Sociology


taught at

'HSE and University of London Parallel Degree Programme in International Relations'

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Lecturer: Ivan Pavlyutkin, Associate Professor, HSE

e-mail: euhomeinid@gmail.com

Office hours: Tuesday, 14:00-16:00
Course overview:

The course is aimed at giving theoretical and methodological resources to reflect on various social and economic phenomena which bind traditional, modern and (post)modern society. The emergence of the ‘sociology of modern society’ was recognized as a break with tradition. At the same time, there is a strong debate on whether this break was intellectually fruitful especially after the turn to a (post)modern state. For example, the growing interest in the artifacts of traditional society, such as gift giving, bazaars, and communities, realizes the need towards the resocialization of economy and society based on new technologies. Social sciences have accumulated rich theoretical and empirical resources which could be applied to conceptualize and objectify present-day challenges of human coexistence. During the course, we will rely on these resources to discuss the agenda of contemporary society.

This introductory course exposes the structure of social sciences and the relationships between subfields to provide the polemics between several disciplines – sociology, demography, anthropology, and economic science. It is divided into several sessions which represent main spheres of sociological investigation: gift exchange, market exchange, capitalism, family, religion, social networks, organizations, and state. Lectures in each session rely on the theoretical debates, local cases, and comparative data which represent various countries.

Learning objectives:

Students are expected to acquire a fair understanding of the relationships between social and economic sciences and their role in contemporary world. Social-scientific knowledge is organized in texts which require specific techniques of reading. Students will learn to read and decipher the social-scientific texts, but also to develop their own judgments and express them in written academic texts.

Course evaluation:

Grades will be based on the following assignments:

1. Short critical papers on one of the assigned readings (papers should be more than 300 but must not exceed 500 words). Each paper should address one problematic issue discussed in readings, suggest a possible answer provided by the author and evaluate it. Papers should be sent to the instructor (e-mail: ivpsociology@gmail.com) before midnight on the day preceding the seminar for which the readings were assigned. **20% of the final grade.**

2. Presentation of the readings delivered in class and participation in class discussions. Students have the suggested readings around 30-40 pages for each seminar. Presentation must summarize the analysis of the readings and avoid repeating and summarizing them. Each presentation should cover: 1) main question/problem that the text addresses; 2) key concepts; 3) most important distinctions suggested in the text; 4) main argument and logic; 5) useful classifications (if any); 6) conclusions of the text; 7) critical evaluation of the text. Duration of the presentation is approximately 15 minutes. The student responsible for presentation is not obliged to submit a critical paper. **10% of the final grade.**

3. Midterm assessment. Test in class is carried out at the end of the third module. It includes multiple choice and open questions. **15% of the final grade.**
4. Mid-term take-home short essay (papers should be more than 1000 words but must not exceed 1500 words). The essay evaluates students’ ability to use concepts and approaches discussed in class for the analysis of social phenomena. Topics for the essay will be distributed after week 8. If the topic is suggested by the student it should be discussed and approved by the instructor. Papers are graded based on proper problem statement, depth of understanding of the relevant literature covered, consistency of the argument, clear structure of the text, referencing. Essays are due on the first week of June. If the essay is submitted 2 days after the deadline the mark is reduced by 2 points. After the second day essay is not accepted. **25% of the final grade.**

5. Final test in class. Final test includes multiple choice questions and short essays and lasts 120 minutes. **30% of the final grade.**

Retakes:

The following assignments can be retaken only once: 1) mid-term take-home short essay; 2) final test in class. The weights of the components in the final grade remain unchanged. The retaken essay and tests are evaluated by a board consisting of three professors. All other assignments cannot be retaken.

**Course outline.**

**Essential readings**

There is no special textbook for this course. Students can use several encyclopedias and handbooks as additional sources. F.ex,


All these sources are shared during the course.

**Session 1. Introduction to Sociology. Course overview.**

**Lecture 1.** Sociologies and Societies. What is the promise of sociology? What does it mean that sociology is a science? The notions of ‘sociological imagination’ and ‘sociological thinking’. Types of sociological knowledge: professional sociology, policy sociology, critical sociology and public sociology.

**Seminar 1.** Suggested readings:


**Additional readings:**


Session 2. Emergence of Sociology and the Transition to a Modern Society.

Lecture 2. Pre-modern (traditional), modern and post-modern society; Western and Non-Western Societies. Social evolution and the problem of transition to a modern society. How is society possible? Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft; collective consciousness, natural law and the division of labor; mechanical and organic solidarity; commonwealth and common life.

Seminar 2. E. Durkheim vs. F. Tönnies.

Suggested readings:


Additional readings:


Lecture 3. Capitalism and rationalization of life, types of rationality, disenchantment of the world, the origins of modern capitalism, types of capitalisms, capitalism and the rise of social inequality, bureaucracy and the iron cage, social class and class struggle, social status.


URL: https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Manifesto.pdf

Additional readings:


Session 4. In search of the “pure sociality”. The promise of the gift.

Lecture 4. The social, the political and the economic as basic concepts in social sciences. The gift / commodity distinction; Discovery of the Kula ring; Big Man and Capitalist, Rules of gift exchange, spheres of exchange, community, self-interest and debt, discovering new forms of gift giving: sharing economy, pay what you want, open software and etc.

