

## Department of Anthropology and Sociology (ANSO)

Academic year 2020-2021

## Social Theory I: Classical and Contemporary Debates

**ANSO104 - Autumn - 6 ECTS**

[Schedule & Room](#)

### Course Description

This course will explore what theory and theorisation are, how they work and have been deployed within anthropology and sociology, both historically and in the present, and how to identify and choose particular theories in relation to empirical research.

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## Syllabus

### Structure and Objectives

This course mixes lectures, seminar discussions, structured debates, and student presentations. It is a reading-intensive course, and has as objective to consider what theory and theorisation are within anthropology and sociology, and to explore how to identify and choose appropriate theories for empirical research. The course will introduce participants to both classic as well as contemporary theoretical debates, and will draw on examples from across the Global North and the Global South.

### Evaluation and Grading

The course evaluation aims to encourage critical thinking and enhance students' ability to understanding the relationship between theory and empirical research. It is based on class participation, demonstrating familiarity with the assigned readings, participating in collective activities, group presentations, as well as the quality and timeliness of the writing assignments. Students are requested to:

- Actively **participate** in class and discussion of the **assigned readings**.
- Participate in a group debate in **week 3**.
- Participate in a group presentation in **week 12-13**.
- Write and upload to Moodle two days in advance of the sessions 400-word paragraphs reacting to the readings in **weeks 4 & 6-10**.
- Write a final 2,500 words essay, to be submitted by **4 January 2021**.

The course will be evaluated in the following manner:

- 15% - Student participation
- 15% - Group presentation 1 (session 3)
- 20% - Group presentation 2 (sessions 12-13)
- 20% - Reading reaction paragraphs (sessions 4-10)
- 30% - Final 2,500 words essay

The course provides 6 ECTS. Attendance is mandatory (either in person or virtually, depending on circumstances).

## **Coursework**

### Presentations

All students will participate in two collective oral presentations. The first presentation will take place in the context of a debate (more or less) modelled on an Oxford style debate (see <https://www.intelligencesquaredus.org/news/blog/what-oxford-style-debate-format>). The class will be divided into two groups who will argue for and against a specific motion. Each group has been assigned readings to help them prepare their arguments. The second presentation will be in pairs and will involve critically dissecting the theoretical and methodological frameworks of an anthropological or sociological monograph, and analysing their relationship to the way this presents its empirical data, analysis, and interpretations. The monograph is to be selected from a specially-curated list of ANSO staff recommendations (to be posted on Moodle). Presentations will be judged on both the quality of their content and of their exposition, including presenters' ability to summarize the key issues coherently, and the extent to which they are able to answer questions in a reflexive manner and lead discussion after the presentation. For both presentations, 50% of the grade will be awarded for the individual performance, and 50% for the collective performance. Further instructions will be provided in class.

### Reading reaction paragraphs

Prior to each session in weeks 4 & 6-10, students will have to write a 400-word paragraph reacting to a specific aspect of the assigned readings, sometimes in relation to other readings that they have done in the past. These paragraphs are to be submitted two days in advance of each session via Moodle.

### Final essay

The final 2,500 words essay will critically consider the relationship between politics and social science with regards to theory and theorisation, drawing on your assigned monograph, as well as the following academic debate and documentary film:

D'Andrade, R., and N. Scheper-Hughes, *et al.*, (1995), "Objectivity and Militancy: A Debate", *Current Anthropology*, 36(3): 399-440.

Carles, P., (2001), *La Sociologie est un Sport de Combat*, available online at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qrCRRHxn42Y> (in French; English sub-titled version available in the Graduate Institute Library's DVD collection, call numbers 2.3SOC & HEIDVD 2565).

## **Course Policies**

- Reading reaction paragraphs and final papers should be written in English or French, double-spaced, using standard 12-point font, with 1-inch margins. The student's name, the paper's title, the date, the course title, and page numbers must be included.
- Quotes and bibliography must follow the Chicago Manual of Style or Harvard Referencing System.
- Word limits must be adhered to within +/- 10%. Word limits exclude references.

- Students must hand in papers electronically as a PDF or Word file.
- Reading reaction paragraphs and final papers that are submitted with an unjustified delay, significantly exceed the word limit, and do not comply with the general guidelines will not receive a grade higher than 4.0.
- Students who miss more than two classes overall without being excused by the instructor will not receive anything higher than a 4.0.
- Plagiarism constitutes a breach of academic integrity and will not be tolerated. Students who present the work of others as their own will receive a 0.
- All of the articles and book chapters indicated in the course schedule will be made available as electronic reserve on the course Moodle site.

