

Course Syllabus

Title of the course	Sociological Theory (offered in English)				
Title of the Academic Programme	Sociology and Social Informatics				
Type of the course	Core				
Prerequisites	Argumentation Theory and Academic Writing				
ECTS workload	3				
Total indicative study hours	Directed Study	Self-directed study	Total		
	56	58	114		
Course Overview	<p>This is the second year of the 3-years course. It introduces students to two main aspects of sociological theory: theory as a special way of thinking, and social theory as a tool for solving certain sociological problems. Classes focus on two fundamental issues: How is the society possible (what is the nature of social)? How is the knowledge about the social possible? The third year combines all the knowledge students got in the first two years of the course and aims to develop the skill of interpreting empirical data applying different sociological theories. The logic of the course and its structure are defined by the variety of answers for the questions about the conditions of formation, maintaining and reconfiguration/ destruction of the samples of social organization, and about the possible ways to analyze these processes suggested by sociology. We start from the very basic elements of explanation of social action and then proceed to understanding the nature of causal explanations in social science.</p>				
Intended Learning Outcomes (ILO)	<p>The main learning outcome of the course is ability to use sociological theory for development of sociological research design. Students will also get an overview of the most influential sociological theories and empirical studies. In addition, students will be able to: Differentiate social actions and social behavior Explain social actions through social mechanisms Understand the link between micro-actions and macro-outcomes Generate simple middle-range theories Develop academic skills in reading, writing, and presentation.</p>				
Teaching and Learning Methods	The course is built as a discussion of textbook and original theoretical and research papers. For each topic students receive assignment in a form of a small seminar project which should be fulfilled individually or in working groups.				
Content and Structure of the Course					
№	Topic / Course Chapter	Total	Directed Study		Self-directed Study
			Lectures	Tutorials	
1.	Nature of social explanation. Theories of the middle range	8	4	2	2
2.	Role of emotions in (rational) choice	8		4	4

3.	Nature and role of beliefs	10		4	6
4.	Preferences (desires)	8		4	4
5.	Opportunity structure	14		6	8
6.	Social norms	10		4	6
7.	Process of instantiation. Concepts and nomological networks	12		6	6
8.	Thought experiments in social science. the nature of relationships	12		6	6
9.	Causal relations. Defining causality	16		8	8
10.	Developing causal diagrams from scratch	16		8	8
Total study hours		114	4	52	58

Indicative Assessment Methods and Strategy	<p>Students' progress will be measured by students' activities in class (10% of the grade), hometasks (30% of the grade), tests (30% of the grade) and a final exam (30% of the grade).</p> <p>The final exam will take the form of a 2-hour written essay that amounts to 30% of the grade. Final grade is arithmetically rounded up.</p> <p><i>Activity</i> in the class during seminars: students are expected to ask meaningful questions and participate in group discussions. Regular active participation in the classes is graded as perfect (10), no participation is graded as 0.</p> <p><i>Tests</i> are given each week. The multiple choice questions are designed to test whether students did read and understand the text assigned for this class. The open-ended question is designed to assess whether students do understand the main concepts or models discussed in the previous class. Tests are graded from 0 ("extremely poor"="fail") to 5 ("perfect"="pass") each. The final grade is then calculated based on the sum of test scores for all the tests.</p> <p><i>Hometasks.</i> There are two types of hometasks: (1) every week students have to sum up the text they read, these summaries have to show that students did read the text and were able to find main points. It is allowed to copy some parts of the text, but not allowed to just copy the Summary sections of the chapters. (2) Large hometasks which require students to demonstrate their ability to apply the theoretical constructs and models we discussed to some real-life examples. Homeworks are graded from 0 ("extremely poor"="fail") to 10 ("perfect"="pass") each. Proficiency in English language does not affect the grade.</p> <p><i>Final exam</i> is aimed to check the skills students should have gotten during the course. Its structure is close to the structure of large home assignments, though it covers all the topics studied. Criteria for the assessment of the exam are the same as for home works: correct understanding of theoretical model, correct application of the model to the explanation of the given case.</p> <p>Missed tests can be written later in cases when student has a respectful reason (illness with official doctor's note etc), within the same module when the original test was held. Same applies to missed homeworks if</p>
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	<p>they did not include presentation in class – this part cannot be submitted later.</p> <p>Missed exam can only be passed later in case of force majeure acknowledged by the study office. The form of the exam will not change, but the questions will be replaced with new ones of equivalent complexity.</p>																								
Readings / Indicative Learning Resources	<p><u>Mandatory</u> Hedström P., Bearman P. (ed.). The Oxford handbook of analytical sociology. – Oxford University Press, 2009. https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/hselibrary-ebooks/detail.action?docID=800880</p> <p><u>Optional</u> Manzo G. (ed.). Analytical sociology: actions and networks. – John Wiley & Sons, 2014. https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/hselibrary-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1650830</p> <p>Hansen, Kevin, and Steven Sloman. Causal Models : How People Think about the World and Its Alternatives, Oxford University Press USA - OSO, 2005. ProQuest Ebook Central, https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/hselibrary-ebooks/detail.action?docID=3052075</p> <p>Jaccard J. 5 Theory Construction, Model Building, and Model Selection //The Oxford Handbook of Quantitative Methods. – 2013. – C. 82.</p>																								
Indicative Self- Study Strategies	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Type</th> <th>+/-</th> <th>Hours</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Reading for seminars / tutorials (lecture materials, mandatory and optional resources)</td> <td>+</td> <td>25</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Assignments for seminars / tutorials / labs</td> <td>+</td> <td>25</td> </tr> <tr> <td>E-learning / distance learning (MOOC / LMS)</td> <td>-</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Fieldwork</td> <td>-</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Project work</td> <td>-</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other (please specify)</td> <td>-</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Preparation for the exam</td> <td>+</td> <td>8</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Type	+/-	Hours	Reading for seminars / tutorials (lecture materials, mandatory and optional resources)	+	25	Assignments for seminars / tutorials / labs	+	25	E-learning / distance learning (MOOC / LMS)	-		Fieldwork	-		Project work	-		Other (please specify)	-		Preparation for the exam	+	8
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Academic Support for the Course	Academic support for the course is provided via LMS, where students can find: guidelines and recommendations for doing the course; guidelines and recommendations for self-study; samples of assessment materials																								
Facilities, Equipment and Software	The seminar requires a white board, laptop and projector.																								
Course Instructor	Daniel Alexandrov, PhD, Distinguished Professor, dalexandrov@hse.ru Ksenia Tenisheva, PhD, senior lecturer, ktenisheva@hse.ru																								