Seminar 4. Suggested readings:


Additional readings:


Session 5. Religion and (de)Secularization of Society.

Lecture 5. Religion and faith, religion and magic, controversial definitions of religion; basic concepts in sociology and anthropology of religion, the difference between sacred and secular, the difference between church and sect, functions of religion, ritual and symbol in religious life, charisma; theories of secularization, the difference between natural and forced secularization, private and public religion.

Seminar 5. Suggested readings:


Additional readings:


Lecture 6. Religion and measures of religiosity, religious identity and confessions, belonging, believing and practicing, religious conversion and values; religion and economic development; social dimensions and social effects of religiosity, network effects of religion, civic religion.

Seminar 6. Suggested readings:

Additional readings:

Session 6. Family and Demographic transition.

Lecture 7. Family and ‘Individualistic’ society, theories of family formation and divorce, family patterns in Europe, kinship, extended family relations, nuclear family and social interaction, family relations, relational reflexivity and relational goods, fatherhood, childhood, family policy in Europe.

Seminar 7. Suggested readings:

Additional readings:


**Lecture 8.** First and second demographic transitions, low and lowest-low fertility in Europe; various patterns of fertility transition - strong families with low fertility and weak families with strong fertility; economic and sociological theories of fertility decline: risk aversion, gender equity; ideal family size, ideational theory, childbirth motivation, transition to parenthood, networks effects in fertility decisions.

**Seminar 8. Suggested readings:**


**Additional readings:**


**Session 7. Capitalization of the social. Forms of capital and their conversion.**

**Lecture 9.** Forms of capital and social structure; Social class and social strata; human capital and investment in primary and secondary education, rate of return on investment in human capital, wage inequality; social capital, trust and social engagement; bridging and bonding social capital; embodied cultural capital, habitus and taste differences in consumption; the conversion of capitals.

**Seminar 9. Suggested readings:**


Additional readings:

Session 8. Social embeddedness and the role of social networks

Lecture 10. Social networks and social classes, social embeddedness of economic action, strong and weak ties, strength of weak ties, bridges, getting a job, network forms of governance, gossips and organizations; interlocking directorates; brain circulation and innovations, structural holes and brokerage.

Seminar 10. Suggested readings:

Additional readings:

Session 9. Sociology of markets and money

Lecture 11. Economics and sociology of markets, perfectly competitive market, social history of markets, markets as public places, agora, European fair, bazaar economy, stock exchange and credit, the great transformation, fictitious goods, Market Society, economic exchange and uncertainty.


Additional readings:


Lecture 12. Commodity and commoditization, economic exchange and uncertainty, search goods, credence goods, social status and trust, economy of qualities, information asymmetry and institutions, clientalization, bazaar governance, cultural goods, social construction of quality, status-based and standard based markets.


Additional readings:


Lecture 13. Sociology of money, nature of money, the social meaning of money, ‘special monies’, moral money, local money, commensuration as a social process, rankings and public order, sociology of price making, legitimate and equilibrium price, pricing the beauty, economic evaluation, markets as calculative devices, performing markets.

Seminar 13. Suggested readings:

Additional readings:

Session 10. Organizations and institutions

Lecture 14. Where do organizations come from? Sociology and management, the rise of formal organization, types of domination, theory of bureaucracy, bureaucratic organization, bureaucratic-professional conflict, rational and functional approaches to organizational analysis, formal and informal organization, efficiency and effectiveness in organizational analysis, non-profit and non-governmental organizations.

Seminar 14. Suggested readings:


Additional readings:

Lecture 15. What makes organizations so similar? Institutions and organizations, organizational efficiency vs. organizational legitimacy, institutional environment and organizational change, technical and institutionalized organizations, public and private organizations, loose coupling and tight coupling, institutional isomorphism and organizational fields.

Seminar 15. Suggested readings:

Discussion: Global Rankings and University organization.

Additional readings:


Session 11. State and Economy

Lecture 16. Theories of state formation, monopoly on violence, sovereign and imperia, the relationship between state and economy, the invisible hand and the grabbing hand, welfare state, typology of states, political order and economic growth, seeing like state, political culture, corruption and mafia.

Seminar 16. Suggested readings:

Additional readings:


**Lecture 17.** The origins of informal economy, state and informal economy, types of informal economy, paradoxes of Informal economy, measures of shadow and domestic economy, corruption, safety networks.

**Seminar 17.** Suggested readings:


Additional readings:


Comparative Data for Social Sciences

World Values Survey [http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs.jsp]

WWW Online Analysis [http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSONline.jsp]

European Values Study [http://www.europeanvaluesstudy.eu/]

European Social Survey [http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/]

International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) [http://www.issp.org/menu-top/home/]

Eurobarometer [http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/publicopinion/index.cfm]

Eurobarometer Interactive [http://ec.europa.eu/comfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Chart/index]

OECD Better Life Index [http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/]


Countries

British Social Attitudes [http://www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk/]

US General Social Survey (GSS) [http://gss.norc.org/]

Russian Longitudinal Monitoring Survey [https://www.hse.ru/en/rlms/]