AY 2016-2017
2 CEU credits/ 4 ECTS credits

MA level

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KEY ISSUES IN SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY
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Description:

The course introduces or re-introduces selected classical sociological concepts and theories relevant to sociology and anthropology. To cater to the needs of a class with diverse backgrounds in sociology, each session typically associates a theme, a classical text (primary reading) and a contemporary text (secondary reading). Historical background is provided in the “additional readings” section. Sessions will combine discussions, presentations and lectures.

Requirements:

--Regular attendance and participation in class. Discussions will be based on students’ close reading of the text(s). You are expected to come to class well prepared, that is, able to present an articulate and structured summary of the readings. Adequate summary includes questions about unclear passages, argued critiques on debatable points, and questions for further reflection. (20% of total grade)
--One brief presentation (30% of grade)
--One final paper (50% of grade)

It is the students’ responsibility to stay informed of possible changes in schedule and readings that may occur during the semester.

The readings in the syllabus refer to the following readers and textbooks, all placed on reserve in the library:

--Craig Calhoun et al., Classical Social Theory, Blackwell, 2002.
--Anthony Giddens, Sociology.
--C. Wright Mills, The Sociological Imagination
RC. Collins, Four Sociological Traditions, Oxford University Press, 1994
The goal of the course

The course will offer a basic but strong background in sociological theory. Why is classical sociology “classical”? Why do you need to take an active look at old concepts? Why is “sociology before sociology” still so fresh and interesting? Learning from theoretical tradition is the best way of avoiding the multiple traps of the present and to put sociology as a specific discipline in a much broader context.

The learning outcomes of the course

- This course provides a thorough overview of social theory by stressing the main topics and the conflicting approaches to social issues
- This course provides a substantial background to develop theoretical classical insights related to contemporary issues
- The course provides skills to write consistent pieces on theory
- This course aims at convincing students that classical pieces are very useful to be a good social scientist

READINGS

1. What is sociological theory?
   (Introduction by the lecturer)

2. Society before sociology (1): theories of order and the contract
   Thomas Hobbes, “Of Power” and “Of Commonwealth” in *Leviathan*

3. Society before sociology (2): theories of freedom and the market
   John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* and *Principle of Political Economy*

4. Sociology before sociology (3): Tocqueville and Democracy
Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ch. 19


5. Sociology before sociology: Marx and Engels


Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol One, 302-337


6. Theories of collective representations: Durkheim


7. Theories of Power and Inequality (1): Weber


8. Theories of Power and Inequality (2): Gramsci


9. Theories of Power and Inequality (3): Critical theory


11. Theories of Action (2): Georg Simmel


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