 2025			
Time	Session/Activity	Academic Lead	Location
9.30am - 11.00am	Group Mobilisation and Collective Action This session will examine how particular groups seek to mobilise and organise to advance political change/reform. We will analyse traditional forms of mobilisation such as Trade Unions right through to online campaigns that seek collective action across national boundaries.	Dr McManus	
11.00am – 11.30am	Break		
11.30am – 1.00pm	Group Mobilisation and Collective Action Developing the discussion in the morning session, this workshop will look at how mobilisation and collective action can move from peaceful protests to more violent manifestations as polarisation intensifies. This will examine a range of case-studies ranging from lone-wolf attackers inspired by online mobilisations through to armed militias such as the Proud Boys	Dr McManus	
1.00pm – 2.00pm	Lunch		
2.00pm – 3.30pm	Case Study: The Rise of the Populist Radical Right	Dr McManus	



	<p>In this session we will examine the rise of the populist radical right looking at the political rise of individuals such as Donald Trump and political groups, parties such as UKIP in the UK and the growing electoral influence of Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) in Germany. The focus will be on how the PRR have mobilised large sections of the population to rally behind narratives once deemed incompatible with Western liberal democratic values.</p>		
--	--	--	--

Friday 27 June 2025			
Time	Session/Activity	Academic Lead	Location
<p>9.00am – 5.00pm</p>	<p>Field trip to North Coast</p> <p>Students will join their peers from other programmes on a trip to the North Coast, including a visit the ruins of the medieval Dunluce Castle and the famous Giant’s Causeway World Heritage Site.</p>	<p>Dr McManus</p>	



Monday 30 June 2025			
Time	Session/Activity	Academic Lead	Location
9.30am - 11.00am	Divided Societies / Northern Ireland This session will examine the historical roots of the conflict in Northern Ireland with a particular focus on the events of the 1960s. We will discuss how and why a movement seeking political change in the form of Civil Rights brought about a political crisis that polarised society to the point of violence on the streets and, ultimately, the reintroduction of militancy to Irish politics.	Dr McManus	
11.00am – 11.30am	Break		
11.30am – 12.30pm	Divided Societies / Northern Ireland This session will examine the search for peace in Northern Ireland. It will explore elite level efforts to find a political settlement and examine how and why the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement came about.	Dr McManus	
12.30pm – 1.30pm	Lunch		
1.30pm – 4.00pm	Stormont Trip: This trip to the heart of government in NI will include a tour of the estate and a panel discussion from a range of local political leaders as they share their experiences of building a more stable society after conflict.	Dr McManus Dr Blaylock	



Tuesday 1 July 2025			
Time	Session/Activity	Academic Lead	Location
9.30am - 11.00am	Transitional Justice 1 In this section, we will consider the main goals and challenges of pursuing justice following large-scale conflict and violence. We will explore different notions of justice and how people's understanding of justice is influenced by contextual factors and group identity.	Dr Li	
11.00am – 11.30am	Break		
11.30am – 1.00pm	Transitional Justice 2 Building on the morning session, we will examine the empirical evidence for the impact of major transitional justice mechanisms (e.g., tribunal, truth commission, political apology) on peace and reconciliation.	Dr Li	
1.00pm – 2.00pm	Lunch		
2.00pm – 3.30pm	Ex-Combatants Panel This panel will bring together ex-combatants from the conflict in Northern Ireland to discuss their experiences and the transition into peace.		

Wednesday 2 July 2025			
Time	Session/Activity	Academic Lead	Location
9.30am - 11.00am	<p>Interventions to Promote Social Cohesion</p> <p>In this session we will discuss movements out of conflict and division by focusing on the way in which social categorisation and a sense of shared identity can be used to frame interventions to foster and promote social cohesion.</p>	Dr Blaylock	
11.00am – 11.30am	Break		
11.30am – 1.00pm	<p>Education as a Source of Inclusion</p> <p>Building on the morning session, we will explore how theoretical frameworks have been applied to various interventions to foster and promote social cohesion; specifically, within the education system.</p>	Dr Blaylock	
1.00pm – 2.00pm	Lunch		
2.00pm – 3.30pm	<p>Guest Speaker</p> <p>Education as a Source of Inclusion – Shared Education and Integrated Education</p>	TBC	



Thursday 3 July 2025			
Time	Session/Activity	Academic Lead	Location
9.30am - 11.00am	Understanding psychological trauma in (post-) conflict societies This session will introduce the psychological consequences of conflict, with a particular focus on trauma experienced by individuals and communities in post-conflict settings. Drawing on clinical health psychology, the module examines the nature, origins, and impact of trauma, including both individual and collective trauma. Students will engage with key concepts such as PTSD, complex trauma, and intergenerational trauma.	TBD	
11.00am – 11.30am	Break		
11.30am – 1.00pm	Supporting resiliency in (post-) conflict societies This session will cover evidence-based approaches to trauma-informed care and intervention strategies aimed at fostering resilience within both individuals and communities. Discussion will focus on how sharing a traumatic experience can create a new social identity, which can help people feel connected to others and find meaning in their trauma.	TBD	
1.00pm – 2.00pm	Lunch		
2.00pm – 3.30pm	Divided Societies: Reflections and Conclusions This session will provide an opportunity for students to discuss and reflect upon their experiences in NI.	Dr McManus	



**QUEEN'S
UNIVERSITY
BELFAST**

FACULTY OF
ARTS, HUMANITIES
AND SOCIAL
SCIENCES

	Following a short presentation, as a group we will discuss the lessons that NI can provide for other societies characterised by increased political polarisation.		
--	---	--	--