

Introduction to sociology

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Sociology is, overall, a way of seeing and analyzing the world. It is an eclectic field, encompassing multiple—sometimes contradictory—perspectives, theories and methods. But all sociology shares one fundamental idea: we experience the world in the context of relationships with individuals, in groups and communities as well as society writ large. It is through those relationships that we make sense of the world and take action within it. This course helps you to describe, reflect on and perhaps even influence the way that society shapes beliefs, values and action.

The weeks are arranged in two main sections. The first half of the course introduces fundamental sociological concepts such as social construction, norms, identity, deviance, and stratification among others. In the second half of the course, we turn to topical areas in which these concepts are applied: the economy, the family, religion, social movements, the state and so on. The course work is organised into three parts. The lectures introduce the main concepts, theories, and debates in sociology. They offer a broad survey of the key ideas in the field of sociology and are meant to draw connections across various intellectual domains. Bonus sessions follow the lecture each week and are meant to reinforce the ideas presented in the lecture in a more interactive – sometimes also more fun – context.

The weekly seminar discussions are designed to help you actively engage with sociological ideas in more depth. Each week, your seminar instructors will discuss the papers or book chapters that have been assigned and teams of students will be assigned to present one of the assigned readings.

USEFUL LINKS AND INFORMATION

All material for the seminars is accessible via the Sciences Po Moodle platform, on which you should be automatically registered for this course: <https://moodle.sciences-po.fr>.

CONTACT

For questions related to the course, or upon encountering a difficulty of any type, you can write me an email at the following address: benjamin.gilbert@sciencespo.fr.

In particular, feel free to seek advice about your digital exploration if in doubt.

If your question can benefit other students, please consider asking it on the public forum on Moodle in the dedicated sections. In this line, please do not hesitate to share content or your personal reflections on the topics seen in class with other students.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA AND VALIDATION

The grading of this course is based on two modules: a continuous evaluation and a final exam. On top of that, students are asked to be actively involved in the lectures and to contribute regularly to them by intervening or asking questions, so as to enrich collective discussions about the topics that will be presented.

To account for this, up to two extra point will be given to students who are proactive during the lectures. Students are also invited to participate digitally by sending articles, reflections, etc. to other students in the class in the course discussion fora on Moodle.

1. CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT – 2/3 OF THE FINAL GRADE

The continuous assessment part of the grade consists in four subparts:

- An oral presentation, in groups, on one of the text excerpts – 30%
- A midterm exam – 30%
- A poster presentation – 30%
- A participation grade including the discussion on one of the excerpts – 10%

2. FINAL EXAM – 1/3 OF THE FINAL GRADE

Details on the final exam will be provided by the lecturer.

COURSE OVERVIEW

Each session of the course will include the following elements:

- A group presentation on one of the mandatory excerpts (20 min)
- A discussion by the designated discussants (10-15 min)
- An opening of the discussion to the whole class (15 min)
- An overview of the second mandatory excerpt, review of important points about the theme and time for questions about the lecture or seminars (30min)
- A presentation of methods in sociology, preparation for the final exam or review of the work carried out in groups on posters (30 min)

COURSE SYLLABUS

The next page lists the material that will be presented during the class, and the material that you are asked to read and work on before the sessions.

Session 1 - Sociological Approaches

Berger, P. 1963. Invitation to sociology. A humanistic perspective. New York: Doubleday, p. 1-24.

Mills, C.W. 2000[1963]. "The Promise of Sociology," The Sociological Imagination. pp.1-5

Session 2 - The Individual in Social Context

Durkheim, E., 1997[1897]. Egotistical Suicide. Suicide: A Study in Sociology. Free Press. pp. 106-110, 123-125, 146-154

Douglas, M., 2003. Chapter 6: Power and Dangers. Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo. Routledge.

Session 3 - Norms and Deviance

Goffman, E. 2002 [1959]. Introduction. The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life. New York: Garden City, NY

Becker, H., 1963. "Deviance and the Responses of Others" (p. 8-14), "Marijuana use and social control" (p., 59-78). Outsiders. The Free Press

Session 4 - Stratification and Inequality

Marx, K., & Engels, F. 2004 [1848]. The Communist Manifesto. Edited and translated by L.M. Findlay. Peterborough ON: Broadview Editions, pp. 61-94

Bourdieu, P. 1979. Distinction. A Social Critique of Judgement. Harvard University Press, p. 114-131

Session 5 - Identity and Identification

Kimberlé Crenshaw. 1991. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Violence Against Women of Color."

Brubaker, R. 2016. Trans. Gender and Race in an Age of Unsettled Identities. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapters 1 and 2.

Session 6 - Urban Sociology

Jacobs, J. 1961. *Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Vintage Books. Read: Bottom of page 34 to page 41 and bottom of page 61 to page 73

Venkatesh, S. A., & Levitt, S. D. 2000. "Are we a family or a business?" History and disjuncture in the urban American street gang. *Theory and society*, 29(4), 427-462.

Session 7 - The Family

Levi-Strauss, C. 1971. The family, in H. Shapiro, *Man, Culture and Society*. Oxford University Press, p.261-285

Edin, K. & Kefalas, M. 2005. *Promises I Can Keep*, Introduction, and Ch. 1. Berkeley, CA: UC Press

Session 8 - Religion

Weber, M. 2013. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Routledge.

Snow, D., & Machalek, R. 1976. "The convert as a social type", *Sociological theory*, 1, p.259-289.

Session 9 - Education

Bourdieu, P. & J.C. Passeron. 1979 [1964]. *Selecting the elect. The Inheritors: French Students and their Relation to Culture*. University of Chicago Press

Khan, S.R., 2001. *Privilege: The Making of an Adolescent Elite at St Paul's School*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, p. 77-101.

Session 10 - Economic Sociology

Granovetter, M., 1995. Chapters 1 and 2. *Getting a Job: A Study of Contacts and Careers*. University of Chicago Press.

Esping-Andersen, G. 1997. 'Hybrid or Unique?: The Japanese welfare state between Europe and America', *Journal of European Social Policy*, 7(3), pp.179-89.

Session 11 - Society and the State

Scott, J. 1998. Cities, People and Language, in Seeing Like a State. New Haven, Yale University Press.

Dubois V., 2016 [1999]. The bureaucrat and the poor. Encounters in French Welfare Offices, Farnham, Ashgate, Part III ("Questioning the Institutional Order"): pp. 137-139; 150-154; 176-182

Session 12 - Movements and Revolutions

Skocpol, T. 1994. "France, Russia, China: A Structural Analysis of Social Revolutions", in Jack Goldstone, ed., Revolutions, Harcourt Brace, pp.81-99

McAdam, D. 1989. The Biographical Consequences of Activism, American Sociological Review, 54 (5), 744-760