## **Course Schedule and Reading List**

### ***Week 1 (15 September 2020) – What are theory and theorisation?***

#### Assigned readings:

- Geertz, C., (1973), "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture", in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, New York: Basic Books, 3-30.
- Abend, G., (2008), "The meaning of 'theory'", *Sociological Theory*, 26(2): 173-199.
- Lund, C., (2014), "Of what is this a case? Analytical movements in qualitative social science research", *Human Organization*, 73(3): 224-34.

### ***Week 2 (22 September 2020) – The historiography of anthropological and sociological theorisation***

#### Assigned readings:

- Moberg, M., (2013), "Of politics and paradigms" and "Claims and critiques of anthropological knowledge", in *Engaging Anthropological Theory: A Social and Political History*, London: Routledge, 1-45.
- Connell, R., (2019), "Canons and colonies: The global trajectory of sociology", *Estudos Históricos (Rio de Janeiro)*, 32(67): 349-367.
- Jones, G. A., and D. Rodgers (2016), "Standing on the shoulders of giants? Anthropology and the city", *Etnofoor*, 28(2): 13-32.

### ***Week 3 (29 September 2020) – Debate: Global Theory vs. Theorisation from the South***

*Motion to be debated: This house believes that global theory is North-centric and that to understand the Global South we need to theorise from the South.*

#### Assigned readings for the group presenting the case for:

- Alatas, S. F., and V. Sinha, (2017), "Introduction: Eurocentrism, Androcentrism and Sociological Theory", in S. F. Alatas and V. Sinha (eds.), *Sociological Theory Beyond the Canon*, London: Palgrave, 1-16.
- Chakrabarty, D., (1992), "Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for 'Indian' Pasts?", *Representations*, 37: 1-26.
- Escobar, A. (1995), "Introduction: Development and the Anthropology of Modernity", in *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 3-20.
- Guha, R., (1988), "The Prose of counter-insurgency", in R. Guha and G. C. Spivak (eds.), *Select Subaltern Studies*, New York: Oxford University Press, 45-88.

- Mbembe, A., (2001), "Introduction: Time on the Move", in *On the Postcolony*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1-23.
- Robinson, J., (2002), "Global and World Cities: A View from Off the Map", *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 26(3): 531-554.
- Roy, A., (2009), "The 21st-century metropolis: New geographies of theory", *Regional Studies*, 43(6): 819-830.
- Roy, A., (2011), "Slumdog Cities: Rethinking Subaltern Urbanism", *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 35(2): 223-238.
- Vázquez, R., (2011), "Translation as Erasure: Thoughts on Modernity's Epistemic Violence", *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 24(1): 27-44.
- wa Thiong'o, N., (1987), "The Language of African Literature", in *Decolonising the Mind*, Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House, 4-33.

Assigned readings for the group presenting the case against:

- Appadurai, A. (1990), "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy", *Theory, Culture, and Society*, 7: 295-310.
- Brenner, N., and C. Schmid, (2015), "Towards a New Epistemology of the Urban?", *City*, 19(2-3): 151-182.
- Buraway, M., (2000), "Introduction: Reaching for the Global", in M. Burawoy, et al., *Global Ethnography: Forces, Connections, and Imaginations in a Postmodern World*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1-40.
- Collier, S. J., and A. Ong, (2005), "Global Assemblages, Anthropological Problems", in A. Ong and S. J. Collier (eds.), *Global Assemblages: Technology, Politics and Ethics as Anthropological Problems*, Oxford: Blackwell, 3-21.
- Gupta, A., and J. Ferguson, (1997), "Beyond 'Culture': Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference", in A. Gupta and J. Ferguson (eds.), *Culture, Power, Place: Explorations in Critical Anthropology*, Durham: Duke University Press, 33-51.
- Hannerz, U., (1989), "Notes on the Global Ecumene", *Public Culture*, 1(2): 66-75.
- Restrepo, E., and A. Escobar, (2005), "Other Anthropologies and Anthropology Otherwise: Steps to a World Anthropologies Framework", *Critique of Anthropology*, 25(2): 99-129.
- Sassen, S., (1991), "Overview" & "A New Urban Regime?", in *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 3-15 & 323-338.
- Scheper-Hughes, N., (2004), "Parts unknown: Undercover ethnography of the organs-trafficking underworld", *Ethnography*, 5(1): 29-73.
- Tsing, A. L., (2005), "Introduction", in *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1-18.

