

Sociology 755 – General Sociology
Mgr. Benjamin Vail, M.Sc., Ph.D.
Spring 2010

Credits: 15
Lecture time: Mondays 12.00-13.30
Classroom: 117
Office hours: Tuesdays 10.00-11.00 in room 3.59
E-mail: vail@fss.muni.cz

Course Description and Requirements

This course introduces students to the wide range of social theory that has developed in the discipline of Sociology, providing exposure to classical, modern, and contemporary theories. The first half of the course focuses on this survey of the development of sociological thought, while the second half of the semester features in-depth study of three books representative of important themes in the field that continue to shape sociological thinking today. The book *The Social Construction of Reality*, by Berger and Luckmann, provides an introduction to a comprehensive conceptual scheme and research program in Sociology. Bourdieu's book, *Practical Reason*, theorizes the link between social structure and social action. Giddens' book, *The Consequences of Modernity*, discusses the institutional structures of modernity. These three books, as well as the two general textbooks, are on the required reading list for the final state exam for students to earn the Masters degree in Sociology. By the end of the semester, students will be fluent in the history of the development of the field of sociology, understand contemporary themes in sociological theory and research, and be prepared to use sociological theory in their Master's thesis work.

Evaluation

Success in this course depends on the careful reading of several textbooks and other literature, which serve as the basic material covered in the exams. Students are expected to attend every lecture and are encouraged to ask questions and offer comments in class. There is a short quiz at the start of each lecture that will cover information in the required reading for that day. A short essay may also be assigned on a weekly basis. There is one mid-term exam covering information presented in class and the required readings up to that point; a comprehensive final exam at the end of the semester will test all information presented during the semester. You will receive a final letter grade (A-F) for the semester based on the following components:

Final grade components

10% – Weekly quizzes
20% – Weekly essays
30% – Mid-term exam
40% – Final exam

Final grade scale

A = 90 – 100%
B = 80 – 90%
C = 70 – 80%
D = 60 – 70%
E = 50 – 60%
F = <50%

E-mail Policy

Students may contact the instructor at any time by e-mail with questions about the course. I will strive to reply to your questions within 48 hours of receipt of your e-mail. I usually do not read or respond to e-mail on weekends or holidays.

Academic Honesty

The Faculty of Social Studies at MU expects students to know the study rules and maintain academic honesty by refraining from plagiarism and from cheating during exams. Plagiarism means that one presents other peoples' ideas as one's own and does not credit the author. Plagiarism is one of the most serious breaches of ethical standards in the academic environment, for it denies the mission of the university and the meaning of studying. From a legal perspective, plagiarism is the stealing of intellectual property. The official FSS policy on academic honesty is available in the course's interactive syllabus in IS in English and Czech. Academic dishonesty is not tolerated under any circumstances at FSS. The

minimum penalty for academic dishonesty is expulsion from the course, a grade of F for the semester, and referral to the Faculty disciplinary committee.

Weekly schedule

(See the online Interactive Syllabus for specific reading assignments.)

<i>Week</i>	Date	Lecture topic	Required reading	Write Essay?
1	February 22	Introduction to Sociology and Social Theory	Syllabus Giddens ch. 1, 3, 4	No
2	March 1	Marx and Weber	Ritzer ch. 1, 2, 4 Giddens ch. 9, 16, 18	Yes
3	March 8	Durkheim and Simmel	Ritzer ch. 3, 5 Giddens ch.10, 14, 21	Yes
4	March 15	Structural Functionalism	Ritzer ch. 6, 7	Yes
5	March 22	Critical Theory	Ritzer ch. 8, 9 Giddens ch. 15, 20	Yes
6	March 29	Interactionism, Rational Choice, and Feminist Theories	Ritzer ch. 10, 11, 12, 13 Giddens ch. 5, 12	Yes
7	April 5	No Lecture – Reading Week	Giddens ch. 8	No
8	April 12	No Lecture - Mid-term exam		No
9	April 19	Micro-Macro, Structure-Agency Integration	Ritzer ch. 14, 15 Giddens ch. 13, 19	Yes
10	April 26	Modernity and Postmodernity	Ritzer ch. 16, 17 Giddens ch. 22	Yes

11	May 3	Social Construction of Reality	Berger & Luckmann Giddens ch. 6	No
12	May 10	Practical Reason	Bourdieu Giddens ch. 7, 17	No
13	May 17	The Consequences of Modernity	Giddens Giddens ch. 2, 11	No

Literature

No. of pages

Berger, P. L. and Luckmann, T. 1966. <i>The Social Construction of Reality</i> . London: Penguin	250
Bourdieu, Pierre. 1998. <i>Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action</i> . Stanford: Stanford University Press	153
Giddens, Anthony. 2006. <i>Sociology</i> . 5th edition, Cambridge: Polity Press.	960
Giddens, Anthony. 1990. <i>The Consequences of Modernity</i> . Cambridge: Polity Press.	186
Ritzer, G. 2000. <i>Sociological Theory</i> . London. McGraw-Hill Education.	621

Total number of assigned pages of reading: ~2170