

STOCKHOLM UNIVERSITY 2017-12-08

Department of Sociology

Modern Sociological Theory

7,5 ECTS credits

1. Decision

The Syllabus is approved by the board of the Department of Sociology at Stockholm University 2013-12-19.

2. General information

The course consists of 7,5 ECTS credits and is at the advanced level.

3. Course code

SO7021

4. Entrance qualifications

A Bachelor's degree

5. Course contents

The aim of this course is to give an overview of modern sociological theory and a deeper understanding of some modern sociological perspectives. With "modern sociological theory" is understood the period after the decline of functionalism around 1960 and until today. Among the important fields and perspectives in recent sociology are cultural theory, rational choice, structural analysis, and organizational theory.

6. Learning outcomes

After accomplishing this course, participants are expected to:

In terms of knowledge and understanding:

- Have knowledge about the principal lines in the development of modern sociological theory.
- Understand the meaning of central concepts and theories in modern sociological theory.
- Be able to identify important similarities and differences between modern sociological theories.
- Know how modern sociology has been shaped by classical sociology.

In terms of accomplishment and competence:

- Be able to account for, and to analyse, the content of central texts by modern sociologists in a clear, well put and well argued manner.
- Be able to use relevant parts of modern sociological theory to analyse social phenomena.

In terms of values and evaluation:

- To be able to critically assess modern sociological theories in terms of their merits and limitations.

7. Instruction

The course is provided at half-time basis over 10 weeks, from January 19 to March 9, 2018.

Teaching takes the form of 9 seminars that discuss theories and perspectives treated in the course literature. Participants meet once a week during 9 weeks.

8. Examination

Examination is in the form of two assignments. Course members are expected to write (1) abstracts of all articles and book chapters that do not already have an abstract and short **summaries** of the remaining articles and book chapters, and (2) reviews of the books by Pierre Bourdieu and Peter Hedström. The abstracts should be about 250 words per article and the summaries a little bit longer. The **reviews** should be 6-8 pages long each and contain references to the texts. To pass, students are required to attend lectures and to participate actively in the seminars. The abstracts and summaries should be delivered successively each week and the paper should be handed in at the end of the course on March 17.

The course work and examination is evaluated according to the following degrees:

A = Excellent. To achieve this grade the student must be able to account for the content of the course literature clearly and precisely, critically analyse and compare concepts and theories, argue convincingly for the interpretations and conclusions, and use relevant parts of modern sociological theory in independent analyses of social phenomena.

B = Very good. To achieve this grade the student must be able to account for the content of the course literature clearly and precisely, critically analyse and compare concepts and theories, argue convincingly for interpretations and conclusions, and use relevant parts of modern sociological theory in relatively independent analyses of social phenomena.

C = Good. To achieve this grade the student must be able to account for the content of the course literature fairly clearly and precisely, critically analyse concepts and theories, provide arguments for interpretations and conclusions, and use relevant parts of modern sociological theory in relatively independent analyses of social phenomena.

D = Satisfactory. To achieve this grade the student must be able to give a fairly accurate account of the content of the course literature, analyse concepts and theories, provide arguments for interpretations and conclusions, and use relevant parts of modern sociological theory in analyses of social phenomena.

E = Sufficient. To achieve this grade the student must be able to give a fairly accurate account of the content of the course literature.

Fx = Insufficient. To achieve this grade the student must be able to account for the course literature to some extent.

F = Fail. The student cannot account for the content of the course literature in a way that is at all satisfactory.

E is needed to pass the course. Students with grade Fx or F at an exam are entitled to take another exam as long as the course is provided in order to achieve grade E at least. A student with E is not entitled to another examination to raise his/her degree. Students can request to have examination according to this syllabus up to three semesters after it has stopped to be valid. Students who received grade Fx or F on exams twice from the same examiner can request to be evaluated by another examiner. Such request should be sent to the Director of Studies.

9. Schedule

Friday 19/1 10-13, A5137	Introduction and Seminar on Social Mechanisms (Hedström 2005; Gross 2009; Hedström & Ylikoski 2010). <i>Jens Rydgren</i>
Thursday 25/1 14-17, F3154	Micro-Sociology (Blumer 1966; Goffman 1961; Schutz 1940) <i>Magnus Haglunds</i>
Friday 26/1 13-16, D307	Rationality and Action (Boudon 2003; Coleman 1986; Elster 1982) <i>Jens Rydgren</i>
Friday 2/2 13-16, E306	Structural Analysis (Blau 1977; Feld 1981; Giddens 1984; Merton 1976) <i>Jens Rydgren</i>
Friday 9/2 13-16, D299	Macro theories: Globalization (Bauman 2001; Beck 2002; Sassen 2000; Habermas 1999) <i>Daniel Ritter</i>
Friday 16/2 13-16, F413	Organization (Meyer & Rowan 1977; Hannan & Freeman 1977; Moss Kanter 1977). <i>Lotta Stern</i>
Friday 23/2 13-16, B413	Status and Stratification (Davis Moore 1945; Breen & Goldthorpe 1997; Sorensen 2000, Weeden 2002) <i>Martin Hällsten</i>
Friday 2/3 13-16, F497	Power (Foucault 1982; Emerson 1962; One additional paper). <i>Lars Udehn</i>
Friday 9/3 13-16, E497	The Cultural Turn (Bourdieu 1984; Swidler 1986; Zerubavel 1996) <i>Jens Rydgren</i>

