



**SÖDERTÖRNS HÖGSKOLA | STOCKHOLM**

**School of Social Sciences  
Sociology**

**Fall 2023**

Modern Sociological Theories  
7,5 credits

## **Introduction**

Welcome to Modern sociological theories. In the following syllabus, you will find much of what you need to know in order to follow the various steps of the course and plan your work accordingly.

## **Course Aim**

The aim of this course is to give an overview of modern sociological theory and a deeper understanding of some modern sociological perspectives. By “modern” is meant theories and perspectives that have developed after World War II.

The course is based both on mandatory readings and discussion seminars, and readings chosen by the participant according to her/his specific interest (in accordance with teachers).

After completing the course, you should present the following knowledge and abilities:

### *Knowledge and understanding*

- Show in-depth knowledge of the main lines of central modern sociological theories;
- Show an in-depth understanding of the meaning of central concepts in modern sociological theories;
- Show an in-depth understanding of the similarities and differences between representatives of modern sociological theories;
- Show an in-depth understanding of how modern sociology has been influenced by classic sociological theories

### *Skills and Abilities*

- In a critical and reflective way use relevant parts of modern sociological theory formation in own analyzes of social phenomena;
- Synthesize and analyze the content of key texts by modern sociologists in a clear, well-formulated and well-argued way;
- Analyze the development of central sociological theories over time

### *Judgment and attitudes*

- Be able critically reflect on the merits and demerits of modern sociological theories

The course runs at half-time speed over 10 weeks, spring 2022. Participants meet every second week for lectures and seminars.

## **Course content and structure**

Throughout the course, the idea is to provide an in-depth overview of some central modern sociological theories. Reading, writing and discussing are the main activities in the course, by which students will improve their knowledge of, skills in practicing thinking theoretically and critically reflect on modern sociological theories.

The course is built around a combination of lectures and seminar, leading up to a final paper. Lectures are provided by leading experts in the field. Seminars are student led, based on reading of central texts and doctoral thesis drawing on sociological perspectives related to the course. Except for two sessions (when students present and re-view course papers), each meeting combines a lecture (first hour) with a student-based presentation and discussion (hour two and three).

To assist in the process of figuring out a topic for the course paper, students are by mid-course asked to prepare a short description on their intentions of the course paper. This should include suggestions for questions of the paper, short presentation the topic (one paragraph), and listing of readings that the paper is to be based upon.

By the end of the course, students will review each other's drafts for the course paper.

### **Examination**

To pass, students are required to participate actively during the discussion, and participate in an oral presentation and together with other students, provide questions for one seminar.

Examination is in the form of two assignments: a course paper and the above oral presentation.

The theme of the course paper is to be closely related to the sociological theories and perspectives in focus of the course, drawing on mandatory reading in combination with literature of your own choice (ca 600 pages). The length of the course paper is circa 3000–4000 words, in Times New Roman, 1,5 spaced and 12 point.

Send course papers to Adrienne Sörbom no later than: XXXX.

### **Teachers**

Course coordinator and teacher: Adrienne Sörbom, e-mail: [adrienne.sorbom@sh.se](mailto:adrienne.sorbom@sh.se)

Alireza Behtoui: [alireza.behtoui@sh.se](mailto:alireza.behtoui@sh.se)

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### **Course Lineout**

#### Meeting 1

Course introduction: lineout, assignments, modern sociological theories after World War II – an introductory perspective on social theory and theorization.

Teacher: Adrienne Sörbom

Readings:

Abend, Gabriel (2008) "What is the Meaning of 'Theory'?", Vol.26 (2): 173–199.

Coleman, James S. (1986) "Social Theory, Social Research, and a Theory of Action". American Journal of Sociology, 91: 1309–35.

Merton, Robert K. (1945) "Sociological Theory", *American Journal of Sociology*, 50 (6):462–473.

Dorothy, E. Smith (1999) "Sociological Theory: Methods of Writing Patriarchy into Feminist Texts", Chapter 4, *Writing the Social*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. Pp. 45–70.

Swedberg, Richard (2012) "Theorizing in sociology and social science: turning to the context of discovery", *Theory and Society*, 41:1–40.

## Meeting 2

Theme: Power, Politics and Populism

Teacher: Alireza Behtoui

Reading (ca 180 pages):

Chapter 1., "Power", Cedric de Leon and Andy Clarno, Pages 35-53 in Janoski, T., de Leon, C., Misra, J., & Martin, I. W. (Eds.). (2020). *The new handbook of political sociology*. Cambridge University Press. theories of political sociology = 18 Pages

Bourdieu, Pierre and Loic J.D. Wacquant. 1992. *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Pp. 94–115. = 21 pages

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1999. "Rethinking the State: Genesis and Structure of the Bureaucratic Field," pp. 53–75 in George Steinmetz (ed.) *State/Culture: State Formation after the Cultural Turn*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. = 22 pages

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1990 [1981]. "Political Representation: Elements for a Theory of the Political Field," in *Language and Symbolic Power*. Pp. 171–202. = 31 pages

Burawoy, Michael (2012). The roots of domination: Beyond Bourdieu and Gramsci. *Sociology*, 2012, 46.2: 187–206. = 19 pages

Burawoy, M. (2018). The poverty of philosophy: Marx meets Bourdieu. *The Oxford handbook of Pierre Bourdieu*, 1–28. = 28 pages

Burawoy, Michael (2012), "CONVERSATION 3, CULTURAL DOMINATION, Gramsci Meets Bourdieu" in Burawoy, M., & Von Holdt, K. (2012). *Conversations with Bourdieu: the Johannesburg moment*. NYU Press. = 18 pages

Eyal, Gil (2005). The making and breaking of the Czechoslovak political field. *Pierre Bourdieu and democratic politics*. Cambridge: Polity, 151–177. = 26 pages

Pop, L. (2018). Bourdieu in the post-communist world. *The Oxford handbook of Pierre Bourdieu*, 146–158. = 12 pages

Walzer, M. (1992). The civil society argument. *Statsvetenskaplig tidskrift*, 94(1). –0 = 10 pages

### Meeting 3

Theme: Discipline, punishment and digitalization

Teacher: Alexandra Bogren

Reading:

Currently 117 pages in total (includes lists of reference for articles, i.e. not “text”)

### Book chapters

Foucault, Michel (1979). “The means of correct training”. In Foucault, Michel (1979). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. New York: Vintage Books. (24 pages).

