

**Contemporary Sociological Thought**

Code: 101127  
ECTS Credits: 6

| Degree            | Type | Year | Semester |
|-------------------|------|------|----------|
| 2500262 Sociology | OB   | 2    | 1        |

**Contact**

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**Use of Languages**

Principal working language: catalan (cat)  
Some groups entirely in English: No  
Some groups entirely in Catalan: Yes  
Some groups entirely in Spanish: No

**Teachers**

Miquel Fernández González

**Prerequisites**

We strongly recommend to have passed the first grade course on "Fonaments de la Sociologia", and to have a basic knowledge of classical sociological theory.

**Objectives and Contextualisation**

This course offers a conceptual and theoretical map of the contemporary sociological theory to students. The aim is to offer them tools to be able to analyse contemporary society in a critical and rigorous way, and understand the main theoretical debates that have taken place within the discipline during the XXth century.

In this course, the most significant contributions to contemporary sociological thinking are studied in relation to their social and historical context. More specifically, the course focuses on the following theoretical trends of the XXth century: functionalism, structuralism, symbolic interactionism, phenomenology, ethnomethodology, neomarxism, postmodernism or analytical sociology among others. In order to convey the complexity of Contemporary Sociological Thought, the course combines the presentation of the theories, with the portrait of the historical-intellectual climate of the time.

**Competences**

- Analysing the problems arising from the implementation of public policies and conflict situations by recognising the complexity of the social phenomena and political decisions affecting democracy, human rights, social justice and sustainable development.
- Applying the concepts and approaches of the sociological theory, specially the explanations of social inequalities between classes, between genders and between ethnic groups, to the implementation of public policies and to the resolution of conflict situations.
- Demonstrating a comprehension of the analysis of social phenomena presented in English, as well as observing their strengths and weaknesses.
- Demonstrating a comprehension of the approaches of the sociological theory in its different aspects, interpretations and historical context.

- Describing social phenomena in a theoretically relevant way, bearing in mind the complexity of the involved factors, its causes and its effects.
- Developing critical thinking and reasoning and communicating them effectively both in your own and other languages.
- Developing self-learning strategies.
- Respecting the diversity and plurality of ideas, people and situations.
- Students must be capable of assessing the quality of their own work.
- Students must be capable of managing their own time, planning their own study, managing the relationship with their tutor or adviser, as well as setting and meeting deadlines for a work project.

## Learning Outcomes

1. Comparing theoretical approaches about the macro- and micro- sociological phenomena.
2. Defining the main micro and macro sociological concepts.
3. Demonstrating a comprehension of the analysis of social phenomena presented in English, as well as observing their strengths and weaknesses.
4. Developing critical thinking and reasoning and communicating them effectively both in your own and other languages.
5. Developing self-learning strategies.
6. Distinguishing the underlying social phenomena of specific policies or conflicts.
7. Expressing the debates about these approaches in several moments.
8. Rearranging the different meanings of the problems derived from the application of public policies and conflict situations.
9. Recognising the sociological implications of several intellectual debates (about the subject, action, social order, language, etc.).
10. Respecting the diversity and plurality of ideas, people and situations.
11. Students must be capable of assessing the quality of their own work.
12. Students must be capable of managing their own time, planning their own study, managing the relationship with their tutor or adviser, as well as setting and meeting deadlines for a work project.
13. Using the approaches of sociology in order to observe the effect of these policies or the outcome of these conflicts.

## Content

The course program is structured through the following 5 blocks:

0. Introduction to Contemporary Sociological Thinking.
  - 0.1. Theorize in the twentieth century: historical, political and ethical implications.
  - 0.2. Classics and contemporaries: similarities and differences.
  - 0.3. Intellectual portraits: biographies, gender and ethnicity.
1. Functionalism
  - 1.1. Parsons: from the theory of action to system theory.
  - 1.2. Merton: the paradigm of functional analysis.
  - 1.3. The crisis of functionalism and its causes.
2. The hermeneutic and comprehensive theories
  - 2.1. The Chicago School: Jane Adams, Thomas, Mead and Goffman.
  - 2.2. Sociophenomenology: Schütz, Berger and Luckmann.
  - 2.3. Ethnomethodology: Garfinkel.

