

Sociological Diagnoses of Our Times

Course description	<p>Sociological literature, especially in the writings of the classics, often contains a (more or less explicit) diagnosis of the present time of the author (for example, Weber's characterization of modern capitalism as "iron cage"). In the 20th century, "time diagnosis" emerged as a specific sociological genre, exemplified by works such as Beck's "Risk Society", Bauman's "Liquid Modernity" or Castell's "Network Society". Time diagnoses offer a sociological interpretation of contemporary society, often with a critical edge and the potential to reach broader educated audiences beyond the confines of the discipline. This course focuses on recently published diagnoses of our times, which we will read and discuss in their entirety, limiting ourselves to one or two monographs per semester.</p> <p>This year, two recent(ly translated) books by two German sociologists will be at the center of our attention, which not only offer condensed versions of arguments elaborated in larger monographs, but also sharpen them towards a critical time diagnosis.</p> <p>In <i>End of Illusions</i> (2021), Andreas Reckwitz, arguably the most influential sociologist in contemporary Germany, elaborates on the themes of <i>The Society of Singularities</i> (2020), in which he argues that cultural processes of "singularization" characterize all fields of contemporary society, from economy and work to culture, life-style and politics. <i>End of Illusions</i> (2021) focusses on the social consequences and political challenges, which are the result of cultural processes of singularization.</p> <p>Similarly, <i>The Uncontrollability of the World</i> (2020) by Hartmut Rosa, Germany's leading critical theorist, is a follow-up to his voluminous monograph <i>Resonance</i> (2019), in which he develops a sociology of human-world relations. <i>The Uncontrollability of the World</i> (2020) argues that our modern desire to control the world impedes on our capacity to experience "resonance", which Rosa argues is central to having a good life. Good societies, accordingly, acknowledge the uncontrollability of the world and create opportunities for resonance.</p>
Course requirements	Regular attendance and participation, eight short response papers, presentation in class or final essay
ECTS points	5
I (13.2)	Organizational Meeting
II (20.2)	End of Illusions I – Introduction & Cultural Conflicts as a Struggle over Culture
Required Readings	Reckwitz, Andreas (2021): <i>The End of Illusions. Politics, Economy, and Culture in Late Modernity</i> . Cambridge; Medford: Polity. 1-32.
Presentations	Introduction to the author; Reckwitz, Andreas (2002): "Toward a Theory of Social Practices. A Development in Culturalist Theorizing". In: <i>European Journal of Social Theory</i> 5(2), 243-265. Reckwitz, Andreas (2020/2017): <i>The Society of Singularities</i> . Cambridge; Medford: Polity. 1-78.
III (27.2)	End of Illusions II – From the Leveled Middle-Class Society to the Three-Class Society
Required Readings	Reckwitz, Andreas (2021): <i>The End of Illusions. Politics, Economy, and Culture in Late Modernity</i> . Cambridge; Medford: Polity. 33-72.
Presentation	Beck, Ulrich (1992): <i>Risk Society</i> . London; Thousand Oaks: Sage.

IV (6.3.)	End of Illusions III – Beyond Industrial Society
Required Readings	Reckwitz, Andreas (2021): <i>The End of Illusions. Politics, Economy, and Culture in Late Modernity</i> . Cambridge; Medford: Polity. 73-110.
Presentations	Reckwitz, Andreas (2020/2017): <i>The Society of Singularities</i> . Cambridge: Polity; Medford. 81-195.
V (13.3.)	End of Illusions IV – The Weariness of Self-Actualization
Required Reading	Reckwitz, Andreas (2021): <i>The End of Illusions. Politics, Economy, and Culture in Late Modernity</i> . Cambridge; Medford: Polity. 111-130.
Presentation	Reckwitz, Andreas (2020/2017): <i>The Society of Singularities</i> . Cambridge; Medford: Polity. 199-266
VI (20.3)	End of Illusions V – The Crisis of Liberalism and the Search for the New Political Paradigm
Required Reading	Reckwitz, Andreas (2021): <i>The End of Illusions. Politics, Economy, and Culture in Late Modernity</i> . Cambridge; Medford: Polity. 131-159.
Presentation	Reckwitz, Andreas (2020/2017): <i>The Society of Singularities</i> . Cambridge: Polity. 268-319; Criticisms of <i>Society of Singularities</i> and <i>End of Illusions</i>
27.3.	Reading Week – No Class
Additional Reading	Alexander, Jeffrey C. (2003/1994): "Modern, Anti, Post, and Neo. How Intellectuals Explain "Our Time" ". In: Alexander, Jeffrey C. (ed.), <i>The Meanings of Social Life. A Cultural Sociology</i> . Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 193-228.
VII (3.4)	The Uncontrollability of the World I – Controllability and Resonance
Required Reading	Rosa, Hartmut (2020): <i>The Uncontrollability of the World</i> . Cambridge; New York: Polity. 1-39
Presentation	Introduction of the author; Rosa, Hartmut (2019/2016): <i>Resonance. A Sociology of Our Relationship to the World</i> . Cambridge; Medford: Polity. Introduction + Part I
10.4	Easter Monday – No Class
VIII (17.4)	The Uncontrollability of the World II – Theses and Observations on Controllability
Required Reading	Rosa, Hartmut (2020): <i>The Uncontrollability of the World</i> . Cambridge; New York: Polity. 40-85
Presentation	Rosa, Hartmut (2019/2016): <i>Resonance. A Sociology of Our Relationship to the World</i> . Cambridge; Medford: Polity. Part II-IV
IX (24.4)	The Uncontrollability of the World III – Controllability and Modernity
Required Reading	Rosa, Hartmut Rosa, Hartmut (2020): <i>The Uncontrollability of the World</i> . Cambridge; New York: Polity. 86-117
Presentation	Rosa, Hartmut (2022): "Social Media Filters and Resonances: Democracy and the Contemporary Public Sphere". In: <i>Theory, Culture & Society</i> 39(4), 17-35; Criticisms of <i>Resonance</i> and <i>Uncontrollability of the World</i>
1.5.	Labor Day – No Class

8.5.	Victory Day – No Class
Requirements for Passing the Course	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Participation in class – 20%2. Eight response papers – 60%3. Presentation or Final Essay – 20%