10. Literature

Beck, Ulrich. 2002. "The Cosmopolitan Society and its Enemies." *Theory, Culture & Society* 19(1-2): 17-44.

Blau, Peter (1977) **A Macrosociological Theory of Social Structure**. *American Journal of Sociology*, 83, 26-54.

Blumer, Herbert (1966) **Sociological Implications of the Thought of George Herbert Mead**. *The American Journal of Sociology*. 71, 535-544.

Boudon, R. (2003). "Beyond Rational Choice Theory". *Annual Review of Sociology*, 29, 1-21.

Bourdieu, Pierre (1984) *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. London: Routledge. 500 pages.

Breen, Richard, and John H. Goldthorpe. 1997. "Explaining Educational Differentials: Towards a Formal Rational Action Theory." *Rationality and Society* 9:275-305.
<http://rss.sagepub.com/content/9/3/275.abstract>

Bauman, Zygmunt. 2001. "Consuming Life." *Journal of Consumer Culture* 1(1): 9-29.

Coleman, James S. (1986) **Social Theory, Social Research, and a Theory of Action**. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 91, 1309-35.

Davis, Kingsley, and Wilbert E. Moore. 1945. "Some Principles of Stratification." *American Sociological Review* 10:242-249. [<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2085643>]

Elster, Jon (1982) **The Case for Methodological Individualism**. *Theory and Society*, 11, 453-482.

Emerson, R.M. (1962). **Power-Dependence Relations**. *American Sociological Review* 27(1): 31-41.

Feld, Scott (1981) **The Focused Organization of Social Ties**. *American Journal of Sociology*, 86, 1015-1035.

Foucault, Michel ([1976] 1980) "Lecture Two: 14 January 1976" in *Power/Knowledge*. Brighton: Harvester Press, 93-108.

Foucault, Michel (1982) **The Subject and Power**. *Critical Inquiry*, 8, 777-795.

Giddens, Anthony (1984) "Elements of a Theory of Structuration". In *The Constitution of Society*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1-40.

Goffman, Erving (1961) "Role Distance". I *Encounters*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merill, 82-152.

Gross, N. (2009). **A Pragmatist Theory of Social Mechanisms**. *American Sociological Review* 74(3): 358-379.

Habermas, Jürgen. 1999. "The European Nation-State and the Pressures of Globalization." *New Left Review* 235: 46-59.

Hannan, M.T. and Freeman, J. (1977) *The Population Ecology of Organizations*. *American Journal of Sociology* 82(5): 929-964.

Hedström, Peter (2005) *Dissecting the Social*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 170 pages.

Merton, Robert (1976) "Structural Analysis in Sociology". In Peter M. Blau (ed.) *Approaches to the Study of Social Structure*. New York: The Free Press. Excerpt pp. 31-37.

Meyer, John W. & Rowan, Brian (1977) **Institutionalized Organizations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony**. *American Journal of Sociology*, 83, 340-363.

Moss Kanter, R. (1977) "Some Effects of Proportions on Group Life: Skewed Sex Ratios and Responses to Token Women." *American Journal of Sociology* Vol. 82, No. 5 (Mar., 1977), pp. 965-990.

Sassen, Saskia. 2000. "Women's Burden: Counter-geographies of Globalization and the Feminization of Survival." *Journal of international affairs* 53(2): 503-524.

Schutz, Alfred, [1940] "The Social World and the Theory of Social Action". *Social Research*, 27, 1960: 203-221. (available in the university library)

Sorensen, Aage B. 2000. "Toward a Sounder Basis for Class Analysis." *American Journal of Sociology* 105:1523-1558. [<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/210463>]

Swidler, Ann (1986) **Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies**. *American Sociological Review*, 51, 273-286.

Weeden, Kim A. 2002. "Why Do Some Occupations Pay More Than Others? Social Closure and Earnings Inequality in the United States." *The American Journal of Sociology* 108:55-101.

Zerubavel, Eviatar (1996) **Lumping and Splitting: Notes on Social Classification**. *Sociological Forum*, 11, 421-433.

In addition to the above literature, there will be some texts added on the relation between micro and macro.

The books by Bourdieu and Hedström are available at Akademibokhandeln, Frescati. The book chapters will be for sale at the introduction. The journal articles can be downloaded from the internet.

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