

## Sociological Diagnoses of Our Times

<b>Course description</b>	<p>Sociological literature, especially in the writings of the classics, often contains a (more or less explicit) diagnosis of the present time of the author (for example, Weber's characterization of modern capitalism as "iron cage"). In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, "time diagnosis" emerged as a specific sociological genre, exemplified by works such as Beck's "Risk Society", Bauman's "Liquid Modernity" or Castell's "Network Society". Time diagnoses offer a sociological interpretation of contemporary society, often with a critical edge and the potential to reach broader educated audiences beyond the confines of the discipline. This course focuses on recently published diagnoses of our times, which we will read and discuss in their entirety, limiting ourselves to one of two monographs per semester.</p> <p>This year, two recent(ly translated) books by two German sociologists will be in the center of our attention. Andreas Reckwitz, arguably the most influential sociologist in contemporary Germany, develops in his "The Society of Singularities" (2020) the concept of singularization to capture crucial features characterizing all fields of contemporary society, from economy and work to culture, life-style and politics. In our class, we will tackle this novel take on late modernity chapter by chapter. With his voluminous work "Resonance" (2019), Hartmut Rosa offers a contemporary piece of German critical theory and a sociology of human-world relations. In this seminar, we will read instead his recent "The Uncontrollability of the World" (2020), a much shorter book that summarizes the argument of its predecessor and sharpens it towards a critical time diagnosis.</p>
<b>Course requirements</b>	Regular attendance and participation, ten short response papers, presentation in class or final essay
<b>ECTS points</b>	6
<b>I</b>	<b>Organizational Meeting</b>
<b>II</b>	<b>Cultural Sociological Introduction – How Intellectuals Explain “Our Time”</b>
Required Readings	Alexander, Jeffrey C. (2003/1994): "Modern, Anti, Post, and Neo. How Intellectuals Explain “Our Time” ". In: Alexander, Jeffrey C. (ed.), <i>The Meanings of Social Life. A Cultural Sociology</i> . Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 193-228.
<b>III</b>	<b>Society of Singularities – Introduction to the Book and the Author</b>
Required Readings	Reckwitz, Andreas (2002): "Toward a Theory of Social Practices. A Development in Culturalist Theorizing". In: <i>European Journal of Social Theory</i> 5(2), 243-265 Reckwitz, Andreas (2020/2017): <i>The Society of Singularities</i> . Cambridge; Medford: Polity. 1-15
Presentation	Introduction of the author; Reckwitz, Andreas (2017/2012): <i>The Invention of Creativity. Modern Society and the Culture of the New</i> . Cambridge; Medford: Polity.
<b>IV</b>	<b>Modernity and the Social Logic of the General and the Particular</b>
Required Readings	Reckwitz, Andreas (2020/2017): <i>The Society of Singularities</i> . Cambridge; Medford: Polity. 19-78
Presentation	Swidler, Ann (1986): "Culture in Action. Symbols and Strategies". In: <i>American Sociological Review</i> 51(2), 273-286.

<b>V</b>	<b>Post-Industrial Economy of Singularities</b>
Required Reading	Reckwitz, Andreas (2020/2017): <i>The Society of Singularities</i> . Cambridge: Polity; Medford. 81-127
Presentation	Karpik, Lucien (2010): <i>Valuing the Unique. The Economics of Singularities</i> . Princeton: Princeton University Press.
<b>VI</b>	<b>Singularization of the Working World</b>
Required Reading	Reckwitz, Andreas (2020/2017): <i>The Society of Singularities</i> . Cambridge, Medford: Polity. 131-160
Presentation	Boltanski, Luc & Chiapello Ève (2018): <i>The New Spirit of Capitalism</i> . London; New York: Verso.
<b>Reading Week</b>	
<b>VII</b>	<b>Digitalization as Singularization</b>
Required Readings	Reckwitz, Andreas (2020/2017): <i>The Society of Singularities</i> . Cambridge, Medford: Polity. 163-195
Presentation	Schwarz, Ori (2021): <i>Sociological Theory for Digital Society: The Codes that Bind Us Together</i> . Cambridge; Medford: Polity.
<b>VIII</b>	<b>The Singularization of Lifestyles and the New Middle-Class</b>
Required Readings	Reckwitz, Andreas (2020/2017): <i>The Society of Singularities</i> . Cambridge; Medford: Polity. 199-266
Presentation	Beck, Ulrich (1992): <i>Risk Society</i> . London; Thousand Oaks: Sage. (In particular Part II)
<b>IX</b>	<b>Politics of Singularities – Differential Liberalism and Cultural Essentialism</b>
Required Readings	Reckwitz, Andreas (2020/2017): <i>The Society of Singularities</i> . Cambridge: Polity. 268-309
Presentation	Reckwitz, Andreas (2021): <i>The End of Illusions. Politics, Economy, and Culture in Late Modernity</i> . Cambridge; Medford: Polity.
<b>X</b>	<b>Conclusion and Criticism</b>
Required Readings	Reckwitz, Andreas (2020/2017): <i>The Society of Singularities</i> . Cambridge: Polity. 310-319 Wagner, Peter (2018): "Singularity: A New Key for the Sociological Diagnosis of the Present Time?". In: <i>European Journal of Sociology / Archives Européennes de Sociologie</i> 59(3), 524-532.
Presentation	Brief overview of the reception of the work, reviews and citations
<b>XI</b>	<b>The Uncontrollability of the World I</b>
Required Readings	Rosa, Hartmut (2020): <i>The Uncontrollability of the World</i> . Cambridge; New York: Polity. 1-59
Presentation	Introduction of the author; Rosa, Hartmut (2019/2016): <i>Resonance. A Sociology of Our Relationship to the World</i> . Cambridge; Medford: Polity. Introduction + Part I

<b>XII</b>	<b>The Uncontrollability of the World II</b>
Required Readings	Rosa, Hartmut (2020): <i>The Uncontrollability of the World</i> . Cambridge; New York: Polity. 60-117
Presentation	Rosa, Hartmut (2019/2016): <i>Resonance. A Sociology of Our Relationship to the World</i> . Cambridge; Medford: Polity. Part II-IV
<b>Requirements for Passing the Course</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Participation in class – 20%</li> <li>2. Ten short response papers – 60%</li> <li>3. Presentation or Final Essay – 20%</li> </ol>