



2025 AHSS International Summer School

Programme Topic: Leadership

**Academic Lead:
Dr Stuart
McClure**

**Dates: 24th June –
3rd July 2025**

Topic Summary

The *Leadership, The Troubles, and the Good Friday Agreement* summer school offers students an immersive exploration of Northern Ireland's complex history and the diverse forms of leadership that emerged during the Troubles. Through a combination of lectures, documentary screenings, interactive workshops, and excursions to significant sites, students gain a comprehensive understanding of the social, political, and community dynamics that shaped Northern Ireland. The programme delves into the roles played by political, religious, and grassroots leaders, examining how each navigated escalating tensions, violence, and ultimately, the peace process.

Students engage directly with themes of resilience, crisis management, and conflict resolution, reflecting on how lessons from Northern Ireland's past can be applied to modern leadership challenges in divided societies. The summer school culminates in collaborative projects and reflective activities, encouraging participants to synthesise their insights and develop personal leadership principles. By the end of the programme, students leave with a nuanced perspective on leadership in complex environments and a deeper appreciation for the role of empathy, negotiation, and community-building in fostering lasting peace.

Intended Learning Outcomes

Understand the Historical Context of the Troubles

- Gain a foundational knowledge of the key historical events, social dynamics, and political factors that led to and sustained the Troubles in Northern Ireland.

Analyse Leadership Roles in Conflict and Peacebuilding

- Evaluate the challenges, strategies, and ethical considerations faced by political, religious, and community leaders in a divided society.

Develop Skills in Crisis Management and Conflict Resolution

- Learn practical strategies for negotiation, mediation, and crisis management, and understand how they were applied in Northern Ireland's peace process.

Build Empathy and Insight into Diverse Perspectives

- Explore and empathise with the varied perspectives of community members affected by the Troubles, recognising the complex motivations that shaped individual and collective responses.

Reflect on Personal Leadership Values and Principles

- Connect historical lessons from Northern Ireland to personal leadership development, identifying key skills and values necessary for effective leadership in complex environments.

Apply Lessons from Northern Ireland to Global Challenges

- Recognise how insights from Northern Ireland's journey from conflict to peace can inform approaches to contemporary issues and leadership in divided or challenging contexts.



Monday 23 June 2025			
Time	Session/Activity	Academic Lead	Location
9.30am - 11.00am	Introductory Session: <i>The Roots of Sectarianism in Northern Ireland</i> This foundational session offers a deep dive into the historical roots of sectarian tensions in Northern Ireland, setting the stage for understanding the complex social, political, and religious divisions that led to the Troubles. Participants will explore the centuries-old conflicts between Protestant and Catholic communities, examining key events such as the 17th-century Plantations of Ulster, the 1690 Battle of the Boyne, and the 1920 Government of Ireland Act, which partitioned Ireland and established Northern Ireland as a predominantly Protestant state.	Dr Stuart McClure	QBS
11.00am – 11.30am	Break		
11.30am – 1.00pm	Film Screening and Discussion: Episode 1 of <i>Once Upon a Time in Northern Ireland</i> Participants will watch the first episode, which portrays the early stages of the Troubles and the surge in violence and unrest. A facilitated discussion will follow, focusing on how various leaders – from political figures to grassroots activists – emerged to address escalating tensions and protect their communities. This session sets the stage for understanding the complexities of leadership amid crises.	Dr Stuart McClure	QBS
1.00pm – 2.00pm	Lunch		
2.00pm – 3.30pm	Guest Speaker Session: Professor Richard English (TBC) Richard English is a Professor of Politics at Queen's University Belfast and serves as the Director of the Senator George J. Mitchell Institute for Global Peace, Security, and Justice. Professor English's research focuses on the history of political violence, terrorism, and nationalism, with a particular focus on Ireland and Britain.	Dr Stuart McClure	QBS