**Week 4 (6 October 2020) – The Gender of Theory**

After reading the assigned readings, students will write 400 words considering the gendered nature of the theoretical analysis of a classic anthropological or sociological monograph that they have read in the past. This is to be submitted via Moodle on 4 October.

Assigned readings:

- Alway, J., (1995), "The trouble with gender: Tales of the still-missing feminist revolution in sociological theory", *Sociological Theory*, 13(3): 209-228.
- Lutz, C., (1995), "The Gender of Theory", in R. Behar and D. Gordon (eds.), *Women Writing Culture/Culture Writing Women*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 249-266.
- Davies, S., (1990), "Inserting Gender into Burawoy's Theory of the Labour Process", *Work, Employment and Society*, 4(3): 391-406.

### **Week 5 (13 October 2020) – The temporality of theory: Fads, fashions, and forgetting**

#### Assigned readings:

- Law, A., and E. R. Lybeck, (2015), "Sociological Amnesia: An Introduction", in *Sociological Amnesia: Cross-currents in Disciplinary History*, Farnham: Ashgate, 1-15.
- Bargheer, S., (2017), "The invention of theory: A transnational case study of the changing status of Max Weber's Protestant ethic thesis", *Theory and Society*, 46(6): 497–541.
- Vigh, H. E., and D. B. Sausdal, (2018), "The anthropology of crime", H. Wydra and B. Thomassenin (eds.), *Handbook of political anthropology*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 441-461.

### **Week 6 (20 October 2020) – Theoretical endurance 1: Marx on historical materialism**

After reading the assigned readings, students will write 400 words identifying what they think is the key difference between Marx's notion of historical materialism and "new materialism". This is to be submitted via Moodle on 18 October.

#### Assigned readings:

- Marx, K., (1986), "Historical materialism", in J. Elster (ed.), *Karl Marx: A Reader*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 170-221.
- Lettow, S., (2017), "Turning the turn: New materialism, historical materialism and critical theory", *Thesis Eleven*, 140(1), 106–121.
- Roseberry, W., (1997), "Marx and Anthropology", *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 26: 25-46.

#### Further readings:

- Wilk R., (1996), "Karl Marx: Putting Politics into the Economy", in *Economies and Cultures: Foundations of economic anthropology*, Boulder: Westview Press, 94-101.
- Williams, R., (1980), "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory", in *Problems in Materialism and Culture*, London: Verso, 31-49.

### **Week 7 (27 October 2020) – Theoretical endurance 2: Weber on authority**

After reading the assigned readings, students will write 400 words explaining what they think is the key difference underlying Weber, Sahlins, and Willis' different interpretations of authority. This is to be submitted via Moodle on 25 October.

#### Assigned readings:

- Weber, M., (1978), "The Types of Legitimate Domination", in *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, edited by G. Roth and C. Wittich, Berkeley: University of California Press, 212-288.
- Sahlins, M., (1963), "Poor Man, Rich Man, Big Man, Chief: Political Types in Melanesia and Polynesia", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 5(3): 285–303.
- Willis, P., (2003 [1981]), "Learning to Labor", in M. Hechter and C. Horne (eds.), *Theories of Social Order: A Reader*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.

#### Further readings:

- Bloch, M., (1974), "Symbols, Song, Dance and Features of Articulation: Is religion an extreme form of traditional authority?", *European Journal of Sociology/Archives Européennes de Sociologie/Europäisches Archiv für Soziologie*, 15(1): 55-81.

Gramsci, A., (1988), "Passive Revolution, Caesarism, Fascism", in D. Forgacs (ed.), *A Gramsci Reader*, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 246-74.

**Week 8 (3 November 2020) – Theoretical endurance 3: Durkheim on social solidarity and 'conscience collective'**

After reading the assigned readings, students will write 400 words discussing whether they think Harry Turtledove's science fiction short story "Bluff" confirms or contradicts Durkheim's notion of organic social solidarity and 'conscience collective'. This is to be submitted via Moodle on 1 November.

Assigned readings:

Durkheim, E., (1972), "Forms of social solidarity" and "The division of labour and social differentiation", in A. Giddens (ed.), *Emile Durkheim: Selected Writings*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 123-54.

