



UNIVERSITÀ  
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

## COURSE SYLLABUS

### History of Sociological Thought

2324-3-E4001N100

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#### Learning objectives

Knowledge and understanding

- Ability to understand the social phenomena through the 'classics' of sociology

Applying knowledge and understanding

- Ability to apply the sociological perspective put out by the 'classics' of sociology in order to understand the everyday phenomena, what happens in everyday life situations
- Ability to understand some of the changes in which contemporary societies are involved

#### Contents

The lectures aim to investigate in which way the 'classics' of sociology can contribute to a better understanding of social phenomena.

The course is organized around four main topics: 1) a discussion on how one can make history of sociology; 2) a very brief overview on contemporary sociological paradigms and theories; 3) some notes on the reorientation of the sociological analysis brought about by the 'sociologies of everyday life' during the second half of the twentieth century; 4) a focus on how contemporary societies are changing along the commodity-consumer-capitalism relation. In this case, we will take into account a number of considerations coming from 'classical' authors such as Marx, Simmel, Mills, Badrillard, Debord, Lipovetsky, and Bauman.

#### Detailed program

- Introduction to the main issues of the history of sociology

- Why one has to study the classics
- What is a classic
- Presentism and historicism
- The problem of order in the age of secular society
- Brief overview on contemporary sociological theories - from Parsons to microsociology
- Some remarks on the sociologies of everyday life: its reorientation of sociological analysis
- The developments of contemporary society from the point of view of the consumption-commodity-capitalism relation
- Marx
- Simmel
- Mills
- Baudrillard
- Debord
- Bauman
- Lipovetsky
- Consumption as production

## **Prerequisites**

No particular prerequisite.

## **Teaching methods**

This course will be delivered in the second semester.

At the beginning of the course, the detailed program of the topics that will be discussed during the various lessons will be distributed.

The teaching method is based on the explanation and discussion of bibliography texts; audio/video materials.

The teaching method and topics discussed focus on the development of synthesis skills, thus facilitating the practical application of the theoretical concepts.

Lectures and class discussions aim to show how science can be applied in studying everyday situations.

Students are expected to be able to make use of the various topics approached in order to describe and understand daily situations making use of their own independent judgement.

## **Assessment methods**

During the Course, there will be no intermediate evaluations. The exams will take place in normal sessions.

The bibliography is the same for both attending and non-attending students.

Written (required), oral (optional).

The written exam includes:

1. a section of multiple choice questions (only one is the correct answer); the correct answer is the most complete and logical one from the point of view of sociological reasoning; the alternatives can be in terms

of:

- 1.1. answers that although correct are however incomplete;
- 1.2. generic or approximate answers;
- 1.3. false or unlikely answers;

2. a section with open questions (in terms of very short essays).

About the written part of the exam, the section of open questions (2) will be evaluated only if the students pass the section of the multiple choice questions (1). Otherwise, the written exam is considered not passed.

One can take the oral examination only after having passed the written part.

The oral examination (optional) is on the whole program covered by the bibliography and the final vote is the average coming from the written and the oral.

Evaluation criteria for both written and oral examination

- Appropriate use of technical formal language – scientific formal skills
- Logical accuracy in the presentation of topics
- Ability to identify the connections between issues
- Completeness of the illustration of the topics given the limits of time and available pages (written)

## Textbooks and Reading Materials

Although this course is held in Italian, for Erasmus students, course material can also be available in English, and students can take the exam in English if they wish to do so.

The bibliography is the same for both attending and non-attending students.

Bibliography:

1. Ong W. J. (1986), *Oralità e scrittura. Le tecnologie della parola*, Il Mulino, Bologna, only pp. 119; 123-127 (downloadable from the teacher's e-learning website);
2. Bachtin M. (1976), *Il problema del testo*, in V. V. Ivanov, J. Kristeva e altri (1977), Michail Bachtin. *Semiotica, teoria della letteratura e marxismo*, Dedalo, Bari, solo pp. 197-207 (downloadable from the teacher's e-learning website);
3. Ghisleni M (2011), *Classici e scienza normale: la sociologia fra continuità e discontinuità*, in 'Quaderni di Teoria sociale', 11, pp. 259-278 (downloadable from the teacher's e-learning website);
4. Ghisleni M (1998), *Modernità e secolarizzazione: il problema dell'ordine*, in A. Melucci (a cura di), *Fine della modernità?*, Guerini, Milano, pp. 131-148 (downloadable from the teacher's e-learning website);
5. Berthelot J-M (2008), *La costruzione della sociologia*, Il Mulino, Bologna, only Chap. IV, V;
6. Ghisleni M (2000), *Vita quotidiana*, in A. Melucci (a cura di), *Parole chiave. Per un nuovo lessico delle scienze sociali*, Carocci, Roma, pp. 225-232 (downloadable from the teacher's e-learning website);
7. Marx K. (2006), *La merce*, in ID., *Il capitale*, Libro primo, Cap. I, Editori Riuniti, Roma, only pp. 23-33 (downloadable from the teacher's e-learning website);
8. Simmel G. (1995), *Le metropoli e la vita dello spirito*, Armando Editore, Roma, only Simmel's essay, pp. 33-57;

9. Mills C. W. (1995), \* *L'immaginazione sociologica*\*, Il Saggiatore, Milano, only Chap. IX (Ragione e libertà), pp. 176-186;
10. Baudrillard J. (1976), *La società dei consumi*, Il Mulino, Bologna, Parte seconda, only Chap. I (*La logica sociale del consumo*), Chap. II (*Per una teoria del consumo*), pp. 39-87;
11. Debord G. (2008), *La società dello spettacolo*, Baldini&Castoldi, Milano, only Chap. I (*La separazione compiuta*), Chap. II (*La merce come spettacolo*), pp. 51-74;
12. Lipovetsky G., Serroy J. (2017), *L'estetizzazione del mondo. Vivere nell'era del capitalismo artistico*, Sellerio Editore, Palermo, only pp. 41-54 (downloadable from the teacher's e-learning website);
13. Bauman Z. (2009), *Capitalismo parassitario*, Laterza, Bari, only Chap. I (*Capitalismo parassitario*), pp. 3-27;
14. Codeluppi V. (2007), *La convergenza tra produzione e consumo*, in 'Sociologia del lavoro', n. 108, fascicolo IV, pp. 11-20 (downloadable from the teacher's e-learning website).

## **Sustainable Development Goals**

QUALITY EDUCATION

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