

Graduate School for Social Research
2024 - 2025
SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

Course Description

This course focuses on sociological theory, starting with the classics in late 19th century up to the most contemporary developments. The course comprises two components, which follow one another during the 2024-2025 academic year. Part I of the course, to take place in Autumn 2024, will cover what is usually considered Contemporary sociological theories. Part II, offered in Spring 2025, focuses on most recent developments in sociological theorizing. Successful completion of the course workloads for Part I and Part II yields a total of 10 ECTS points/credits (5 ECTS points/course component).

Below are the detailed descriptions for **Sociological Theory Part II, *Contemporary Sociological Theory*** (30 hours, Semester I) including timeline and requirements specific to each of the course's components. Please note that the course includes both online and on-site units (hybrid mode); the online units are **marked in red** in the table below; important deadlines and activities that must be completed by a specified date are **marked in green**.

Sociological Theory Part II, *Contemporary Sociological Theory* **(30 hours, Semester I)**

Instructor: Marta Bucholc

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Place of on-site meetings: Room 232, Staszic Palace, 72 Nowy Świat, 00-330 Warsaw, Poland.

Link for online meetings: see table below

Times: Indicated in the table below

Office Hours: By appointment for online meetings, please contact me directly.

Description of *Contemporary Sociological Theory* Part I

Contemporary Sociological Theory Part I provides a systematic overview of the main Contemporary sociological theories. We will reconstruct, examine and challenge the history, the typology, and the main narratives applied in discussing the origins and the impact of Contemporary sociological theory, starting with the very notion of sociological classics. The most important part of the day-to-day course work is reading and discussion, and the most important part of grading is an essay.

Objectives

Contemporary Sociological Theory aims to provide students the key knowledge on sociological theory of 20th century and early 21st century. We will look at the concepts, themes, and research problems, but we will also address the limitations of sociological theorizing, as well as the formation of the dominant sociological paradigms. At the end of Part II, you should:

- Be able to identify the main paradigms in contemporary sociological theory;
- Know and correctly identify the names and the key representatives of the main contemporary theoretical orientations;
- Be able to discuss and criticize the key tenets of the main contemporary theoretical orientations;
- Have systematic in-depth knowledge of selected contemporary theoretical orientation;
- Be able to engage in a debate on the critique of sociological theory.

In addition to imparting this specialized knowledge, by focusing on discussion, Part II fosters critical thinking and communication skills. By the end of the semester, you should be able to present your understanding of and arguments regarding contemporary sociological theory in clear, logical fashion.

Teaching methods

Discussion, mutual on writing assignments, individual consultations of essay topics and essays.

Course Requirements

1. Classroom participation (25% of grade)

Everyone is expected to participate regularly and to be prepared to meaningfully discuss the readings. Punctual attendance is required. If you have a good reason why you might be late on a regular basis, please notify me as soon as possible. The presentation of your essay and the discussion of a colleague's essay together with the written comments on it counts toward your grade for classroom participation.

2. Reading Reactions (25% of grade)

To help focus class discussions, in the first half of the course you will write two short reading reactions (ca. 300-500 words), based on assigned readings in this course. Due dates for the reading reactions are indicated in the table below. We will use your reactions as part of class discussion.

3. Essay (50% of grade)

At the end of this course, you will be required to write a short argumentative essay (no more than 2,000 words) engaging with a selected theoretical problem based on a list of no more than three readings. One of the readings should be a source reading (a theoretical sociological text), and two should be secondary literature. You will be asked to come up with a subject for your essay in November and we will discuss and adjust it as necessary. If you have trouble thinking about a subject, I am here to help. You will submit your essay by a specified date in the third quarter of the semester (note: this will be well before the end of the course, not after the course ends). Subsequently, you will be required to read an essay by one of your colleagues and to provide written feedback on it (no more than 500 words). In the final meetings of the course, you will present your essays and comments in pairs (no more than 10 minutes per pair).