3. Neomarxism, critical theory and modernity.

3.1. Marxism after Marx: introduction.

3.2. The Frankfurt School and the "critical theory".

3.3. Hannah Arendt and the human condition

3.3. The theory of the communicative action of Habermas.

3.4. The debate modernity-postmodernity.

4. The outsiders and the reflection on power: Elias, Mills, Foucault, Bourdieu and Judith Butler.

In parallel to the regular program, the course develops a set of three lab sessions that revolve around the idea of power, obedience and social change. They are the following:

a) Power, domination and social order: why do we obey? The practice consists in a reflection on the processes of obedience and the factors that lead to it. The reflection will be encouraged through movie fragments such as "The Experiment" or "The Wave", and will include the realization of a reflective essay.

b) Utopia, collective representations and social order: the dangers of dreaming the future. The practice will consist of watching Margarethe Von Trotta's "Hannah Arendt" film related to the book "Eichmann in Jerusalem: report on the banality of evil" and write an essay. The will is to reflect on the processes of collective obedience and the construction of totalitarian regimes.

c) Power, domination and social order: the critical look at the present. The practice will consist of watching the movie "La Granja de el Pas", and conducting an essay on the construction processes-but also of resistance-of the social order. The will is to propitiate the reflection on the concept of hegemony, counter-hegemony and the possibilities of social transformation.

## Methodology

The course is structured around four types of activities:

1. Exhibition of the contents of the program in class by the teacher - with participation and critical discussion of the students.

2. Practices consisting of text reading seminars, viewing and discussion of films and exercises for the practical application of the theory, among other activities.

3. Tutorials outside the classroom.

4. Autonomous activities by students: reading texts, writing essays and exercises, etc.

## Activities

| Title                | Hours | ECTS | Learning Outcomes                   |
|----------------------|-------|------|-------------------------------------|
| Type: Directed       |       |      |                                     |
| Lectures             | 43    | 1.72 | 1, 2, 5, 4, 6, 9, 10, 13            |
| Type: Supervised     |       |      |                                     |
| Essays and Lab       | 2     | 0.08 | 3, 5, 10                            |
| Type: Autonomous     |       |      |                                     |
| Independent learning | 50    | 2    | 11, 1, 2, 3, 5, 4, 6, 12, 9, 10, 13 |

## Assessment

The assessment consists of the following evidences:

The final exam. Represents 50% of the final mark and it is necessary, as a minimum, to get a 4.75.

Essays: the subject is based on two practical works (to choose between three different options) and each of which represents 20% of the final grade.

Attendance, reading texts and participation in class is mandatory and will be valued at 10% of the mark.

It will be considered that the person has a "Non-Presented" if he has not done the exam.

## Assessment Activities

| Title                        | Weighting | Hours | ECTS | Learning Outcomes             |
|------------------------------|-----------|-------|------|-------------------------------|
| Essays                       | 40        | 30    | 1.2  | 11, 3, 5, 4, 7, 12, 8, 10, 13 |
| Exam                         | 50        | 5     | 0.2  | 1, 2, 6, 9, 13                |
| Participation and attendance | 10        | 20    | 0.8  | 11, 1, 2, 5, 4, 7, 9, 10      |

## Bibliography

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Baert, Patrick (2001). La teoría social en el siglo XX. Madrid, Alianza.

Bottomore, Tom y Nisbet, Robert (eds.). (1988). Historia del análisis sociológico. Buenos Aires, Amorrortu.

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Giner, Salvador (coord.) (2003). Teoría sociológica moderna. Barcelona, Ariel.

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Lamo de Espinosa, E. y Rodríguez Ibáñez, J. E. (1993). Problemas de teoría social contemporánea. Madrid, CIS.

Lizón, Angeles (2007). La otra sociología. Una saga de empíricos y analíticos. Barcelona, Montesinos.

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## 2. Other recommended bibliography

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Merton, Robert K. (1949). *Teoría y estructura sociales*. México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1968.

Parsons, Talcott. (1937). *La estructura de la acción social*. Madrid, Guadarrama, 1968.

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#### Etnomethodology

Coulon, Alain (1988). La etnometodología. Madrid, Cátedra, 1988.

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