

Sociological Diagnoses of Our Times

Course description	<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 20th 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 or two monographs per semester.</p> <p>This year, two recently published books will be at the center of our attention, <i>Late Modernity in Crisis</i> and <i>Cannibal Capitalism</i>. Andreas Reckwitz and Hartmut Rosa, arguably the two most influential sociologists in contemporary Germany, have published together a book entitled <i>Late Modernity in Crisis</i> (2023). There, both authors not only provide outlines of their respective theories and diagnoses of contemporary society but also engage in a debate with each other. While Reckwitz focusses on the social consequences of cultural processes of "singularization", Rosa argues that the modern desire to control the world harms our capacity to experience "resonance". In the second part of the class, we will discuss Nancy Fraser's <i>Cannibal Capitalism</i>, where she develops a contemporary critique of capitalism on social, political and environmental grounds.</p>
Course requirements	Regular attendance and participation, eight short response papers, presentation in class or final essay
ECTS points	5
I (20.2)	Organizational Meeting
II (27.2)	Reckwitz & Rosa: Theory of Society
Required Readings	<p>Andreas Reckwitz & Hartmut Rosa: <i>Late Modernity in Crisis: Why We Need a Theory of Society</i>. Cambridge; Medford: Polity. 1-8.</p> <p>Reckwitz, Andreas (2023): "The Theory of Society as a Tool". In: Andreas Reckwitz & Hartmut Rosa: <i>Late Modernity in Crisis: Why We Need a Theory of Society</i>. Cambridge; Medford: Polity. 11-26.</p> <p>Hartmut Rosa (2023): "Best Account: Outlining a Systematic Theory of Modern Society". In: Andreas Reckwitz & Rosa Hartmut: <i>Late Modernity in Crisis: Why We Need a Theory of Society</i>. Cambridge; Medford: Polity. 159-200., 97-113.</p>
Presentations	Introduction to both authors and their works (knowledge of German is helpful)
III (5.3)	Reckwitz: Social theory and The Practice of Modernity
Required Reading	Reckwitz, Andreas (2023): "The Theory of Society as a Tool". In: Andreas Reckwitz & Hartmut Rosa: <i>Late Modernity in Crisis: Why We Need a Theory of Society</i> . Cambridge; Medford: Polity. 27-58.
Presentation	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.

IV (12.3.)	Reckwitz: Theory of Late Modernity
Required Reading	Reckwitz, Andreas (2023): "The Theory of Society as a Tool". In: Andreas Reckwitz & Hartmut Rosa: <i>Late Modernity in Crisis: Why We Need a Theory of Society</i> . Cambridge; Medford: Polity. 59-94.
Presentation	Reckwitz, Andreas (2021): <i>The End of Illusions. Politics, Economy, and Culture in Late Modernity</i> . Cambridge; Medford: Polity.
V (19.3.)	Rosa: Theory of Modern Society
Required Reading	Hartmut Rosa: "Best Account: Outlining a Systematic Theory of Modern Society". In: Andreas Reckwitz & Rosa Hartmut: <i>Late Modernity in Crisis: Why We Need a Theory of Society</i> . Cambridge; Medford: Polity. 159-200., 114-157.
Presentation	Rosa, Hartmut (2020): <i>The Uncontrollability of the World</i> . Cambridge; New York: Polity.
VI (26.3)	Debate: Modernity and Critique
Required Reading	Reckwitz, Andreas, Hartmut Rosa & Martin Bauer (2023): "Modernity and Critique. A Conversation with Martin Bauer". In: Andreas Reckwitz & Hartmut Rosa: <i>Late Modernity in Crisis: Why We Need a Theory of Society</i> . Cambridge; Medford: Polity. 159-200.
VII (2.4)	Reading Week – No Class
Additional Reading	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.
VIII (9.4)	Fraser: Cannibal Capitalism I – Capitalism
Required Reading	Fraser, Nancy (2002): <i>Cannibal Capitalism. How Our System Is Devouring Democracy, Care and the Planet—and What We Can Do about It</i> . London; New York: Verso, xiii-26.
Presentation	Introduction of the author and her work Appelrouth, Scott A. & Laura Desfor Edles (2012): "Karl Marx (1818-1883)" In: <i>Classical and Contemporary Sociological Theory</i> . Thousand Oaks: Sage, 20-76.
IX (16.4)	Fraser: Cannibal Capitalism II – Racism
Required Reading	Fraser, Nancy (2002): <i>Cannibal Capitalism. How Our System Is Devouring Democracy, Care and the Planet—and What We Can Do about It</i> . London; New York: Verso, 27-52.
Presentation	Fraser, Nancy & Rahel Jaeggi (2018): <i>Capitalism. A Conversation in Critical Theory</i> . Cambridge; Medford: Polity.
X (23.4)	Fraser: Cannibal Capitalism III – Care
Required Reading	Fraser, Nancy (2002): <i>Cannibal Capitalism. How Our System Is Devouring Democracy, Care and the Planet—and What We Can Do about It</i> . London; New York: Verso, 53-74.
Presentation	Arruzza, Cinzia, Tithi Bhattacharya & Nancy Fraser (2019): <i>Feminism for the 99%. A Manifesto</i> . London: Verso.
XI (30.4)	Fraser: Cannibal Capitalism IV – Nature
Required Reading	Fraser, Nancy (2002): <i>Cannibal Capitalism. How Our System Is Devouring Democracy, Care and the Planet—and What We Can Do about It</i> . London; New York: Verso, 75-113.
Presentation	Haraway, Donna J. (2016): <i>Staying with the Trouble. Making Kin in the Chthulucene</i> . Durham: Duke University Press.

XII (7.5)	Fraser: Cannibal Capitalism V – Democracy
Required Reading	Fraser, Nancy (2002): <i>Cannibal Capitalism. How Our System Is Devouring Democracy, Care and the Planet—and What We Can Do about It</i> . London; New York: Verso, 115-139.
Presentation	Fraser, Nancy (2019): <i>The Old Is Dying and the New Cannot Be Born. From Progressive Neoliberalism to Trump and Beyond</i> . London: Verso.
XIII (14.5)	Fraser: Cannibal Capitalism VI – Socialism
Required Reading	Fraser, Nancy (2002): <i>Cannibal Capitalism. How Our System Is Devouring Democracy, Care and the Planet—and What We Can Do about It</i> . London; New York: Verso, 141-157.
Presentation	Reviews and criticisms
Requirements for Passing the Course	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Participation in class – 10% 2. Eight response papers – 60% (four in the first half of the semester) 3. Presentation or Final Essay – 30%