



STOCKHOLM UNIVERSITY
Department of Sociology

2019-06-24

Instructor: Jens Rydgren. E-post: jens.rydgren@sociology.su.se

Classical Sociological Theory

7,5 ECTS credits (5 p)

1. Decision

The Syllabus is approved by the board of the Department of Sociology at Stockholm University 2019.

2. General information

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

3. Course code

SO7010

4. Entrance qualifications

A Bachelor's degree or 90 ECTS credits (60 p) in sociology.

5. Course contents

The aim of this course is to give an overview of classical sociological theory and a deeper understanding of some theories and perspectives. The course begins with a short sketch of the development of social theory in the history of ideas and an account of the social and intellectual background of the rise of sociology as an academic discipline in the 19th century. The main focus of the course is on Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Emile Durkheim, but other classical sociologists, such as Alexis de Tocqueville, Ferdinand Toennies, Georg Simmel and George Herbert Mead will also be discussed. In addition, a number of female pioneers in sociology, such as Harriet Martineau, Marianne Weber, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman, will be

presented. Courses in classical sociology usually treat the period that ends around 1920. In this course, however, some attention is paid to theories of a later date, such as the phenomenology of Alfred Schutz, the structural functionalism of Talcott Parsons and Robert K. Merton and critical theory of the Frankfurt School.

6. Learning outcomes

After accomplishing this course, participants are expected to:

In terms of knowledge and understanding:

- Have knowledge about the origin of sociology, including the social and intellectual context in which it emerged.
- Understand the meaning of central concepts and theories in classical sociological theory.
- Be able to identify important similarities and differences between classical sociological theories.
- Know how classical sociology has influenced modern sociology.

In terms of accomplishment and competence:

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

In terms of values and evaluation:

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

7. Instruction

The course is provided at full-time basis over nine weeks, from 3 September to 25 October 2019. Teaching takes the form of 9 combined lectures and seminars. Seminars are mandatory.

8. Examination

Examination is in the form of two assignments. The course member is expected to write two papers of 6-8 pages each. Both papers must contain references to the texts. The first paper is about the prescribed literature (see below). It should be based on the literature, not on the lectures, and include (1) a comparison between the most influential classical sociologist (Marx, Durkheim and Weber, in particular), (2) a discussion of their influence upon later classical sociologists (critical theory and structural functionalism, in particular) and a discussion of their relevance for contemporary sociology. The second paper is in the form of a book review of Durkheim's *Suicide*. Students who aspire to a high grade are advised to write a critical review, rather than only a summary. To pass, students are required to attend lectures

and to participate actively in the seminars. Students who do not participate in seminars, are obliged to write short summaries (1-2 pages) on the topic of the seminars. If a student misses more than two seminars, an additional assignment will be given. All examination papers should be given in at the end of the course on Monday, November 1, before 17.00.

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 classical 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 classical 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 classical 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 classical 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

- | | | |
|-------------------------|-------|---|
| 1. Tuesday 3/9, C497 | 10-13 | Introduction: early theories about society
Calhoun, et. al., parts I and II (pp. 1-132)
Teacher: Jens Rydgren |
| 2. Friday 6/9, C497 | 13-16 | Seminar: Karl Marx
Calhoun, et. al., part III (pp. 135-191).
Marx, K., excerpts from <i>Early Writings</i>
Teacher: Jens Rydgren |
| 3. Friday 13/9, B419 | 13-16 | Seminar: Emile Durkheim
Calhoun, et. al., part IV (pp. 195-254).
Durkheim, Suicide
Teacher: Jens Rydgren |
| 4. Friday 20/9, E371 | 13-16 | Seminar: Max Weber
Calhoun, et. al., part V (pp. 267-338).
Teacher: Jens Rydgren |
| 5. Thursday 26/9, E371 | 13-16 | Seminar: Ferdinand Toennies and George Simmel
Calhoun, et. al., Introduction to Part VI and chapters
26, 27, 28.
Simmel, G. How is Society Possible?
Simmel, G. The Metropolis and Mental Life
Toennies, F. Two excerpts from <i>Community and
Society</i>
Teacher: Jens Rydgren |
| 6. Friday 4/10, D299 | 13-16 | Seminar: Harriet Martineau, Marianne Weber,
Charlotte Perkins Gilman & Simone de Beauvoir
De Beauvoir, S., excerpts from <i>The Second Sex</i>
Gilman, C. Perkins, excerpt from
<i>Women and Economics</i>
Martineau, H., excerpt from <i>How to Observe Morals
and Manners and Society in America</i> .
Weber, M. Authority and Autonomy in Marriage.
Teacher: Lars Udehn |
| 7. Thursday 10/10, E371 | 13-16 | Seminar: Social Psychology
Calhoun, et. al., chapters 25, 29, 31.
Schutz, A. Common Sense and Scientific
Interpretation of Human Action
Teacher: Jens Rydgren |
| 8. Friday 18/10, E315 | 13-16 | Seminar: Critical Theory and the soc. of knowledge
Calhoun, et. al., part VII (pp. 421-486)
Teacher: Jens Rydgren |
| 9. Friday 25/10, D289 | 13-16 | Seminar: Structural Functionalism
Calhoun, et. al., part VIII (pp. 489-541) |

Teacher: Lars Udehn

10. Literature

The course literature consists of a selection of original texts by classical sociologists. The main bulk of the prescribed course literature is Calhoun, Craig, et al. *Classical Sociological Theory* (Third edition, Oxford: Blackwell, 2012), which consists of original texts by the most influential classical sociologists. It is supplemented by a small number of important classical texts not in the book, including a number of texts by women founders of sociology. In addition, students will read Durkheim, Emile. *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*.