Grading

Grades will be based: 25% on Class participation, 25% on Reading Reactions; and 50% on the Essay. Total possible points = 100 (corresponding to 100%).

Reading reactions will be graded for clarity and compliance with the instructions provided, as well as for addressing the topic in an adequate manner. Essays will be graded for the quality of the argument made, for the structure of the argument's presentation, and for the selection of and engagement with the selected reference literature.

Essays will be evaluated based on the following criteria: clarity of discussion, originality and consistence of the argument, ability to formulate a thesis as well as to support it with well-structured reasoning. Students will be assessed on their use of relevant literature, appropriate referencing, and the accuracy with which theoretical concepts are applied. Quality of writing—including composition, referencing, and formatting of bibliography—will also form an essential part of the evaluation.

Students receiving more than 90% of possible points receive at least a **5-**, more than 80%, at least a **4-**, more than 70% at least a **3-**, and more than 60% at least a **2**. The corresponding **ECTS grades** are:

A 94-100 5	B+ 87-89 4+	C+ 77-79 3+	D+ 65-69 2+	F 59-0 1
A- 90-93 5-	B 84-86 4	C 74-76 3	D 60-64 2	
	B- 80-83 4-	C- 70-73 3-		

Readings

See the table below for the readings list. Readings for Sociological Theory Part II are available via the course-specific G-drive

(<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1URcb5tQrIXjqy1KdAEnt-LVPdZ0TYI9V?usp=sharing>)

Readings are shared for academic instruction only, and are not to be distributed further. Please consult the Timetable for reading materials assigned to each class period.

Resources:

Bhambra, G. (2014). *Connected Sociologies*. Bloomsbury Academic.

Turner, J. H. (2013). *Contemporary Sociological Theory*. Sage.

Policies on Attendance and Late Materials

Attendance is mandatory, and counts toward your Classroom participation and attendance grade. Up to two classes can be missed. Please notify me in advance if you are unable to attend. All assignments are to be turned in via email, by the deadlines specified in the table below. I will accept late materials *only if* notified 24 hours prior to the deadline and for a good reason. I will confirm receipt of assignments by email.

Learning Outcomes

P8S_WG

- knows and understands at an advanced level, functional revision of paradigms - global achievements, theoretical foundations and general issues and general issues detailed – appropriate for scientific or artistic disciplines;
- knows and understands the main scientific or artistic trends in which they occur;

P8S_WK

- knows and understands the fundamental dilemmas of contemporary civilization;

P8S_UW

- can perform critical analysis and evaluation of the results of scientific research and activities, expert and other creative work and their contribution to the development of knowledge

P8S_UK

- can communicate on specialist topics to the extent that allows active participation participation in the international scientific community;
- can disseminate the results of scientific activities, also in popular forms;
- can initiate a debate;
- can participate in scientific discourse;
- can use a foreign language at level B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference Language Education the extent enabling participation in international scientific and professional environment;

P8S_KK

- is prepared critically to assess the achievements within a given scientific or artistic discipline;
- is prepared critically to assess one's own contribution to the development of a given scientific or artistic discipline;
- is prepared to recognize the importance of knowledge in solving cognitive and practical problems.

