



SIOBHAN

/ BSC CRIMINOLOGY AND SOCIOLOGY GRADUATE AND PHD STUDENT



/ Tell us about your Salford journey so far.

My Salford journey has been a whirlwind! I started my undergraduate degree in Criminology and Sociology in 2016. After graduating, I went on to start my PhD in Sociology last September.

/ Tell us about what you are currently studying at Salford

My PhD broadly focuses on ageing & social participation. More specifically, it explores the experiences of older charity shop volunteers in the North West of England. Obviously, this is a shift away from Criminology, but it's an aspect of society I became passionate about during my studies and experiences at Salford. And I think that this is really one of the joys of the social sciences, there's so much room to grow and develop your own interests. There's generally a lot involved in day to day PhD life, I've just entered my second year of study, so currently I'm carrying out my own research - interviewing and working with older volunteers - whilst also attending training sessions, assisting on other projects & running online seminar classes.

/ What was it that inspired you to study the subject further after your UG course?

It's hard to pinpoint, but I think I realized quite quickly into the degree that this was something that suited me. In studying and learning about all these different sociological/criminological theories and topics, I really started to question how society works and think about those social forces shaping our everyday life. It felt like something just clicked and I probably realized then that there was no going back! Doing an undergraduate dissertation in final year feels like the experience that really solidified to me that I want to stay on an academic path. I developed a passion and enthusiasm for research & discovering knowledge, so it was then that I started seriously looking into postgraduate options. The support of the staff here was really integral to every stage of this decision though; I don't think I would have had the confidence to do this without their guidance and encouragement. They not only inspired me with their work but really helped me realize it's something that I can achieve - which I'm very grateful for!

/ Why did you choose to study at Salford? (if you came to an open day, please talk about your experience here).

Well, I researched a lot of different universities and Criminology/Sociology courses! Once I'd developed a short list of institutions that offered degrees which aligned to my own interests, I found that it was quite difficult to figure out which one was the right 'fit'. I decided then to attend a lot of open days to be able to get a better feel for the different places and people. Coming to Salford, spending some time here, going to the taster sessions and talking to the staff was extremely helpful in terms of understanding not only what the course entails, but what kind of atmosphere they foster and value here. It was always important to me that the department felt quite close-knit and welcoming, I wanted to be part of a community and that was something I felt straight away when I came to the open day. I knew then that this was the place for me. It just felt right!





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/ Tell us a bit about your subject area – there are a lot of misconceptions around what Criminology is (from TV programmes like CSI), so what it is really like studying Criminology?

Absolutely- I think our knowledge or understanding of crime is inevitably often based on TV dramas, documentaries and podcasts etc., but Criminology is so much more than the sensational things we see in the media. It's not about crime scene analysis or forensic investigation, it goes deeper into thinking about the causes of crime & deviance, how crime affects society and the response of the criminal justice system. So, for instance, studying it was more about grappling with those issues of why people offend, the role of the police and how things like race, gender and class shape experiences of crime & victimization. Criminology offers a lot, and here at Salford it was such a rich and interesting experience. There was a really diverse range of modules, and a lot of opportunities to learn about things in innovative ways. Inside out, for instance, was a great module where we, a group of university (outside) students, went to a local prison each week to be taught alongside - and as equals with - a group of prison (inside) students. We all completed the same readings and assessments and explored different issues of criminal justice together each week. This combined with learning about other topics I was interested and engaged in (gender & crime, social inequalities & policing and social control, for example) made for an amazing experience. Every day was different, and it felt like I was constantly broadening my understandings and horizons.

/ What sort of placements (or practical experience) have you undertaken related to your field of study?

I came into my undergraduate degree after working for a long time in the charity sector, so I already had some experience of managing and working with people involved in the criminal justice system. I carried on doing this role part time during my degree and

also volunteered for a few different charities dedicated to issues of imprisonment & ageing. It was important to me to get that on the ground experience of working in fields related to Criminology/ Sociology where I could, and I think it really helped to shape my learning and understand and apply those abstract theories & concepts in a more practical every-day sense. I didn't choose to do the work placement in final year, but I think that also offers a really great way to get this kind of experience and have that opportunity to use what you're learning.

/ What do you want to do once you've graduated and how does Salford / your course help with this?

I really want to continue on the path to an academic career. Being able to research aspects of society I'm passionate about and blending this with teaching & engaging with students is the dream. Realistically it's not always an easy career path, but Salford have offered amazing opportunities to build a teaching portfolio and work as a research assistant alongside studying for my PhD, which I think will give me a good grounding to enter into the field. In all honesty though I haven't spent too much time thinking about it at this point; a PhD is a long journey and I'm just really happy to be doing something I love!

/ What would you say to someone thinking about studying Criminology at Salford?

I couldn't recommend Salford enough if you're interested in studying Criminology. The department is very research active so you're constantly learning new and exciting things, the modules are diverse and it's home to such a supportive and engaging atmosphere. If you're considering studying here, I'd really advise coming to an open day - have a chat to us about the course and the modules, get a feel for the place and bring as many questions as you have!

