**Contemporary sociological theory**

SC30007 Contemporary sociological theory, 7.5 credits, Third-cycle level

Samtida sociologisk teori, 7,5 högskolepoäng, Forskarnivå

**Course content**

The course aims to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of some major contemporary sociological theories and perspectives. The course covers theoretical approaches on different levels (macro, meso, and micro), and has a particular focus on the analytical connections between these levels in order to develop an understanding of the interdependence of individual/collective agency and structural patterns and processes. The course includes a number of specific modules, covering general theoretical problems such as: social agency and resources for action, social interactions and relations, social inequalities and power, culture, structure and institutions.

Responsible Department: Department of Sociology and Work Science, University of Gothenburg.

Course coordinator: Professor Kerstin Jacobsson (kerstin.jacobsson@gu.se)

The course is given in collaboration with Department of Sociology, Copenhagen University. Contact person: Mikael Carleheden ([mc@soc.ku.dk](mailto:mc@soc.ku.dk))

Course examiner: Kerstin Jacobsson, Mikael Carleheden, Oksana Shmulyar Gréen

Participating teachers:

Kerstin Jacobsson

Emma Engdahl

Oksana Shmulyar Gréen

Mikael Carleheden

Anders Petersen

Lars Tønder

Course administrator: Irene Carlensberg (irene.carlensberg@gu.se)

Course language: English

Maximum participants: 16.

To register, please go to: [Fubasextern (gu.se)](https://fubasdoc.gu.se/fubasextern/search" \t "_blank)

**Schedule**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **April 4** | **Course start:**  3 weeks of individual work | | | |
| **First course meeting – Gothenburg**  (Department of Sociology and Work Science,  Skanstorget 18) | | | | |
| **April 28** | **13.00** | Course info | Kerstin Jacobsson |  |
| Room: F417 | 13.15-15.00 | Lecture + seminar | Emma Engdahl | Theory & theorizing |
| Room: F417 | 15.15-17.30 | Lecture + Seminar | Oksana Shmulyar Green | Feminism & postcolonialism |
| Restaurant to be announced | 18.30 | Dinner |  |  |
| **April 29**  Room: F 417 | 9.15-12 | Lecture + Seminar | Kerstin Jacobsson | Institutional logics & cultural sociology |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| 3 weeks of individual work | | | | |
| **Second course meeting – Copenhagen**  **Department of Sociology** Centre for Health and Society Øster Farimagsgade 5, Building 16 DK-1353 Copenhagen K | | | | |
|  | | | | |
| **May 24** |  |  |  |  |
| Room: 16.2.55 | 14-17 | Lecture + Seminar | Mikael Carleheden | Axel Honneth’s Freedom’s Right & French pragmatism |
| Restaurant  to be announced | 18.30 | Dinner |  |
| **May 25**  Room: 16.2.55 | 10-12 | Lecture + seminar | Anders Petersen | Hartmut Rosa and Andreas Reckwitz’ diagnoses of the times: Acceleration and singularization |
|  | 12-13 | Lunch |  |  |
| Room: 16.2.55 | 13-15 | Lecture + seminar | Lars Tønder | New materialisms and the Anthropocene |
| 3 weeks of individual work | | | | |
| **Examination seminar meeting – Gothenburg**  (Skanstorget 18) | | | | |
| **June 17**  Room: F417  Deadline for paper submission **June 10** | 13-17  (may end later depending on number of participants) | Examination seminar | Mikael Carleheden, Kerstin Jacobsson, Oksana Shmulyar Green |  |

# Literature – Contemporary Sociological Theory, 7,5 hec,

**Theory & theorizing** (80pp)

Dewey, John (1938) ”Patterns of Inquiry”.  In  John Dewey, *Logic: Theory of Inquiry*, 101-119.

<https://archive.org/stream/JohnDeweyLogicTheTheoryOfInquiry/%5BJohn_Dewey%5D_Logic_-_The_Theory_of_Inquiry_djvu.txt>

Engdahl, Emma (2020) “The Disappearance of the Other: A Note on the Distortion of Love” [***Qualitative Sociology Review***](https://www.proquest.com/pubidlinkhandler/sng/pubtitle/Qualitative+Sociology+Review/$N/816331/OpenView/2403818391/$B/AA94B44CCFB540B6PQ/1;jsessionid=AF7B05471696D027179AA7E409DE87E2.i-0863a3733b323439a)***,*** Vol. 16, Iss. 1. <https://www.ceeol.com/search/article-detail?id=849200>

Swedberg, Richard (2016) “Before theory comes theorizing or how to make social science more interesting”, *2015 BJS Annual Public Lecture*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12184>

Swedberg, Richard (2017) “Social Theory and Theorizing”, *Wiley Online Library*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118430873.est0860>

# Critical lenses of feminism(s) & post-colonialism (about 250 pp)

**Books** (choose *one*)**:**

Ahmed, Sara (2017) Living a feminist life. Duke University Press, 299pp.

Butler, Judith (1993) *Bodies that Matter. On the Discursive Limits of ”Sex”*. Routledge.

Lengermann, Patricia & Niebrugge, Gillian (red.) (2007) *The Women Founders. Sociology and Social Theory 1830-1930: A Text/reader.* Boston: McGraw-Hill.

**Articles:**

Engstrand, Åsa-Karin & Larsson, Jennie, K. (2015) ”Chapter 5 Intersectionality: manifold opportunities to grasp the complexities of inequality” in Dahlstedt, M.&A. Neergard *International Migration and Ethic Relations: Critical perspectives*, Routledge, pp. 115-138 (14 p)

+ *one* of the following:

Egeberg Holmgren, Linn & Jeff Hearn (2009) “Framing ‘men in feminism’: theoretical locations, local contexts and practical passings in men's gender-conscious positionings on gender equality and feminism”, *Journal of Gender Studies*, 18:4, 403-418, DOI: 10.1080/09589230903260076 (15 p)

Mohanty, Chandra (1988) ”Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses”. *Feminist Review* 30: 61-88. (25 pp)

Skeggs, Beverley (1997) ”Chapter 6 Ambivalent Femininities” in: *Formations of Class and Gender. Becoming Respectable*. Sage. (20 pp)

# Institutional logics and cultural sociology (ca 220pp)

Alexander, Jeffrey 2003. *The Meanings of Social Life. A Cultural Sociology.* Oxford University Press. Introduction + chapter 1, pp. 3-26 (distributed by the course leader)

Alexander, Jeffrey 2004. Cultural Pragmatics: Social Performance between Ritual and Strategy, *Sociological Theory, 22(4), 527-573*.

Lamont, Michèle, Stefan Beljean & Matthew Clair (2014) What is Missing? Cultural processes and Causal Pathways to Inequality, *Socio-Economic Review*, 12(3): 573-608. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ser/mwu011>

Thornton, Patricia, William Ocasio, & Michael Lounsbury 2012. *The Institutional Logics Perspective. A New Approach to Culture, Structure, and Process*. Oxford University Press. Selected chapters (1,2, 3,4,7).

**Alex Honneth’s Freedom’s rights and French pragmatism** (222pp)

Honneth, Axel (2015) Freedom's Right: The Social Foundations of Democratic Life.

Columbia UP New York: pp 1-68.

Boltanski Luc & Chiapello, Eve (2005): The New Spirit of Capitalism Verso London: pp 3- 156.

# Hartmut Rosa and Andreas Reckwitz’ diagnoses of the times: Acceleration and singularization (200 pp)

Hartmut Rosa (2010). *Alienation and Acceleration: Towards a Critical Theory of Late- Modern Temporality*. Malmo: NSU Press.

Reckwitz, Andreas (2020). *The Society of Singularities*. <https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/46689/9783110669398.pdf?sequence=1#page=152>

# New materialisms and the Anthropocene (228pp)

Bennett, Jane (2010) "preface", "The Force of Things", "The Agency of Assemblages", "A Life of Metal", "Neither Vitalism nor Mechanism", "Stem cells and the Culture of Life", "Political Ecologies", in *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, pp. vii-xix, 1-38, 53-109. (ca. 105p.)

Coole, Diana & Frost, Samantha (2010) "introducing the New Materialisms", in *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, pp. 1-43 (ca. 42p.)

Connolly, William (2013) "The 'New Materialism' and the Fragility of Things", *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 41(3): 399-412. (ca. 13p.)

Dolphijn, Rick and Iris van der Tuin (2012) “ ‘The notion of the univocity of Being or single matter positions difference as a verb or process of becoming at the heart of the matter’

- Interview with Rosi Braidotti,” *New Materialism: Interviews & Cartographies***.** Open Humanities Press, 2012. (ca. 15p.).

Juelskjær, Malou & Schwennesen (2012) "Intra-active Entanglements – An Interview with Karen Barad", *Kvinder, Køn og Forskning*, 21(1-2): 10-21. (ca. 11p.)

Højgaard, Lis; Juelskjær Malou, Søndergaard, Dorthe Marie (2102) "The 'WHAT OF' and the 'WHAT IF' of Agential Realism – In search of the Gendered Subject", *Kvinder, Køn og Forskning*, 21(1-2): 67- 78.(ca. 11p.)

Latour, Bruno (1999) "The Slight Surprise of Action" (Chapter nine), in *Pandoras Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies*. Cambridge MA, London: Harvard University Press, p. 266-292. (ca. 26p)

Tønder, Lars (2017) “Five Theses for Political Theory in the Anthropocene” *Theory & Event*, 20(1): 129 – 136. (7p).

**Examination:**

Final course paper and active seminar participation. Active seminar participation includes handing in short written assignments for each seminar. (Instruction for course papers and written assignments will be presented closer upon the course).

Grades: The grade Pass (G) or Fail (U) is given in this course

Course evaluation: The course is subjected to a written evaluation.

**Learning objectives:**

On completion of the course, the student shall be able to:

*Knowledge and understanding*

● Identify and briefly describe and summarize a number of influential theories in contemporary sociology.

● Define the core concepts of these theories and identify which previous theories they criticize and/or develop further.

● Compare these theories to each other and in relation to different theory traditions.

*Competence and skills*

● Demonstrate an independent, critical and analytical approach to different perspectives in contemporary sociological theory.

● Reflect on how the theories can be applied in one’s own thesis-project and on important social issues in present times

*Judgement and approach*

● Critically discuss and evaluate strong and weak points of these theories.

● Evaluate the applicability of the different theories, and identify what possibilities and limitations that follows from applying them in one’s own research problem.