

OISSLY10 - Understanding Contemporary Issues: A Sociological Outlook

Lecturer: Murielle BEGUE
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Department: International affairs
Semester: 2

Course level: L3 Undergraduate
Domain: Sociology, Human Resources, Politics
Teaching language: English
Number of in-class hours: 33
Number of course sessions: 10 + Exam
ECTS: 6

Course description and objectives

Modernity - defined by political characteristics such as the preference for democracy and economic characteristics with the rise of liberal capitalism - has confronted contemporary Western societies with major upheavals: the weakening of traditional referents and the rise of individualism,

The purpose of this course is to examine contemporary issues from a sociological perspective: What are the consequences of social inequalities within egalitarian societies? How are differences (gender, sexual orientation, race, disability, etc.) perceived and dealt with from a normative point of view? What are the consequences on the evolution of the social structure and cohesion of society? How new forms of power and domination are implemented within democratic societies? What evolutions are taking place in the world of labour and business?

The connections between social norms, inequalities and power will be discussed during the course, allowing a discussion of some major thinkers such as Georg Simmel, Erving Goffman, Pierre Bourdieu, Michel Foucault, Beverley Skeggs, Arlie R. Hochschild, Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello.

This course ambitions to be an open-minded discussion place where French and international students can meet and exchange ideas on current issues in an academic setting.

Objectives :

- Introducing sociology: the discipline, tools, main theories and concepts, key issues
- Acquiring conceptual tools to analyse and understand social transformations in contemporary societies through three main topics: norms, power, organizations
- Connecting concepts and concrete situations, theoretical analysis and empirical knowledge
- Recognizing the main methods used in sociology
- Familiarizing oneself with several key sociological schools of thought
- Reading ambitious academic texts, getting a sociological culture
- Improving writing skills and removing inhibitions when it comes to speaking English

Prerequisites

Intermediate or advanced English (read, written, spoken) necessary to study a social science discipline. No prerequisite in sociology. A general introduction to the discipline is provided at the beginning of the course.

Learning outcomes

- Reading, understanding and discussing key sociological texts
- Comparing and debating concepts and theories in sociology
- Recognizing the main methods and tools used in sociology
- Questioning key issues in contemporary societies

- Writing sociological essays
- Improving oral and written academic English

Assignments and grading

- Continuous assessment (50%)
 - Mid-term exam (30%) – essay
 - Class work (20%) – combining group presentation, short papers; readings and participation
- Exam (50%) – essay

The numerical grade distribution will dictate the final grade. The passing grade for a course is 10/20.

Class participation: Active class participation – this is what makes classes lively and instructive. Come on time and prepared. Class participation is based on quality of comments, not quantity.

Exam policy: In the exam, students will not be allowed to bring any document (except if allowed by the lecturer). Unexcused absences from exams or failure to submit cases will result in zero grades in the calculation of numerical averages. Exams are collected at the end of examination periods.

Course structure

Session	Topic
1	General introduction to sociology: heuristical approaches (Bourdieu, Mills, etc.)
2	General introduction to sociology: concepts and methods (Durkheim, Weber, Bourgeois)
3	Norms and Inequalities: poverty (Simmel)
4	Norms and Deviance: stigmatization and labelling theory (Goffman, Becker, Elias)
5	Power and Domination: discipline and surveillance (Foucault, Deleuze)
6	Mid-term exam
7	Inequalities and Domination: social reproduction and distinction (Bourdieu)
8	Reproduction of Inequalities: education and work (Skeggs)
9	Organizations and Power : capitalism (Boltanski & Chiapello)
10	Organizations and Inequalities: gender (Hochschild)
11	Final Exam

Bibliography

- BOLTANSKI Luc & CHIAPELLO Eve (2005), *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, Verso.
- BOURDIEU Pierre (1987), "Aristocracy of Culture", *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, Routledge.
- BOURGOIS Philippe (2003), *In Search of Respect. Selling Crack in El Barrio*, Cambridge University Press.
- CASTELLS Manuel (2011), "Power in the Network Society", *Communication power*, Oxford University Press.
- FOUCAULT Michel (1977), "'Panopticism' from Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison", *Race/Ethnicity: Multidisciplinary Global Contexts*, Vol.2, n°1, Autumn 2008.
- GIDDENS Anthony, *Sociology*, Polity press, 2006.
- GOFFMAN Erving (1963), "The Self and the Other", *Stigma. Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, A Touchstone Book, 1986.
- HOCHSCHILD Arlie Russel (2003), *The Managed Heart. Commercialization of Human Feeling*, University of California Press.

- MILLS Charles Wright (1974), “The Sociology of Stratification”, *Power, Politics and People*, Oxford University Press.
- RIDGEWAY Cecilia R., “Why Status Matters for Inequality”, *American Sociological Review*, 2014, vol. 79 (1), pp. 1-16.
- SIMMEL Georg (1907), *The Poor, Social Problems*, vol.13, n°2, pp. 118-140, Autumn 1965, University of California Press.
- SKEGGS, Beverley (1997), “Ambivalent Femininities”, in *Formations of Class and Gender: Becoming Respectable* (Chapter 6), London: Sage.

Lecturer’s biography

Murielle Bègue is a Doctor in Sociology and has taught Social sciences in the Université Paris-Dauphine-PSL since 2009. She is a graduate of Sciences Po Paris and defended a PhD on “Patterns of Political Engagement among Disadvantaged People: A European Comparison (France, England, Spain)”.

Moodle

This course is on Moodle: **Yes**

Academic integrity

Be aware of the rules in Université Paris Dauphine about plagiarism and cheating during exams. All work turned in for this course must be your own work, or that of your own group. Working as part of a group implies that you are an active participant and fully contributed to the output produced by that group.