COURSE GUIDE

Contemporary Sociological Theory (2141131)

Approval date: 17/06/2025

Grado (Bachelor's Degree)	Grado en Sociología	Branch	Social and Legal Sciences
Module	Teoría y Fundamentos Sociológicos	Subject	Teoría Sociológica Contemporánea

Year of study	3º	Semester	1º	ECTS Credits	6	Course type	Compulsory course

PREREQUISITES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is advisable, but not compulsory, to have completed at least a course on Classical and Modern Sociological Theory.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF COURSE CONTENT (According to the programme's verification report)

- New sociological notions for the analysis of social reality.
- Sociology in the 20th Century. The 70s: rifts and pluralism.
- Microsociology and macrosociology: theoretical integration of the macro and micro levels.
- Other relevant theories.
- Recent theoretical developments.
- Tools and sources for the gathering of sociologically significant information.

SKILLS

GENERAL SKILLS

- CG01 - Ability to analyse and summarise
- CG03 - Computer skills related to the field of study
- CG08 - Ability to work in a team
- CG10 - Ability to cater for diversity and multiculturalism
- CG12 - Ethical commitment
- CG13 - Commitment to gender equality
- CG14 - Commitment to respect for human rights and non-discrimination
- CG15 - Ability to learn autonomously
- CG22 - Ability to recognise the global and local character of social phenomena
- CG24 - Ability to recognise the complexity of social phenomena

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SUBJECT-SPECIFIC SKILLS

- CE01 - Understand the main concepts and generalisations regarding human society and its processes
- CE02 - Learning of history, theory and its main schools to the present day
- CE11 - Know the evolution of contemporary societies and their social and political movements
- CE14 - Skills in the search for secondary information from different sources (official institutions, libraries, internet, etc.)
- CE20 - Ability to recognise the complexity of social phenomena
- CE27 - Ability to define, locate and contact the population targeted for social integration
- CE28 - Ability to identify and measure social vulnerability factors and conflict processes
- CE34 - Ability to relate knowledge of sociology to that of other related disciplines
- CE35 - Critical attitude towards social doctrines and practices
- CE37 - Attitude of commitment to social and cultural problems

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students enrolled in the course should be able to:

- Understand the key tenets of contemporary sociological theory.
- Construe social reality through sociological theory.
- Acknowledge the social complexity of contemporary society.
- Develop teamwork skills.

PLANNED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

THEORY SYLLABUS

PART I: HISTORY AND CONTINGENCY

1. The 'postmodern turn' in the social sciences
2. Modernity in crisis
    1. Ulrich Beck and reflexive modernity
    2. Anthony Giddens and modernity as a juggernaut
    3. Jürgen Habermas and the philosophical discourse of modernity
    4. Zygmunt Bauman: modernity, ambivalence and the Holocaust
3. The postmodern apocalypse
    1. Post-structuralism in Michel Foucault
    2. The postmodern condition according to Jean-François Lyotard
    3. Hyper-reality and simulacra in Jean Baudrillard
    4. Contingency, irony and solidarity in Richard Rorty
4. Approaches to mundialization and globalization
    1. Modern World-System theory in Immanuel Wallerstein
    2. Global culture according to Roland Robertson
    3. The globabl age according to Martin Albrow
    4. Global sociology
5. Historical sociology
    1. The civilizing process in Norbert Elias
    2. Social revolutions according to Theda Skocpol
    3. Social movements and democracy according to Charles Tilly

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4. The sources of social power according to Michael Mann

6. Sociological theory in the digital society

PART II. ACTION AND STRUCTURE

1. Action perspectives
    1. Interaction ritual chains in Randall Collins
    2. Social action in Alain Touraine
2. Relationist perspectives
    1. Neopragmatism
    2. Network theory
    3. Social networks, communication and Big Data
3. Structure perspectives
    1. Neofunctionalism in Jeffrey Alexander
    2. Structural functionalism and systems theory in Niklas Luhmann
4. Integrating action and structure
    1. Habitus theory in Pierre Bourdieu
    2. Structuration theory in Anthony Giddens
    3. The morphogenetic approach in Margaret Archer

PART III. REASON AND RELATIVISM

1. Contemporary critical theory
    1. The theory of communicative action in Jürgen Habermas
    2. Recognition theory in Axel Honneth
2. Revisions of rational choice theory
    1. Rationality, its limits and their subversion in Jon Elster
    2. Analytical sociology
3. Identity and standpoint epistemologies
    1. Feminist sociological theory
    2. Queer theory and the epistemology of the closet
    3. Postcolonial studies and the critique of race
4. The sociology of scientific knowledge
    1. The strong programme in the sociology of science
    2. Science in action according to Bruno Latour

PRACTICAL SYLLABUS

Weekly seminars will be conducted by the students on the main topics and authors addressed in the course.