Goffman, Erving (1961/2007). “On the characteristics of total institutions.” In Goffman, Erving (1961/2007). *Asylums: Essays in the social situation of mental patients and other inmates*. London: Aldine Transaction Publishers, pp. 3–12. (10 pages).

### Articles

Garland, David (2018). Theoretical advances and problems in the sociology of punishment. *Punishment & Society* 20(1), 8–33. (25 pages)

Lyon, David (1993). An Electronic Panopticon? A Sociological Critique of Surveillance Theory. *The Sociological Review* 41(4), 653–678. (25 pages)

Rhodes, Lorna (2007). Supermax as a Technology of Punishment. *Social Research* 74(2), 547-566. (19 pages)

Zuboff, Shoshana (2015). Big Other: Surveillance Capitalism and the Prospects of an Information Civilization. *Journal of Information Technology*, 30, 75–89. (14 pages)

### Meeting 4

Theme: Conflictual identities in Critical theory and postmodernist thinking

Teacher: Nikolay Zakharov

Readings (total 213 p.):

Agger, Ben (1991) "Critical theory, poststructuralism, postmodernism: Their sociological relevance." *Annual Review of Sociology* 17.1: 105–131.

Battershill, Charles D. (1990) "Erving Goffman as a precursor to post-modern sociology." *Beyond Goffman: Studies on communication, institution, and social interaction*, 163–86.

Baudrillard, Jean (2001) "The Gulf War Did Not Take Place", in Jean Baudrillard: *Selected Writings*, Second Edition, Stanford: Stanford University Press, pp. 231–254.

Bauman, Zygmunt (1993) *Postmodern ethics* (excerpts)

Benhabib, Seyla (2010) "The return of political theology: The scarf affair in comparative constitutional perspective in France, Germany and Turkey." *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 36.3–4: 451–471.

McNay, Lois (2008) *The trouble with Recognition. Subjectivity, Suffering and Agency. Sociological Theory*. 26: 271–296.

Mbembe, Achille (2001) "African modes of self-writing." *Identity, culture and politics* 2.1: 1–39.

Mbembe, Achille (2008) "Necropolitics." *Foucault in an Age of Terror*. Palgrave Macmillan, London, 152–182.

## Meeting 5

A meeting for presenting and discussing ideas for individual course papers.

Teacher: Adrienne Sörbom

## Meeting 6

Theme: Social Capital and Stratification

Teacher: Sara Ferlander

Adkins, Lisa (2005). Social capital: the anatomy of a troubled concept. *Feminist Theory*, 6: 161–172.

Anthias, Floya (2001). The concept of 'social division' and theorising social stratification: Looking at ethnicity and class. *Sociology*, 35: 835–854.

Anthias, Floya (2007). Ethnic ties: Social capital and the question of mobilisability. *The Sociological Review*, 55: 788–805.

Bourdieu, Pierre (1986). The forms of capital. In Richardson J (ed.). *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (p. 241–258). Westport: Greenwood.

Burt, S Ronald (1988). The gender of social capital. *Rationality and Society*, 10: 5–46.

Coleman, James S (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American Journal of Sociology*, 94: 95–120.

Ferlander, Sara (2007). The importance of different forms of social capital for health. *Acta Sociologica*, 50: 115–128.

Lin, Nan (2000). Inequality in social capital. *Contemporary Sociology*, 29: 785–795.

Portes, Alejandro (1998). Social capital: Its origins and applications in modern sociology. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 24: 1–24.

### Meeting 7

Theme: During this meeting, students are to discuss drafts of final paper together, in a peer-review process.  
Teacher: Adrienne Sörbom

### Meeting 8

Theme: Microsociology – Emotions, violence and rituals  
Teacher: Magnus Wennerhag

Collins, Randall (2004) *Interaction ritual chains*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter 1, "The program of Interaction Ritual Theory" (s. 3–46); Chapter 2, "The mutual-focus / emotional-entrainment model" (p. 47–101).

Collins, Randall (2008) *Violence: A micro-sociological theory*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter 1, "The micro sociology of violent confrontations" (p. 1–35).

Collins, Randall (1992) "The Romanticism of Agency/Structure Versus the Analysis of Micro/Macro". *Current Sociology* 40(1): 77–97.

van der Zeeuw, Alex, Laura Keesman & Don Weenink (2017) "Sociologizing with Randall Collins: An interview about emotions, violence, attention space and sociology". *European Journal of Social Theory* 21(2): 245–259.

Hochschild, Arlie Russell (1979) "Emotion Work, Feeling Rules, and Social Structure", *American Journal of Sociology* 85(3) 551–575.

*190 pages*

## **Final paper**

### **Course evaluation and feedback**

Course evaluation will be done at the end of the course. The course evaluation is undertaken as a discussion, and part of the final paper seminar.