

SOC789: Post-Post-Modernity: 21st Century Social Issues in Debate

Mgr. Benjamin Vail, M.Sc., Ph.D.
Spring 2013

Credits: 10

Classroom: M117

Seminar time: Mondays 14.00-15.40

Office hours: Mondays 13.00-14.00 in room 359

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Course Description and Requirements

This course is intended for students to read and discuss cutting-edge literature they probably won't encounter in other courses about current events and predictions about near- and long-term social development in a sociological context. We will read five or six recently published books and related literature offering different analyses and theories about the meaning and direction of today's social developments and how society is moving, or has already moved, toward a historical era that might be called "post-post-modern." These alternative visions of the present and future challenge our sociological thinking about the forces that are shaping our world and our lives, and suggest new topics of social research. The topics covered in this course will vary from semester to semester depending on the selected literature and may include: Economy; Globalization; Family and Community; Environment and Society; Politics; Security and Peace; Culture and Philosophy; Technology; and Social Movements. The aim of the course is to gain knowledge about forces that are transforming our world and increase students' familiarity with theories and analysis that make sense of these changes. By the end of this course, students will be informed about a number of controversial contemporary social issues, aware of alternative theories explaining and predicting the direction of post-post-modern society, and able to critically analyze the meaning of these issues and theories for their academic studies and in their own lives.

Textbooks

The books that serve as the core literature this semester are:

- Bakan, Joel. 2005. *The Corporation: The Pathological Pursuit of Profit and Power*
- Gairdner, William. 2008. *The Book of Absolutes: A Critique of Relativism and a Defence of Universals*
- Glenny, Misha. 2009. *McMafia: A Journey Through the Global Criminal Underworld*
- Heinberg, Richard. 2011. *The End of Growth: Adapting to Our New Economic Reality*
- Wolin, Sheldon S. 2010. *Democracy Incorporated: Managed Democracy and the Specter of Inverted Totalitarianism*

These texts may be supplemented with other required resources, such as articles and videos. See the online Interactive Syllabus for specific reading assignments.

Evaluation

Success in this course depends on participating in the seminar meetings and careful reading of the assigned literature. Students should attend every seminar meeting. For each book, a small team of 3-5 students should prepare materials to start the in-class discussion of the book. For each book, you should write a 1500 word reaction paper in which you critically engage with the contents of the book, demonstrating you have read the book, expressing your opinion and evaluation of the book, and explaining how you interpret the sociological significance of the book. The final exam will consist of short essays to be written at home and along with a 3000-5000 word research paper. Students earn a grade of A-F based on the following components:

Final grade components	Final grade scale	FSS grade meanings
15% – Attendance, discussion, and in-class presentation	A = 90 – 100%	A = Excellent
25% – Take-home final exam	B = 80 – 90%	B = Outstanding
60% – Book reaction papers	C = 70 – 80%	C = Good
	D = 60 – 70%	D = Satisfactory
	E = 50 – 60%	E = Acceptable
	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 or work as one's own without crediting the original author. Plagiarism is one of the most serious breaches of ethical standards in the academic environment, for it contradicts the mission of the university and the purpose of education. From a legal perspective, plagiarism is the stealing of intellectual property. The official FSS policy on academic honesty is available in the course's online interactive syllabus in both 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.

Semester Schedule

(See the online Interactive Syllabus for specific reading assignments.)

Date	Theme	Literature
February 18	Introduction	Syllabus
February 25	Reading, Writing, and Presenting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ASA Style Guide • Guide to writing response papers • Effective Thinking, Writing, and Studying
March 11	Economy	Heinberg: <i>The End of Growth</i>
March 25	Social Institutions	Bakan: <i>The Corporation</i>
April 8	Politics	Wolin: <i>Democracy, Inc.</i>
April 22	Globalization	Glenny: <i>McMafia</i>
May 6	Ideology and Culture	Gairdner: <i>The Book of Absolutes</i>
May 13	To be announced (TBA)...	TBA