Tuesday 24 June 2025			
Time	Session/Activity	Academic Lead	Location
9.30am - 11.00am	Lecture: <i>Leadership Roles in Divided Societies</i> This session explores the varied leadership roles during the Troubles, from political and religious figures to grassroots community leaders, highlighting how each navigated sectarian tensions and worked to guide their communities through a deeply divided society.	Dr Stuart McClure	QBS
11.00am – 11.30am	Break		
11.30am – 1.00pm	Role-Playing Workshop – Perspectives in a Divided Community This session is designed to help students understand the complex web of perspectives and motivations within Northern Irish communities during the Troubles. Through a role-playing exercise, students will take on the roles of various community members, such as political leaders, religious figures, grassroots activists, business owners, educators, and young people affected by the conflict.	Dr Stuart McClure	QBS
1.00pm – 2.00pm	Lunch		
2.00pm – 3.30pm	Guest Speaker Session: Protestant and Catholic Religious Leaders (TBC) Former religious leaders during the Troubles share their experiences of mobilising local communities during the Troubles, offering a firsthand account of grassroots leadership challenges and ethical dilemmas in high-stakes situations.	Dr Stuart McClure	QBS



Wednesday 25 June 2025			
Time	Session/Activity	Academic Lead	Location
9.30am - 11.00am	Lecture: <i>Leadership Under Pressure: The Escalation of the Troubles</i> This session delves into how leaders across various sectors responded to the intensifying conflict, examining the leadership challenges they faced, crisis management strategies employed, and the tough decisions made as violence escalated.	Dr Stuart McClure	QBS
11.00am – 11.30am	Break		
11.30am – 1.00pm	Film Screening and Discussion: Episode 2 of <i>Once Upon a Time in Northern Ireland</i> Viewing and discussing the second episode of the documentary, participants will examine how leaders on all sides managed, or struggled to manage, the crisis. The discussion focuses on decision-making and ethical considerations amid mounting violence.	Dr Stuart McClure	QBS
1.00pm – 2.00pm	Lunch		
2.00pm – 3.30pm	Interactive Debate: <i>Leadership in Conflict vs. Leadership in Peace</i> Divided into teams, participants debate the differing demands on leaders during conflict and in peacebuilding. This debate encourages critical thinking about adaptability in leadership approaches and the potential evolution of leadership styles in shifting contexts.	Dr Stuart McClure	QBS



Thursday 26 June 2025			
Time	Session/Activity	Academic Lead	Location
9.30am - 11.00am	Excursion: Shankill Road and Falls Road Area A full day exploring sites critical to Northern Ireland's history. Participants will visit the Shankill and Falls Roads to understand the physical and symbolic divisions of Belfast, with guided tours discussing the role of community leaders.	Dr Stuart McClure	
11.00am – 11.30am	Break		
11.30am – 1.00pm	Excursion: Crumlin Road Gaol At Crumlin Road Gaol, the tour will focus on political imprisonment and leadership among incarcerated individuals, with insights into how prison experiences shaped political movements throughout the British Isles.	Dr Stuart McClure	
1.00pm – 2.00pm	Lunch		
2.00pm – 3.30pm	Film Screening and Discussion: Episode 3 In this session, students will watch Episode 3, which examines the peak of violence during the Troubles and the profound impact on Northern Irish communities. The documentary highlights how daily life became marked by fear, resilience, and loss, as violence escalated and divisions deepened. Following the screening, a facilitated discussion will explore the responses of community and political leaders to this crisis, focusing on the difficult choices they faced and the strategies they employed to protect and support their communities amid intense turmoil. This session provides a compelling foundation for understanding crisis leadership, resilience, and the human cost of prolonged conflict.	Dr Stuart McClure	QBS



Friday 27 June 2025			
Time	Session/Activity	Academic Lead	Location
9.00am – 5.00pm	Field trip to North Coast 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.		

Monday 30 June 2025			
Time	Session/Activity	Academic Lead	Location
9.30am - 11.00am	<p>Lecture: <i>Negotiation and Mediation in Conflict Resolution</i> This session covers the skills and strategies of negotiation and mediation used by leaders during the peace process. Participants will analyse how leaders on both sides approached dialogue and compromise.</p>	Dr Stuart McClure	QBS
11.00am – 11.30am	Break		
11.30am – 1.00pm	<p>Film Screening and Discussion: <i>Episode 4</i> In this episode, the focus is on the early steps toward peace. A discussion follows, analysing the efforts and compromises made by leaders to initiate peace talks and set a foundation for the Good Friday Agreement.</p>	Dr Stuart McClure	QBS
1.00pm – 2.00pm	Lunch		
2.00pm – 3.30pm	<p>Guest Speaker Session: <i>TBC (Political and/or Security Forces and Ex-Combatants)</i> A former leader involved in the peace process shares their perspective on the complexities of mediating between divided communities and the challenges of reaching consensus among opposing sides.</p>	Dr Stuart McClure	QBS