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILO) Delivering

Programme ILO(s)	Course ILO(s)	Teaching and Learning Methods for delivering ILO(s)	Indicative Assessment Methods of Delivered ILO(s)
Ability to identify the scientific essence of problems in one's professional area.	Students can give definitions of the main concepts, use new terminology, identify different theoretical approaches, argument her/ his own opinion	Work in the seminars, preparation of home tasks	Home tasks, tests
Ability to solve problems in professional practice based on analysis and synthesis	Student can generalize and analyze the materials (s)he read, assess it, express own opinion, give own interpretation	Group work in the seminars and during preparation of the home tasks	Home tasks, tests
Ability to assess the need for resources and plan their use to solve practice-related problems	Student can prepare a research program, can achieve the goals of the study, understands the strengths and limitations of the study	Group work in the seminars, preparation of presentations, speeches in the seminars	Home tasks, tests
Ability to work as part of a team	Student can participate in a dialogue with other students, share the tasks and achieve the common goals	Group work in the seminars and during preparation of the home tasks	Home tasks
Ability to communicate efficiently based on communication goals and situations	Student demonstrates the skills of group work, can build a good discussion	Group work in the seminars and during preparation of the home tasks	Home tasks
Ability to critically evaluate and reassess accumulated experiences (personal and others'), reflect on professional and social activities	Student can generalize and analyze the materials (s)he read, assess it, express own opinion, give own interpretation	Group work in the seminars and during preparation of the home tasks	Home tasks, tests
Ability to solve standard professional tasks on the basis of information and bibliographic culture while using information	Student has skills of searching and processing the information, can prepare a list of	Preparation of presentations, speeches in the seminars	Home tasks, tests

and communication technology and taking into account the basic requirements for information security	sources/ materials, and create a presentation of the main findings		
Ability to critically perceive, summarize, and analyze professional information	Student knows the materials and can apply the knowledge of the main sociological theories to accomplish the tasks	Preparation of presentations, speeches in the seminars, Group work in the seminars and during preparation of the home tasks	Home tasks, tests
Ability to independently formulate goals and set specific objectives for scientific research in various areas of sociology and solve them using modern research methods	Student can interpret the given materials (results of observations, interviews, documents, results of previous research)	Preparation of presentations, speeches in the seminars, Group work in the seminars and during preparation of the home tasks	Home tasks

Course Content

1. Nature of social explanation. Theories of the middle range

What is analytical sociology about? What means to give an explanation? Types of bad explanations. Types of good explanations. Theories of the middle range vs grand theories. Middle range theories and social explanations.

2. Role of emotions in (rational) choice

Rational choice and emotional choice. Do emotions have direct impact on action? The impact of emotion on substantive preferences. The impact of emotion on formal preferences. The impact of emotion on belief formation and information-gathering.

3. Nature and role of beliefs

The role of categorization in belief formation. The role of inductive reasoning in belief formation. Analogism. The role of social influence in belief formation. Dissonance and consistency-seeking.

4. Preferences (desires)

What are preferences? Preference and personality. Who has preferences? Preference formation and change. Urgency and impatience.

5. Opportunity structure

Opportunity in choices. Opportunity and inequality: preferences and talents. Career opportunities for employees: rigid opportunity structure. Opportunity hoarding: expansion and restriction of opportunities. Legal restrictions.

6. Social norms

Norms and action. Social and moral norms, quasi-moral norms, legal norms, conventions. How do social norms operate? Work norms, tipping norms, queueing norms, fairness norms and

political norms. Role of the emotions of contempt (or indignation) and shame. Social norms mediating the influence of emotion on behavior.

7. Process of instantiation. Concepts and nomological networks

The Process of Instantiation. Shared Meaning, Surplus Meaning, and Nomological Networks. Practical Strategies for Specifying Conceptual Definitions. Multidimensional Constructs. Creating Constructs. An Example of Specifying Conceptual Definitions. Operationism.

8. Thought experiments in social science. The nature of relationships

Thought Experiments for Relationships in Grounded and Emergent Theory. Describing Relationships with Different Types of Variables. Thought Experiments for Relationships between Categorical Variables. Thought Experiments for Relationships between Quantitative Variables. Thought Experiments for Relationships between Categorical and Quantitative Variables. Thought Experiments for Moderated Relationships. