



Правительство Российской Федерации

**Федеральное государственное автономное образовательное учреждение
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"Национальный исследовательский университет
"Высшая школа экономики"**

Факультет Социологии

Программа дисциплины

Social theory
(Социальная теория)

для направления 040100.68 «Социология» подготовки магистра
для магистерской программы «Сравнительные социальные исследования»

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*Настоящая программа не может быть использована другими подразделениями
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Social Theory

Obligatory Course within International MA in Comparative Social Research, NRU-HSE Module 2, 2014-15 Academic Year

Course description

This course will perform two tasks. First, it will provide a basic foundation for the use of social theory for students without a strong background in theory. At the same time, the course will provide a selected set of advanced theoretical perspectives which can enrich the comparative social research modernization research field. In this way, students will be better equipped to construct research projects that communicate to other social scientists while being better prepared to defend themselves from key critiques. At the same time, students will be able to critique other comparative social research. Therefore, this course provides the foundation for later theoretical and thematic courses.

Learning plan

Students will be reading at least one book for each lesson. For each lesson, there will also be a group of students responsible for presenting the book and broadening our understanding of it through linking it to an outside book from another major social theory (('the big three' (Durkheim, Marx, Weber), social-interactionism (Mead, Blumer), structural-functionalism (Talcott Parsons), conflict theory, etc.) Students will also serve as discussants for one lesson, where they will have a presentation and critique prepared on the main text, also broadened through knowledge of a second book. Active participation by all students is expected in every lesson. For the end of the course, students will write an essay that analyzes the strengths and weaknesses of the use of a theoretical frame within a research article.

Grading

Participation and Attendance: students missing more than 2 lessons will be penalized. Students with perfect attendance and active participation will receive extra credit.

Presenter role: 40%

Discussant role: 20%

Theory evaluation essay (within the context of a research question): 40%

Course outline

Theme 1. Introduction: Provides the basic course expectations, purpose

Theme 2. The Use of Theory

Theme two will provide a basic foundation of what social theory is, how theories are constructed, what makes a 'good theory,' and how social theory is fundamental to good empirical social research. Theory will be presented not as something abstract or irrelevant but as 'sense making.' The basic task of sociology to make sense of the social world, and theory is the language of this sense making, and is therefore fundamental to it.

Little, Daniel. 1991. *Varieties of Social Explanation: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Social Sciences*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press. 46

Loyal, Steven and Barry Barnes. "'Agency" as a Red Herring in Social Theory," *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 2001, 31, 4, Dec, pp. 507-524

Theme 3. Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*

Themes 3 through 8 will review analyze theories of violence as a case study through which to expand understanding of theory per se. Within the discussions, other relevant sociological (including classical) approaches will be brought in order to broaden angles of analysis of the particular theme.

Theme 4. Karl, Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*

Theme 5. Horkheimer and Adorno, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*

Theme 6. Hannah Arendt, *On Violence*

Theme 7. Bauman, Sygmunt, *Modernity and the Holocaust*

Theme 8. Pinker, Steven, *The Better Angels of Our Nature*

Other References:

Ahuvia, Aaron C. 2002. "Individualism/Collectivism and Cultures of Happiness: A Theoretical Conjecture on the Relationship Between Consumption, Culture and Subjective Well-Being at the National Level." *Journal of Happiness Studies* 3:23-

Berger & Luckmann. *The Social Construction of Reality*.

Blumer, Herbert *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method* (1969)

Foucault, M. *Discipline and Punish*.

Freud, S. *Civilization and its Discontents*.

Inglehart, R, Welzel C. *Modernization, Cultural Change and Democracy*.

Mannheim, Karl. 1952. "The Problem of Generations." Pp. 276-322 in *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, edited by P. Kecskemeti. New York: Oxford University Press.

Parsons, Talcott. *Toward a General Theory of Action*;

Olson, Mancur. *The Logic of Collective Action*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965

Tönnies, Ferdinand. 1988 [1887]. *Community and Society/ Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers.

Wallerstein, I. *The Modern World System*.

Weber, Max. 2003. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Mineola, New York: Dover Publications.