RECOMMENDED READING

ESSENTIAL READING

- P. Baert and F. Carreira da Silva. Social Theory in the Twentieth Century and Beyond. Polity Press
- C. E. Benzecry, M. Krause and I. A. Reed. Social Theory Now. The University of Chicago.
- H. Joas and W. Knöbl. Social Theory. Twenty Introductory Lectures. Cambridge University Press.

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COMPLEMENTARY READING

- H. Becker. Tricks of the Trade. University of Chicago Press.
- C. Bordoni. Nuove tappe del pensiero sociologico. Odoya.
- C. Calhoun et al. (eds.) Contemporary Sociological Theory. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Ph. Corcuff. Théories sociologiques contemporaines. France: 1980-2020. Armand Colin.
- A. Elliott. Contemporary Social Theory: An Introduction. Routledge.
- G. Ignatow. Sociological theory in the digital age. Routledge.
- R. Keucheyan y G. Bronner. La théorie sociale contemporaine. PUF.
- S. Lindgreen. Data Theory. Interpretative Sociology and Computational Methods. Polity Press.
- O. Schwarz. Sociological Theory for Digital Society. Polity Press.
- S. Susen. Sociology in the Twenty-First Century. Key Trends, Debates and Challenges. Palgrave Macmillan.

RECOMMENDED LEARNING RESOURCES/TOOLS

- Social Theory Applied: https://socialtheoryapplied.com/
- Main Sociological Perspectives: https://www.thoughtco.com/sociology-research-and-statistics-s2-3026650
- Oxford Bibliography of Social Theory: https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/display/document/obo-9780199756384/obo-9780199756384-0054.xml
- Frankfurt Institute for Social Research: https://www.ifs.uni-frankfurt.de/institute.html

TEACHING METHODS

- MD01 - Master class/lecture
- MD02 - Discussion and debate sessions
- MD03 - Problem solving and practical case studies
- MD07 - Seminars
- MD09 - Source and document analysis
- MD10 - Group projects
- MD11 - Individual work

ASSESSMENT METHODS (Instruments, criteria and percentages)

ORDINARY EXAMINATION DIET

- Final written exam (50% of the final score). You need to pass the exam in order to pass the course: grades from the other assignments will not be added up to the exam grade unless the latter is equal or greater than 2'5 points.
- Preparation, presentation and coordination of a reading seminar on one of the topics, authors or works discussed in the course, including a proposal for the empirical application of a specific theory (40% of the final score). In order to participate in this activity, you **must** sign up, during the course's first three weeks, for the coordination of a specific seminar, and **attend all the scheduled seminars**: each unjustified absence will subtract 0'5 points from your grade in this assignment. Preparing the seminar entails arranging a meeting with the lecturer to discuss your proposal. This meeting must take

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place one week before the seminar, at the latest. Failure to attend, or to arrange it, entails relinquishing 30% of the final score.
- Discussion of a book suggested by the lecturer (10% of the final score).

EXTRAORDINARY EXAMINATION DIET

Final written exam, with two options: a) keeping your grades from the other assignments in the ordinary examination diet (seminars and book discussion: 50% of the final score) and taking an exam on the course lectures that will be graded over 5 points (50% of the final score), or b) taking an exam on Baert and Carreira da Silva's book "Social theory in the Twentieth Century and Beyond" that will be graded over 10 points (100% of the final score).

SINGLE FINAL ASSESSMENT (evaluación única final)

If you cannot attend the course sessions, you are entitled to a final written exam, which you should apply for (https://sede.ugr.es/procs/Gestion-Academica-Solicitud-de-evaluacion-unica-final/) during the first two weeks of the course or the first two weeks after registering. The exam will include five questions about Baert and Carreira da Silva's book "Social Theory in the Twentieth Century and Beyond".

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- POLISOCIOLAB. Practical teaching in this course may entail the use of PoliSocioLab (Laboratories at the Faculty of Political Science and Sociology), including the Quantitative Studies Laboratory (SPSS, R, Visual QSL, Bellview Cati, Python), the Qualitative Studies and Multimedia Analysis Laboratory (NVivo, QDA miner liter) and the Radio Laboratory. Depending on how the requeriments from other courses can be coordinated, use of the laboratories may proceed during the official teaching hours allocated to this course or outside such schedule as supplementary teaching.
- PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE. In this course we study and discuss the main works in contemporary sociological theory in order to apply them in the professional practice of social research, but this also fosters the development of skills that are equally useful for other occupations in communication, politics, consulting, journalism and social intervention.
- ANTI-HARASSMENT PROTOCOL. The University of Granada has implemented a Protocol to prevent and address harassment episodes of any kind. Please find it in this link: https://www.ugr.es/sites/default/files/2017-09/NCG1125.pdf

Información de interés para estudiantado con discapacidad y/o Necesidades Específicas de Apoyo Educativo (NEAE): Gestión de servicios y apoyos (https://ve.ugr.es/servicios/atencion-social/estudiantes-con-discapacidad).

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