

Sociology 183 – The Sociological Imagination and Contemporary Society

Mgr. Benjamin Vail, M.Sc., Ph.D.
Autumn 2009

Credits: 6

Lecture time: Tuesdays 14.00-15.40

Classroom: 32

Office hours: Tuesdays 10.00-11.00 in room 3.59

E-mail: vail@fss.muni.cz

Course description and requirements

This course introduces many of the major schools of thought and topics of research in the field of Sociology. We take an historical view of the development of social theory from the 19th century until today. The course is based on several textbooks and the classic treatise on sociology by C. Wright Mills called *The Sociological Imagination*. Mills believed that the purpose of Sociology is to help you understand and engage with the world. By the end of the semester, students will be fluent in the history of the development of the discipline of Sociology. You will understand different social science perspectives on contemporary society, and you will be able to use these concepts in your studies. You will be able to explain the concept of the “sociological imagination” and critically assess its meaning for your experiences both inside and outside the university.

Using the MU Information System

Class resources are available to students through Masaryk University’s online Information System (IS). In the IS you will find an interactive syllabus which contains important general information about the course and the weekly schedule with links to some of the required course materials – including the required reading and all other information. Please contact the instructor with any questions or concerns about using the IS. An abridged version of the weekly lecture PowerPoint presentation slides will be available on the interactive syllabus for up to one week after each lecture. The abridged lecture notes are intended as a study aid so you can listen carefully to the lecture without having to take notes on every slide during the lecture presentation. They are *not* meant to be used to avoid your attendance at the lecture.

Evaluation

Success in this course depends on carefully reading all the assigned literature, which serves as the basis for the two exams that determine your grade for the semester. Students are expected to attend every lecture, and information provided in lectures may also be tested in the exams. You will receive a final letter grade (A-F) for the semester based on the following components:

Final grade components

40% – Mid-term exam

60% – 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 in this course 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.)

Week	Date	Lecture topic	Required reading
1	September 22	Introduction to Sociology and the Sociological Imagination	Syllabus Charon and Vigilant Giddens
2	September 29	Conflict Theory	Collins Poggi Mills
3	October 6	Marxian Theory	Ritzer Farganis
4	October 13	The Durkheimian Tradition	Collins Palumbo and Scott Durkheim
5	October 20	Structural Functionalism	Ritzer Holmwood Mills
6	October 27	The Rational/Utilitarian Tradition	Collins Ritzer
7	November 3	No Lecture – Reading Week	Collins Elwell Study for mid-term exam
8	November 10	Mid-Term Exam	
9	November 17	No Lecture – National Holiday The Microinteractionist Tradition and Social Constructionism	Collins Outhwaite Berger and Luckmann
10	November 24	Structure and Agency	King Ritzer Mills

11	December 1	Modernity and Postmodernity	Smart Delanty Bauman Beck
12	December 8	Critical and Feminist Theories	Ashenden Adkins Kellner Held Mills
13	December 15	The Sociological Imagination	Mills Aronowitz Gitlin

Literature	No. of pages
Aronowitz, Stanley. "A Mills Revival?"	27
Bauman, Zygmunt. 1989. "Modernity and the Holocaust," Pp. 428-447 in Calhoun, Craig, et al., eds. <i>Contemporary Sociological Theory</i> , 2nd edition. Oxford: Blackwell.	20
Beck, Ulrich. "Risk Society: Toward a New Modernity," Pp. 398-401 in Giddens, Anthony. 2001. <i>Sociology: Introductory Readings</i> . Cambridge: Polity.	4
Berger and Luckmann. "The Social Construction of Reality," Pp. 17-27 in Kauzlarich, David. 2005. <i>Sociological Classics: A Prentice Hall Pocket Reader</i> . Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.	11
Charon, Joel M. and Lee Garth Vigilant. 2002. <i>The Meaning of Sociology</i> , 8th edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.	20
Collins, R. 1994. <i>Four sociological traditions</i> . New York: Oxford University Press.	280
Durkheim, E. "The Rules of the Sociological Method," Pp. 139-157 in Calhoun, Craig, et al., eds. <i>Classical Sociological Theory</i> , 2nd edition. Oxford: Blackwell.	9
Elwell, Frank W. 2006. "The Sociology of C. Wright Mills," pp. 1-35 in <i>Macrosociology: Four Modern Theorists</i> . Boulder: Paradigm Publishers.	36
Farganis, J. 2007. <i>Readings in social theory</i> . New York: McGraw-Hill.	20
Giddens, A. 2002. <i>Sociology</i> . 4th edition, Cambridge. Polity Press	55
Gitlin, Todd. "C. Wright Mills, Free Radical"	16
Harrington, Austin. 2005. <i>Modern Social Theory: An Introduction</i> . Oxford University Press.	285
Held, "Introduction to Habermas," pp. 402-406 in Giddens, A. 2002 <i>Sociology: Introductory Readings</i> , Oxford: Polity Press.	5
Mills, C.W. 2000. <i>The Sociological Imagination</i> . Oxford University Press.	256
Ritzer, G. 2000. <i>Sociological Theory</i> . London. McGraw-Hill Education.	150

Total number of assigned pages of reading: ~1200