The sociology of civil society and the third sector: module outline

Faculty of Sociology

National Research University, Higher School of Economics, Moscow.

Please note: This is a preliminary version of the module outline and is valid as of 26 August 2011. The final outline will be made available shortly before the beginning of the course.

Module Convener: Dr. Ruben Flores

Office hours: TBC

Lecture place and time: TBC

Seminar place and time: TBC

1. Introduction

This course seeks to offer an introduction to the sociology of civil society and the third sector, two terms which, as the 20th century drew to a close, became the object of much public and academic discussion, but which can be semantically elusive. The course will begin by reflecting upon the meaning of and relationship between these notions, and then go on to explore their sociological significance. In so doing, it will examine their relevance for issues such as social flourishing, democracy, civility, globalisation, and development. A session will be devoted to examining civil society in the ‘Russian’ context.

2. Course Assessment

Students are expected to write one essay (3,000-3,500 words). Two versions of the essay are required. The first version of the essay is due by the end of week three, and the second version towards the end of the term. The second essay is expected to incorporate the marker’s feedback and be a significantly improved version of the first essay. The idea is that students have the opportunity the work and revise a single piece of work, which they can turn later into a larger research project if they so wish. Students will also have to make a short presentation during seminar time about the topic of their essays.

The final grade is calculated as follows:

Seminar presentation = 10%
First essay = 40%
Second essay = 50%

3. Seminars.

The first seminar will be devoted to discuss the course expectations regarding coursework. Thereafter, seminars will cover the topic examined during the previous week’s lecture (in week 2, the seminar will focus on the materials covered during week 1, and so on). During each seminar, a student will have the responsibility to chair the session and lead the discussion. Students are strongly advised to attend the seminars, as seminars will provide an opportunity to clarify doubts and discuss ideas which are bound to be relevant for the writing of the two essays.

4. Course outline

Introduction: What do we mean by civil society and the third sector?

Required reading:


Further reading:


(Social) origins of civil society and the third sector

Required reading:

Further reading:


**Civil society, the third sector and civility**

Required reading:


Further reading:


**The sociology of charity and philanthropy, social enterprise and volunteering**

Required reading:


Further reading:


Civil Society, the third sector and democracy

Required reading:


Further reading:


Civil society, globalisation and development

Required reading:


Further reading:


Civil Society in the Russian Empire, the Eastern Bloc, and post-Soviet Russia

Required reading:
5. **Essay themes/questions:**

Critically evaluate the relationship between civil society, civility and the third sector.

Analyse whether Norbert Elias’ theory of the Process of Civilization can illuminate the genesis of civility and civil society, and how this account contrasts with the “social origins theory”.

How can civil society and the third sector contribute to social well-being and the process of development broadly construed?

Analyse the ways in which civil society, the third sector and civility can buttress or undermine democracy.

Is civil society a Western concept? How useful is it to analyse and understand Russian society?

Outline the historical development of civil society, civility and the third sector in Russia.