

Title of the course: Sociological Theory.

Course Descriptions:

This course surveys classical and contemporary theories in sociology, with special regard to the critical theory of modernity. Sociological theory inspires us to construct interesting questions about social world, guides our research, and helps us to understand better why things are as they are. While contemporary theories encompass a wide range of different perspectives and issues, it is important to recognize that they are rooted in the tradition of sociological thoughts set by classical theorists such as Durkheim, Marx, Simmel and Weber. Hence, this course will also provide an opportunity to revisit these classical theorists in sociology, and understand how their theories about social life have developed in response to the social changes in modern society. We will not only concentrate on the thought of every single author, but we will also try to apply his theory to actual relevant phenomenon. The final part of the course will be dedicated to understand the (supposed) passage from modernity to postmodernity, focusing on some “key words” (commodity spectacle, body and globalization) that describe the recent cultural and social turn.

Our goal is 1) to become familiar with each theorist’s major concepts and frameworks of their thoughts, 2) to understand the strengths and limitations of each theory studied, and 3) to develop an ability to critically evaluate the theories and to apply them to today’s social problems.

Required Texts:

- 1) Kivisto, Peter, *Social Theory: Roots and Branches*, 3rd ed. Oxford University Press.
- 2) Supplementary readings will be put on e-reserve (TBA) or given as handouts in class (most of the materials come from Kivisto, Peter, *Illuminating Social Life*, 4th Edition, Pine Forge Press)

Name of the Chair of the course: Vincenzo Mele (University of Pisa)

Name of the Visiting Professor of the course: Marcello Musto (York University)

Compulsory/optional course: optional course in “Sociological theory”

Year of the course and semester: Spring semester 2021

ECTS credit: 6

Number of hours: 42

General information and objective of the course

By the end of the semester, students are expected to be able to:

- - understand theoretical ideas of the key theorists of modern and contemporary sociology
- - make connections between contemporary theories and classical theories
- - have a sense of the historical and intellectual circumstances in which each of these thinkers emerged
- - compare similarities and differences between the perspectives of different thinkers
- - identify relative strengths and weaknesses of given theories
- - discuss contemporary social phenomena in light of the theories learned in course

Syllabus of the course: Sociological Theory.

I. WEEK (Mele)

What is social theory? Four Key Ideas and four key thinkers: Capitalism (Marx), Rationalization (Weber), Society/Community (Durkheim), Modernity (Simmel)

II. WEEK (Mele)

The starting of Sociology: Comte and Positivism

III. WEEK (Mele)

Durkheim

IV. WEEK (Mele)

Weber

V. WEEK (Mele)

Simmel

VI. WEEK (Mele)

Simmel

VII. WEEK (Mele-Musto)

Marx

VIII. WEEK (Mele-Musto)

Marx

IX. WEEK (Mele-Musto)

Tocqueville

X. WEEK (Mele-Musto)

Liberalism

XI. WEEK (mele- Musto)

Wright Mills

A detailed class calendar and readings will be available on the moodle platform of the course.

Pre-requisites, exams and assessment

Pre-requisites: intro to sociology, philosophy, social and political thought

Assessment:

One paper (a minimum of 10 pages) is required as a final paper. The paper will focus on authors and concepts included in the readings. Then the student can discuss the reception and the literature on the topic, ending with some open questions to show how the problems are still relevant (or not relevant) today.

Exam: final oral exam and/or presentation can be given in English or Italian

Structure of the course

Professor' s office hours

Prof. Vincenzo Mele

Wednesday, 10-13

Prof. Marcello Musto (TBD)