Sociology

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Course aims and intended learning outcomes

The course aims to provide students with the fundamentals of sociological knowledge.

The course is divided into one module of forty hours (fall term) and a twenty hours workshop (spring term). The first module is focused on ten essential issues which enhance the students' ability to look at the world out there through a sociological lens and asking the right questions, in order to understand who is doing what with whom under which circumstances, i.e. to make sense of what is happening around us. The workshop explores the same key social issues through the lens of media and communications, paying attention to both mainstream media and the emerging digital ecologies.

Intended Learning Outcomes (knowledge and understanding)
As a result of the course the students will be able to understand the main sociological theories and concepts.

Intended Learning Outcomes (applying knowledge and understanding)
Students will also manage to apply their knowledge to the critical evluation of key contemporary issues such as social interaction, social stratification and inequalities, diversity, globalization, migration, etc

Course content

The issues are:

FIRST MODULE
1. The sociological imagination: let us not to take everything for granted. Learning from the classic theorists.
2. From individuals to societies: cultures, groups, organizations, institutions.
3. The social interaction: How to develop a sense of self, how to make sense of our worlds?
4. Social stratification and inequalities: do have all the people equal opportunity to succeed in life?
5. Diversity as a social resource: gender, ethnicity, religion etc.
6. Globalization: drivers, benefits and drawbacks for whom and where?
7. Power and politics: who has power where and how on whom? What are movements and do emerge political (local and global) resistance forms?
8. Cities and communities: how is the urban world changing?
9. Immigration: Who is moving where and why? How do the migrants settle in the new cities where they live (between integration and interaction)?
10. Sustainability: How does the quality of the environment affect the social life? Which are the main issues that a sustainable development model arises on the side of production chains and on the side of consumption practices?

SECOND MODULE
1. Mediated social interactions: how do we communicate with others through social and digital media? how do we communicate and perform our identities online? how does social media shape our social interactions (e.g.: social surveillance, hate speech)?
2. Media and politics: based on recent cases (Brexit, 2016 US Presidential campaign, etc.), what is the role of social media in election campaigns (computational propaganda, fake news, sousveillance, etc.)?

3. Digital and social divides: what are the main forms of social inclusion and exclusion in the digital age? What is the relationship between digital and social exclusion? How does dataveillance and algorithmic governmantality fosters social inequalities?
4. The media and globalization: how does the media system concur to globalization and foster a global social imaginary?
5. The role of media representations: how do the media represent social issues (e.g. migration)? how do media representations inform and shape social representations? How are moral panics circulated? What are media panics?

Reading list

FIRST MODULE

A. GIDDENS-P.W. SUTTON, Essential Concepts in Sociology, 2nd Edition, Polity Press, 2017 (Theme 1 Thinking Sociologically – Globalization, Modernity, Postmodernity, Society, Structure/Agency; Theme 2 Doing Sociology – Ideal Type, Qualitative/quantitative Methods, Reflexivity, Social Constructionism; Theme 3 Environment and Urbanism – Migration, Urbanism; Theme 4 Structures of Society – Bureaucracy, Capitalism, Consumerism, Religion; Theme 5 Unequal Life Chances – Gender, Race and Ethinicty; Theme 7 Interaction and Communication – Culture, Identity, Interaction, Public Sphere; Theme 8 Health Illness and the Body – Stigma; Theme 9 Crime and Social Control – Anomie, Deviance, Labelling; Theme 10 Political Sociology – Conflict, Democracy, Nation State, Power, Social Movement).

A. GIDDENS-P.W. SUTTON (2010), Introductory Readings, 3rd Edition, Polity Press (Readings 1, 2, 5, 14, 15, 16, 19, 27, 31, 34, 51).

M. SAVAGE ET AL., A new model of social class? Findings from the BBC's Great British Class Survey experiment. Sociology, 2017, 47 (2). pp. 219-250. Available from: http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/49654/

SECOND MODULE

A. APPADURAI, Modernity at Large, Cultural Dimensions of Globalization. Minneapolis, Minnesota University Press. 1996 (Ch. I).

D. BOYD (2010), Social Network Sites as Networked Publics: Affordances, Dynamics, and Implications, in Networked Self: Identity, Community, and Culture on Social Network Sites (ed. Zizi Papacharissi), pp. 39-58. Online at: http://www.danah.org/papers/2010/SNSasNetworkedPublics.pdf.

A.J.A.M. VAN DEURSEN-E.J. HELSPER- R. EYNON (2017), The Compoundness and Sequentiality of Digital Inequality. International Journal of Communication. http://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/5739/1911

J. VAN DIJK, The Culture of Connectivity: A Critical History of Social Media, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2013 (Ch. I).

S.C. WOOLLEY-D.R. GUILBEAULT (2017), Computational propaganda in the United States of America: Manufacturing consensus online. Oxford, Oxford Internet Institute. Online at: http://comprop.oii.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/89/2017/06/Comprop-USA.pdf

Teaching method

The course is based on lectures, visiting lectures, team works in classroom. Group assignments will be planned as part of the exam.

Assessment method and criteria

Attending students: two written tests (one for each module): 70%; three group assignments and class discussions: 30%. More specifically, in the written text attending students will be required to answer to 5 open question on the topics of module I (40% of the final evaluation); and to 3 open questions on the topics of module II (30% of the final evaluation). The assessment of the test is based on the number of answers, the ability to use the correct terminology, the reference to the appropriate concepts and theories, the identification of critical issues, the clarity and soundness of the argumentation. Students will also be involved in 3 groups presentations: two in the first term (20% of the final evaluation) and one in the second term (10% of the final evaluation). For the group presentations, students are expected to read the recommended reading list, find additional resources on the given topic and apply the theories and readings to the analysis of case studies. The presentations will be assessed considering the originality of the work, the ability to refer to theories and concepts, the use of the correct terminology, the quality of the presentation.

Non- attending students will give a final exam in which they will have to answer to 10 questions on the topics of module I (60% of the overall evaluation) and 7 questions on the topics of module II (40% of the overall evaluation).

Notes and prerequisites

There are no prerequisites.