

## 2026 AHSS International Summer School

<b>Programme Topic:</b> Identity and Intergroup Relations in Divided Societies	<b>Academic Lead:</b> Dr Cathal McManus	<b>Dates:</b> Weeks 2 & 3
<b>Topic Summary</b> <p>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.</p>		
<b>Intended Learning Outcomes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Understand how identity can be both a cause and consequence of conflict</li><li>- Examine processes that can contribute to social division and polarization</li><li>- Explore identity-based interventions designed to enhance social cohesion</li><li>- Assess how experiences from a divided society like Northern Ireland can be applied to other contexts</li><li>- Gain an understanding of the legacies of conflict and political division</li></ul>		



Monday 22 June 2026			
Time	Session/Activity	Academic Lead	Location
9.30am - 11.00am	<b>Introducing the Identity &amp; Intergroup Relations in Divided Societies Strand</b>  This session will introduce the Identity & Intergroup Relations in Divided Societies strand and provide an overview of what will be covered (and why). The session will provide an opportunity for participants to get to know each other and our particular academic/research interests.	Dr McManus	
11.00am – 11.30am	<b>Break</b>		
11.30am – 1.00pm	<b>An Introduction to Political Extremism and Polarization in the 21st Century</b>  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	<b>Lunch</b>		
2.00pm – 3.30pm	<b>Divided Societies / Northern Ireland (1)</b>  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	

Tuesday 23 June 2026			
Time	Session/Activity	Academic Lead	Location
9.30am - 11.00am	<p><b>Divided Societies / Northern Ireland (2)</b></p> <p>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.</p>	Dr McManus	
11.00am – 11.30am	<b>Break</b>		
11.30am – 12.30pm	<p><b>Divided Societies / Northern Ireland (3)</b></p> <p>This third session will explore the challenges faced in generating political stability in Northern Ireland after the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. It will also analyse some of the efforts made to address the legacy of the conflict, including formal and informal interventions to improve community relations.</p>	Dr McManus	
12.30pm – 1.30pm	<b>Lunch</b>		
1.30pm – 4.00pm	<b>Stormont Trip:</b>	Dr McManus	



	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.		
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<b>Wednesday 24 June 2026</b>			
<b>Time</b>	<b>Session/Activity</b>	<b>Academic Lead</b>	<b>Location</b>
<b>9.30am - 12.00pm</b>	<b>Crumlin Road Gaol</b>	<b>Dr McManus</b>	
<b>12.00pm – 1.30pm</b>	<b>Lunch</b>		
<b>1.30pm – 3.00pm</b>	<b>Ex-Prisoners Panel</b>	<b>Dr McManus</b>	



<b>Thursday 25 June 2026</b>			
<b>Time</b>	<b>Session/Activity</b>	<b>Academic Lead</b>	<b>Location</b>
<b>9.30am - 11.00am</b>	<b>Learning from the past: the role of personal narratives from the conflict and its aftermath</b> A reflection by Lesley Emerson.	<b>Ms Lesley Emerson (SSESW)</b>	
<b>11.00am – 11.30am</b>	<b>Break</b>		
<b>11.30am – 1.00pm</b>	<b>Brexit: Impact and Legacy on the Island of Ireland</b>	<b>Professor Katy Hayward</b>	
<b>1.00pm – 2.00pm</b>	<b>Lunch</b>		
<b>2.00pm – 3.30pm</b>	<b>Towards Irish Unity? What the polls tell us</b>	<b>Dr Jamie Pow</b>	



Monday 29 June 2026			
Time	Session/Activity	Academic Lead	Location
9.30am - 11.00am	<b>Group Discussion – Polarisation in Contemporary Society</b>  The aim of this discussion session 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 (Weeks 1 and 2) to generate a discussion on how political polarisation manifests itself in contemporary society/ies.	Dr McManus	
11.00am – 11.30am	<b>Break</b>		
11.30am – 12.30pm	<b>Theories of Nationalism and Othering</b>  This lecture / discussion will explore the history and theories of nationalism and national belonging. We will assess how notions of national identity come to be defined and how these have become core to processes of Othering and polarisation in contemporary society.	Dr McManus	
12.30pm – 1.30pm	<b>Lunch</b>		
1.30pm – 4.00pm	<b>Case Study: The Rise of the Populist Radical Right</b>  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 parties such as Reform 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.	Dr McManus	