Course Outline: Sociological Theory Part I, 2024-2025	
<p>Tuesday, 17 February 2026</p> <p>16.30 – 18.00</p> <p>ONLINE</p>	<p>What makes sociology scientific (or not)?</p> <p>Reading assignment: Fuchs, S. (2001). What Makes Sciences “Scientific?”. In: Turner, J.H. (eds) <i>Handbook of Sociological Theory</i>. Handbooks of Sociology and Social Research. Springer, Boston, MA . https://doi.org/10.1007/0-387-36274-6_2</p>
<p>Tuesday, 24 February 2026</p> <p>16.30 – 18.00</p> <p>ONLINE</p>	<p>(Once again) What is sociological theory?</p> <p>Reading assignment: Abend, G. (2008). The Meaning of ‘Theory’. <i>International Review of Victimology</i>, 26(2), 95-116. https://doi.org/10.1177/026975800301000201</p> <p>Further readings: Levine, D. D. (2015). <i>Social Theory as a Vocation: Genres of Theory Work in Sociology</i>. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.</p>
<p>Tuesday, 3 March 2026</p> <p>16.30 – 18.00</p> <p>ONLINE</p>	<p>The Zooming Problem</p> <p>Reading assignment: Collins, R. (1992). The Romanticism of Agency/Structure Versus the Analysis of Micro/Macro. <i>Current Sociology</i>, 40(1), 77-97. https://doi.org/10.1177/001139292040001007</p>
<p>Tuesday, 10 March 2026</p> <p>16.30 – 18.00</p> <p>ONLINE</p>	<p>Surveillance</p> <p>Reading assignments: Foucault, M. (1979). <i>Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison</i>. New York: Vintage Books, pp. 170-230.</p> <p>Zuboff, S. (2015). Big other: Surveillance Capitalism and the Prospects of an Information Civilization. <i>Journal of Information Technology</i>, 30(1), 75-89. https://doi.org/10.1057/jit.2015.5</p>
<p>15 March 2025</p>	<p>Deadline Reading Reaction 1 (submission via e-mail) (based on Emirbayer 1997).</p>
<p>Tuesday, 17 March 2026</p> <p>16.30 – 19.15</p> <p>ON-SITE</p>	<p>Relations</p> <p>Reading assignment: Emirbayer, M., (1997) Manifesto for a Relational Sociology, <i>American Journal of Sociology</i> 103:2: 281-317, https://doi.org/10.1086/231209</p> <p>Further readings: Stan Rzeczy 1 (12)2017, thematic issue “The Relational Turn in Sociology”, https://stanrzeczy.edu.pl/index.php/srz/issue/view/2/53</p>
<p>Tuesday, 31 March 2026</p> <p>16.30 – 18.00</p> <p>ONLINE</p>	<p>Emotions</p> <p>Reading assignment: Hochschild, A. R. (1979). Emotion Work, Feeling Rules, and Social Structure. <i>American Journal of Sociology</i>, 85(3), 551–575. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2778583</p> <p>Further readings:</p>

	Shklar, J. N. (1989). <i>The Liberalism of Fear</i> . In <i>Liberalism and the moral life</i> (pp. 21-38). Harvard University Press.
5 April 2026	Deadline Reading Reaction 2 (submission via e-mail) (based on Bhambra 2014).
Tuesday, 7 April 2026 16.30 – 18.00 ONLINE	An Interim Map for the 20th Century Reading assignment: Camic, C., & Gross, N. (1998). Contemporary Developments in Sociological Theory: Current Projects and Conditions of Possibility. <i>Annual Review of Sociology</i> , 24, 453–476. http://www.jstor.org/stable/223489
Tuesday, 21 April 2026 16.30 – 18.00 ONLINE	Desiderata: For a New Mode of Theorizing Reading assignment: Bhambra, G. (2014). <i>Connected Sociologies</i> . Bloomsbury Academic, Part 3 (Connected Sociology) Burawoy, M. (2005) For Public Sociology, <i>American Sociological Review</i> 2005 70:1, 4-28, https://doi.org/10.1177/000312240507000102
22 April 2026	Deadline essay subjects (via email)
Tuesday, 5 May 2026 16.30 – 18.00 ONLINE	The Really Contemporary Sociological Theory (1) Reading assignment: Selected recent journal articles
Tuesday, 12 May 2026 16.30 – 19.15 ON-SITE	The Really Contemporary Sociological Theory (2) Reading assignment: Selected recent journal articles
Tuesday, 19 May 2026 16.30 – 18.00 ONLINE	The Really Contemporary Sociological Theory (3) Reading assignment: Selected recent journal articles
2 June 2026	Submission of essays (via e-mail)
Tuesday, 9 June 2026 16.30 – 19.15 ON-SITE	Discussion of Essays Submission of written comments (to the instructor and to the author of the essay on which you are commenting)