STOCKHOLM UNIVERSITY 2023-06-16
Department of Sociology

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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 2020.

2. General information

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

3. Course code

SO7011

4. Entrance qualifications

A Bachelor's degree or 90 ECTS credits

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 main focus of the course is on Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Emile Durkheim, but other classical sociologists will also be discussed. 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 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 29 August to 20 October 2023. Teaching takes the form of 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 Friday, October 27, before 19.00.

The course work and examination are 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 29/8 (C497) 13-14 Introduction
Extensive reading: Calhoun, et. al., General introduction and parts I and II (pp. 1-118)

Teacher: Jens Rydgren

2. Wednesday 30/8 (D247)   13-16   Seminar: Karl Marx
Calhoun, et. al., part III (pp. 141-202).
Marx, K., excerpts from *Early Writings*
Teacher: Jens Rydgren

3. Wednesday 6/9 (D307)   13-16   Seminar: Emile Durkheim
Calhoun, et. al., part IV (pp. 203-261).
Durkheim, Suicide
Teacher: Jens Rydgren

4. Wednesday 13/9 (D289)   13-16   Seminar: Max Weber
Calhoun, et. al., part V (pp. 271-340).
Teacher: Jens Rydgren

5. Tuesday 19/9 (F3154)   13-16   Seminar: George Simmel
Calhoun, et. al., Introduction to Part VI and chapters 29-31.
Teacher: Stefanie Möllborn

6. Tuesday 26/9 (F3154)   13-16   Seminar: Harriet Martineau & Marianne Weber
Martineau, H., excerpt from *How to Observe Morals and Manners* and *Society in America.*
Weber, M. Authority and Autonomy in Marriage.
Teacher: Anna Lund

7. Tuesday 3/10 (F389)   13-16   Seminar: Charlotte P Gilman & Simone de Beauvoir
Gilman, C. Perkins, excerpt from *Women and Economics*
De Beauvoir, S., excerpts from *The Second Sex*
Teacher: Anna Lund

8. Thursday 5/10 (E487)   13-16   Seminar: Social Psychology
Calhoun, et. al., chapters 28, 32, 39, 40.
Schutz, A. Common Sense and Scientific Interpretation of Human Action
Teacher: Lars Udehn

9. Thursday 12/10 (D299)   13-16   Seminar: Critical Theory and the soc. of knowledge
Calhoun, et. al., part VII (pp. 399-444) and chapter 38.
Teacher: Vanessa Barker

10. Tuesday 17/10 (D315)   13-16   Seminar: Structural Functionalism
Calhoun, et. al., part IX (pp. 483-512)
Teacher: Lars Udehn

11. Friday 20/10 (B487)   13-16   Seminar: Theorizing with the classics
Reading: Weber, M. *Economy and Society*, p. 3-62.

Teacher: Richard Swedberg

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* (Fourth edition, Oxford: Blackwell, 2022), 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* (any unabridged edition).