

Sociology 755 – General Sociology
Mgr. Benjamin Vail, M.Sc., Ph.D.
Spring 2009

Credits: 15

Lecture time: Mondays, 12.00-13.30 in room 117

Office hours: Mondays 14.00-15.00 in room 3.59

E-mail: vail@fss.muni.cz

Course Description and Requirements

This course introduces students to the wide range of social theory that has accumulated in the discipline of Sociology, providing exposure to classical, modern, and contemporary theories. The first half of the course focuses on this survey of the development of sociological thought, while the second half of the semester features in-depth study of three books representative of important themes in the field that continue to shape sociological thinking today. The book *The Social Construction of Reality*, by Berger and Luckmann, provides an introduction to a comprehensive conceptual scheme and research program in Sociology. Bourdieu's book, *Practical Reason*, theorizes the link between social structure and social action. Giddens' book, *The Consequences of Modernity*, discusses the institutional structures of modernity. These three books, as well as the two general textbooks, are on the required reading list for the final state exam for students to earn the Masters degree in Sociology. By the end of the semester, students will be fluent in the history of the development of the field of sociology, understand contemporary themes in sociological theory and research, and be prepared to use sociological theory in their Master's thesis work.

Evaluation

Success in this course depends in large part on carefully reading several textbooks and other literature, which serve as the basic material covered in the exams. See the section below for a listing of all the literature in the course. Students are expected to attend every lecture and are encouraged to ask questions and offer comments in class. There is a short quiz at the start of each lecture that will cover information in the required reading for that day. There is one mid-term exam covering information presented in class and the required readings up to that point; a comprehensive final exam at the end of the semester will test all information presented during the semester. You will receive a final letter grade (A-F) for the semester based on the following components:

Final grade components

10% – Weekly seminars

20% – Weekly quizzes

30% – Mid-term exam

40% – 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.

Seminar Study Groups

There will be ten meetings of a seminar study group that all students are required to attend. The study group will meet weekly and will be organized by a student Teaching Assistant. The meetings are intended to promote understanding of the information presented in the weekly lectures. The graded weekly quizzes will be returned at the meetings. The study group meetings are an opportunity for students to discuss sociological concepts in more detail. The meetings will include unstructured time for questions and discussion and also a thematic program in which students are expected to participate fully. Participation in the study groups are mandatory and account for 10 percent of your grade for the semester. Details about the time and place of the meetings will be given in the Interactive Syllabus.

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 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.)

<i>Week</i>	Date	Lecture topic	Required reading
1	February 16	Introduction to Sociology and Social Theory	Syllabus Harrington Charon and Vigilant Mills
2	February 23	Classical Sociological Theory	Ritzer
3	March 2	Modern Sociological Theory	Ritzer
4	March 9	Interactionism, Rational Choice, and Feminist Theories	Ritzer
5	March 16	Micro-Macro, Structure-Agency Integration	Ritzer
6	March 23	Modernity and Postmodernity	Ritzer
7	March 30	Reading Week – No Class	Study for mid-term exam
8	April 6	Mid-term exam	

9	April 13	No Class – National Holiday	Berger & Luckmann
10	April 20	Social Construction of Reality	Berger & Luckmann
11	April 27	Practical Reason	Bourdieu
12	May 4	The Consequences of Modernity	Giddens
13	May 11	Review and Conclusion	

Literature	No. of pages
Berger, P. L. and Luckmann, T. 1966. <i>The Social Construction of Reality</i> . London: Penguin	250
Bourdieu, Pierre. 1998. <i>Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action</i> . Stanford: Stanford University Press	153
Charon, Joel M. and Lee Garth Vigilant. 2002. <i>The Meaning of Sociology</i> , 8th edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.	20
Giddens, Anthony. 2002. <i>Sociology</i> . 4th edition, Cambridge: Polity Press.	768
Giddens, Anthony. 1990. <i>The Consequences of Modernity</i> . Cambridge: Polity Press.	186
Harrington, Austin. 2005. <i>Modern Social Theory: An Introduction</i> . Oxford University Press.	16
Mills, C.W. 2000. <i>The Sociological Imagination</i> . Oxford University Press.	25
Ritzer, G. 2000. <i>Sociological Theory</i> . London. McGraw-Hill Education.	621

Total number of assigned pages of reading: 2039