Tuesday 30 June 2026			
Time	Session/Activity	Academic Lead	Location
9.30am - 11.00am	<b>Christian Nationalism in an Age of Secularism</b>  This session will explore the rise and influence of Christian nationalism in the United States and Europe. It will seek to examine how, even in an era of secularisation, the narratives and/or messaging of Christian nationalism can resonate with sections of the population.	Dr McManus	
11.00am – 11.30am	<b>Break</b>		
11.30am – 1.00pm	<b>Social Media and Group Identity: Reinforcing Echo Chambers?</b>  The aim of this session is to get participants to think about the role of Social Media in helping to foster social division and polarisation. We will explore how different groups have sought to use social media to (a) mobilise (b) grow their support. There will also be a discussion on the ethics of researching extremism online.	Dr McManus	
1.00pm – 2.00pm	<b>Lunch</b>		
2.00pm – 3.30pm	<b>Group Mobilisation and Collective Action</b>  This session will examine how particular groups seek to mobilise and organise in order 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	



Wednesday 1 July 2026			
Time	Session/Activity	Academic Lead	Location
9.30am - 11.00am	<b>Terrorism and Political Violence</b>  This session will examine 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	
11.00am – 11.30am	<b>Break</b>		
11.30am – 1.00pm	<b>A Conversation with Professor Richard English – Does Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism Work?</b>  This session will take the form of a Questions and Answers session with leading expert Professor Richard English, former Director of the Institute for Global Peace, Security and Justice at Queen's University Belfast. Prof English will discuss his two recent books, "Does Terrorism Work?" and "Does Counter-Terrorism Work?"	Dr McManus/ Prof Richard English	
1.00pm – 2.00pm	<b>Lunch</b>		
2.00pm – 3.30pm	<b>Reporting "the Troubles": A Q&amp;A with Brian Rowan</b>	Dr McManus	



	In this session the renowned journalist Brian “Barney” Rowan will discuss his experiences of covering the conflict in Northern Ireland. He will discuss issues such as reporting on the violence and seeking to investigate issues such as collusion and informants.		
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<b>Thursday 2 July 2026</b>			
<b>Time</b>	<b>Session/Activity</b>	<b>Academic Lead</b>	<b>Location</b>
<b>9.30am - 11.00am</b>	<p><b>Confronting the Legacy of Division: The Lasting Imprint of Sectarianism</b></p> <p>This session will explore the challenges of overcoming sectarianism in Northern Ireland since 1998. We will analyse why the polarisation of society remains – both at a political and a community level.</p>	<b>Dr Cathal McManus</b>	
<b>11.00am – 11.30am</b>	<b>Break</b>		
<b>11.30am – 1.00pm</b>	<p><b>Building Relations: Community Peacebuilding in Northern Ireland</b></p> <p>A panel of speakers who have played an active role in Community Relations work in Northern Ireland. They will share their experiences on the divisions in NI and efforts to bring divided communities together.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Jacqueline Irwin (CEO, Community Relations Council of Northern Ireland)</li> <li>- Claire Graham (Social Impact &amp; Civic Responsibility Manager, QUB)</li> <li>- Geraldine McAnoy (St. Peter’s Immaculata YC, Belfast)</li> </ul>	<b>Panel Discussion</b>	
<b>1.00pm – 2.00pm</b>	<b>Lunch</b>		
	<b>Divided Societies: Reflections and Conclusions</b>	<b>Dr McManus</b>	



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<b>2.00pm – 3.30pm</b>	<p>This session will provide an opportunity for students to discuss and reflect upon their experiences in NI.</p> <p>Following a short presentation, as a group we will discuss the lessons that NI can provide for other societies characterised by increased political polarisation.</p>		
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