

Contemporary Sociological Thought

Code: 101127
ECTS Credits: 6

2024/2025

Degree	Type	Year
2500262 Sociology	OB	2

Contact

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Teaching groups languages

You can view this information at the [end](#) of this document.

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

Sociological theory must significantly contribute to outlining the basic conceptual map for sociology students and offer tools that enable them to understand and critically analyze contemporary reality.

In the course Contemporary Sociological Thought, we study the most significant contributions to contemporary social theory, placing them in their social, political, and cultural contexts. The guiding thread of the course is the presentation of the most relevant theoretical currents of the 20th century, including functionalism, structuralism, symbolic interactionism, phenomenology, ethnomethodology, neo-Marxism, and postmodernism, among others.

To convey the complexity of contemporary sociological thought, the course combines an explanation of the theories with a depiction of the historical-intellectual climate of the period and biographical notes. At the same time, the course seminars will encourage reflexivity by connecting contemporary sociological thought to a critical analysis of the contemporary moment. The aim is to think creatively about the relevance of 20th-century sociological thought today and to provide theoretical depth to our understanding of the present.

Furthermore, we will develop a critical reflection with a gender perspective on the theoretical production in sociology in the 20th century, incorporating the viewpoints of contemporary women authors who reflect on these issues.

Thus, the aim of the course is for students to acquire the ability to situate, understand, and relate the main theoretical contributions of contemporary sociological thought, doing so with rigor, reflexivity, and a critical perspective.

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.
- 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. Expressing the debates about these approaches in several moments.
5. Rearranging the different meanings of the problems derived from the application of public policies and conflict situations.
6. Relating their usage and criticism in the historical context in which they emerged.
7. Respecting the diversity and plurality of ideas, people and situations.
8. Students must be capable of assessing the quality of their own work.
9. 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.
10. 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 four blocks:

0. Introduction to Contemporary Sociological Thinking

- 0.1. Theorizing 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. 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: an 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 Bourdieu.
- 3.5. 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 recognition with Michèle Lamont.
- 4.3. An accelerated world (Hartmut Rosa).
- 4.4. Ideas for thinking about the present and the future.

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

a) Power, Domination, and Social Order: Why Do We Obey?

This session consists of reflecting on the processes of obedience and the factors that lead to it. Reflection will be encouraged through movie fragments such as "The Experiment" and "The Wave," and will include the writing of a reflective essay.

b) Utopia, Collective Representations, and Social Order: The Dangers of Dreaming the Future

This session involves watching Margarethe Von Trotta's film "Hannah Arendt," related to the book "Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil," followed by writing an essay. The aim is to reflect on the processes of collective obedience and the construction of totalitarian regimes.

c) Power, Domination, and Social Order: A Critical Look at the Present

This session involves watching the movie "La Granja de el Pas" and conducting an essay on the construction and resistance processes of the social order. The goal is to reflect on the concepts 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.

Activities and Methodology

Title	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Type: Directed			
Lectures	43	1.72	1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 10
Type: Supervised			
Essays and Lab	2	0.08	3, 6, 7, 8, 9
Type: Autonomous			
Independent learning	50	2	1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

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The course is structured around four types of activities:

1. Lectures
Presentation of the program content by the teacher, with participation and critical discussion by the students.
2. Practices
Activities such as text reading seminars, film viewings and discussions, and exercises for the practical application of theory, among other activities.
3. Tutorials
One-on-one or small group sessions outside the classroom.
4. Autonomous Activities
Independent work by students, including reading texts, writing essays, and completing exercises

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.

Assessment

Continous Assessment Activities

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

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.

Single assessment: the single assessment will consist of a final exam, and two essays. There will be the possibility to retake the exam but not to submit the essays again.

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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.

Language list

Name	Group	Language	Semester	Turn
(SEM) Seminars	1	Catalan	first semester	morning-mixed
(SEM) Seminars	51	Catalan	first semester	afternoon
(TE) Theory	1	Catalan	first semester	morning-mixed
(TE) Theory	51	Catalan	first semester	afternoon