

SOC757 Contemporary Sociological Theory

Department of Sociology, FSS MU
2009 Fall

Extent and Intensity: 15 credits. Workload: 26 contact hours and 234 study hours (i.e. weekly 2 contact hours and 18 hours of coursework.)

Type of Completion: Exam.

Requirements for 15 ECTS credits: (a) 11 position papers, (b) 3 individual presentations, (c) final paper, (d) written exam, (e) activity in the class discussions.
Requirements for 10 ECTS credits: (a) 11 position papers, (b) 1 individual presentation, (c) final paper, (d) activity in the class discussions.

Teacher: doc. PhDr. Csaba Szaló, Ph.D.
doc. PhDr. Radim Marada, Ph.D.

Timetable: Thu 10:00--11:40 U34

Abstract: The course introduces students into major paradigmatic areas of contemporary social theory and sociological research. It builds on reading and discussing texts by sociological classics of the second half of the 20th century and by authorities in social theory who draw on, develop, and modify the classical traditions today. Understanding continuities and discontinuities in contemporary social thought is one important aim of the course. Therefore it includes examples of older classical texts that inspire the present-day theories either as assigned readings or as presentations given by individual students. In the main part of the course we focus, among others, upon links between the micro and macro levels of social research and analysis. In this way, the empirical relevance of abstract sociological concepts is to be brought to light. Selected prominent issues in contemporary social theory will be, in turn, discussed within paradigmatic theoretical contexts introduced throughout the course.

The classes are intended as seminars, rather than lectures. Students work consists in intensive reading of assigned texts and active participation in the class discussions. Particular attention will be paid to students capacity to understand and present theoretical concepts and paradigms in empirical terms. Students are graded on the basis of their performance in the class test, the quality of their oral presentation, and especially the excellence of the final essay. Their activity in the class discussions will also be taken into account.

Syllabus:

1. Introduction to the course

2. Foundations of Social Theory

Turner, Bryan S. 2008. *The New Blackwell Companion to Social Theory*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell. pp. 17-80.

3. Actions, Actors and Systems

Turner, Bryan S. 2008. *The New Blackwell Companion to Social Theory*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell. pp. 81-196.

4. Perspectives on Social and Cultural Analysis

Turner, Bryan S. 2008. *The New Blackwell Companion to Social Theory*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell. pp. 197-321.

5. Sociology and the Social Sciences

Turner, Bryan S. 2008. *The New Blackwell Companion to Social Theory*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell. pp. 322-474.

6. New Developments in Social Theory

Turner, Bryan S. 2008. *The New Blackwell Companion to Social Theory*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell. pp. 475-566.

7. Reading week

8. Radical Microsociology

Collins, Randall. 2004. *Interaction Ritual Chains*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. pp.3-46

9. Emotional Energy and Transient Emotions

Collins, Randall. 2004. *Interaction Ritual Chains*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. pp.47-140.

10. Interaction Markets and Material Markets

Collins, Randall. 2004. *Interaction Ritual Chains*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. pp.141-182.

11. Internalized Symbols and the Social Process of Thinking

Collins, Randall. 2004. *Interaction Ritual Chains*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. pp.183-222.

12. Applied Radical Microsociology

Collins, Randall. 2004. *Interaction Ritual Chains*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. pp.223-344.

13. Individualism and Inwardness as Social Product

Collins, Randall. 2004. *Interaction Ritual Chains*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. pp.345-374.

Literature:

Collins, Randall. 2004. *Interaction Ritual Chains*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Turner, Bryan S. 2008. *The New Blackwell Companion to Social Theory*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Assignments:

Final paper assignment

The paper should be submitted to ISMU. Deadline: 20.01.2009 The final paper consists of critical interpretation of a citation. It should contain 2000 words (there is a tolerance from 1800 to 2200 words). The essay has to contain (a) a short recapitulation of a core idea from the citation, (b) an interpretation of this core idea grounded in a wider theoretical context, and (c) a critical commentary based on a secondary literature. The final paper must follow the classic format: The paper has a specific title related to its content and main thesis. Students put their name under the title. The first part provides an introduction to the main thesis of the paper. Then, in the main part of the paper, arguments and counterarguments are developed and illustrative examples and evidence for and against them are provided. Finally, it restates the main thesis in the conclusion. The paper ends with bibliography in ASA citation format. (<http://www.calstatela.edu/library/bi/rsalina/asa.styleguide.html>)

Plagiarism is a serious academic offence and will constitute grounds for failing the course. Generally, students are expected to use their own words and develop their own arguments, but if they do borrow ideas or words from someone else, this must be acknowledged. All direct quotes must be in quotation marks. Both direct quotes and ideas from someone else that are paraphrased must be associated with a precise bibliographic reference in ASA citation format that in addition includes page numbers! Students can be asked by instructors to provide an evidence of their reading of all texts that are included in their bibliography.

Position papers

Position papers (cca 2 pages i.e. 3600 characters), submitted to the ISMU. For detailed instructions see: [<http://web.ceu.hu/writing/position.htm>].

Presentations

Individual presentation includes cca 15 minutes resume and interpretation of a seminar reading. Students have to use slides (minimally 3 maximally 10 slides). Presentations should be submitted to the ISMU in a PDF format in the same day as they are presented in the seminar.