Malinowski, B., (1939), "The Group and the Individual in Functional Analysis", *American Journal of Sociology*, 44(6): 938-64.

Turtledove, H., (2004), "Bluff", in *3xT*, New York: Baen, 156-77.

Further readings:

Gofman, A., (2014), "Durkheim's Theory of Social Solidarity and Social Rules", in V. Jeffries (ed.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Altruism, Morality, and Social Solidarity: Formulating a Field of Study*, New York: Palgrave, 45-69.

O'Laughlin, B., (1975), "Marxist Approaches in Anthropology", *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 4: 341-370.

**Week 9 (10 November 2020) – Theoretical endurance 4: Foucault on biopolitics**

After reading the assigned readings, students will write 400 words identifying what they think is the key difference underlying Foucault and Agamben's different interpretations of the notion of biopolitics. This is to be submitted via Moodle on 8 November.

Assigned readings:

Foucault, M., (2013 [1976]), "Right of Death and Power over Life" and "17 March 1976", in T. Campbell and A. Sitze (eds.), *Biopolitics: A reader*, Durham: Duke University Press, 41-81.

Agamben, G., (2013 [1998]), "Introduction to *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*", "The Politicization of Life", and "Biopolitics and the Rights of Man", in T. Campbell and A. Sitze (eds.), *Biopolitics: A reader*, Durham: Duke University Press, 134-60.

Rabinow, P., and N. Rose, (2006), "Biopower Today", *Biosocieties*, 1: 195–217.

Further readings:

Hardt, M., and A. Negri, (2013 [2009]), "De Corpore 1: Bio politics as Event", in T. Campbell and A. Sitze (eds.), *Biopolitics: A reader*, Durham: Duke University Press, 237-244.

Mbembe, A., (2013 [2003]), "Necropolitics", in T. Campbell and A. Sitze (eds.), *Biopolitics: A reader*, Durham: Duke University Press, 161-91.

**Week 10 (17 November 2020) – Theoretical endurance 5: Bourdieu on social capital**

After reading the assigned readings, students will write 400 words discussing what they think are the key differences underlying Bourdieu, Coleman, and Putnam's notions of social capital. This is to be submitted via Moodle on 15 November.

Assigned readings:

- Bourdieu, P., (1986), "The forms of capital", in J. Richardson (ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, New York: Greenwood, pp. 241-258.
- Coleman, J. S., (1988), "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital", *American Journal of Sociology*, 94(supplement): S95-S120.
- Putnam, R. D., with R. Leonardi and R. Y. Nonetti, (1993), "Chapter 6: Social Capital and Institutional Success", *Making Democracy work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 163-185.

Further readings:

- Fine, B., (2010), "A History of Social Capital", in *Theories of Social Capital: Researchers Behaving Badly*, London: Pluto Press, 36-59.
- Molyneux, M., (2002), "Gender and the silences of social capital: Lessons from Latin America", *Development and Change*, 33(2): 167-188.

**Week 11 (24 November 2020) – Deconstructing theoretical analysis**

Assigned readings:

- Asad, T., (1972), "Market Model, Class Structure and Consent: A Reconsideration of Swat Political Organisation", *Man (N. S.)*, 7(1): 74-94.
- Brandel, A., and S. Bagaria, (2020), "Plotting the Field: Fragments and Narrative in Malinowski's Stories of the Baloma", *Anthropological Theory*, 20(1): 29-52.
- Swedberg, R., (2019), "How do you make sociology out of data? Robert K. Merton's course in theorizing (Soc 213–214)", *The American Sociologist*, 50(1): 85–120.

**Week 12 (1 December 2020) – Monograph dissection presentations**

Student presentations (also on 26 November in Research Methods class)

**Week 13 (8 December 2020) – Monograph dissection presentations**

Student presentations (also on 3 December in Research Methods class)

**Week 14 (15 December 2020) – Theory and theorisation in Practice**

Assigned readings:

- Burawoy, M., (2003), "Revisits: An outline of a theory of reflexive ethnography", *American Sociological Review*, 68(5): 645-679.
- Jensen, S., and D. Rodgers, (2020), "Comparison through collaboration: Dilemmas and opportunities of joint ethnographic research on gangs in Nicaragua and South Africa", mimeo, 1-18.
- Harriss, J., (2001), "The case for cross disciplinary approaches in international development research", *World Development*, 30(3): 487-496.