Tuesday 1 July 2025			
Time	Session/Activity	Academic Lead	Location
9.30am - 11.00am	Lecture: <i>The Good Friday Agreement: Leadership in Conflict Resolution</i> A lecture providing an in-depth look at the Good Friday Agreement, examining the roles of various leaders in reaching and implementing this historic accord.	Dr Stuart McClure	QBS
11.00am – 11.30am	Break		
11.30am – 1.00pm	Film Screening and Discussion: <i>Final Episode</i> The final episode of the documentary offers insights into the Agreement's impact on contemporary Northern Ireland. A discussion follows on the successes, limitations, and ongoing challenges of post-conflict leadership.	Dr Stuart McClure	QBS
1.00pm – 2.00pm	Lunch		
2.00pm – 3.30pm	Workshop: <i>Leadership Skills for Conflict Resolution</i> A skills-based session on negotiation, mediation, and communication strategies for effective conflict resolution. This workshop provides participants with practical techniques relevant to both historical and contemporary leadership challenges.	Dr Stuart McClure	QBS

Wednesday 2 July 2025			
Time	Session/Activity	Academic Lead	Location
9.30am - 11.00am	Role-Playing Exercise: <i>Simulated Peace Negotiation</i> Participants engage in simulated negotiation scenarios based on historical events, applying learned skills to resolve a fictional conflict. This role-play fosters practical understanding of leadership in peacebuilding.	Dr Stuart McClure	QBS
11.00am – 11.30am	Break		
11.30am – 1.00pm	Excursion: <i>Stormont Parliament Buildings</i> A tour of Stormont, the political heart of Northern Ireland. This visit will explore the role of political leadership post-Good Friday Agreement and how leaders continue to navigate challenges in a post-conflict society.	Dr Stuart McClure	
1.00pm – 2.00pm	Lunch		
2.00pm – 3.30pm	Excursion: <i>Titanic Quarter</i> The Titanic Quarter in Belfast is one of Europe's largest urban waterfront regeneration projects, symbolising Northern Ireland's resilience and transformation. This excursion will take participants to iconic sites, including the Titanic Belfast Museum, which tells the story of the Titanic's construction and tragic voyage, and the historic Harland & Wolff shipyard, where the ship was built. Participants will learn how the quarter's development represents a broader shift in Northern Ireland from a history of industrial pride, hardship, and conflict to a future focused on renewal, innovation, and economic growth. The excursion highlights the leadership and vision required to transform Belfast's physical and economic landscape, showcasing how leaders use history to foster a sense of community identity and optimism for the future.	Dr Stuart McClure	



Thursday 3 July 2025			
Time	Session/Activity	Academic Lead	Location
9.30am - 11.00am	Panel Discussion: <i>Future Challenges for Leadership in Northern Ireland</i> A panel featuring community leaders, former politicians, and youth representatives discusses ongoing leadership challenges in Northern Ireland, including reconciliation efforts and community building.	Dr Stuart McClure	QBS
11.00am – 11.30am	Break		
11.30am – 1.00pm	Reflective Workshop: <i>Personal Leadership Takeaways</i> Participants reflect on the week's learnings and consider how the leadership lessons from Northern Ireland apply to their personal development and future leadership roles.	Dr Stuart McClure	QBS
1.00pm – 2.00pm	Lunch		
2.00pm – 3.30pm	Collaborative Reflection Poster – <i>Capturing Insights from Northern Ireland</i> In this interactive and creative session, students will work together to create a large collective poster that captures their key insights, reflections, and memorable moments from the summer school experience in Northern Ireland. Divided into small groups, students will brainstorm and discuss the themes, events, and personal takeaways that resonated most with them throughout the programme.	Dr Stuart McClure	QBS