

**Contemporary Sociological Thought**

Code: 101127  
ECTS Credits: 6

Degree	Type	Year	Semester
2500262 Sociology	OB	2	1

**Contact**

Name: Maria del Mar Grieria Llonch  
Email: mariadelmar.grieria@uab.cat

**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

**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 develops a general overview of contemporary sociological theory. The main aim is to offer students the necessary tools to be able to critically reflect about contemporary societies, and to engage into critical thinking.

Theoretical contributions are explained in relation to their social, cultural and political context, and contemporary art expressions are used to, and put in relation with, theoretical reflections. The course is organised in four main blocs in which the main theoretical currents are studied: functionalism, structuralism, symbolic interactionism, social constructivism, ethnomethodology, neomarxism, postmodernism and cultural sociology. 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 4 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 Addams, 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. Reflections on a post holocaust World: the Frankfurt school

3.3. Hannah Arendt and the human condition

3.4. About power: Mills, Elias, Foucault and Bourdeiu.

3.4. Beyond modernity? the postmodern debate

4. Understanding contemporary societies: current theories

4.1. Eva Illouz, and the making of emotional capitalism.

4.2. Boundaries and recongition with Michèle Lamont.

4.3. An accelerated world (Hartmut Rosa)

4.4. Ideas for thinking the present, and the future.

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.

The content of the labs might be slightly modified at the beginning of the course.

## 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.

Annotation: Within the schedule set by the centre or degree programme, 15 minutes of one class will be reserved for students to evaluate their lecturers and their courses or modules through questionnaires.

## 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

Course bibliography

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## **Software**

All the necessary materials for the course will be uploaded to the moodle site of the course. If necessary, teams will be used for online teaching.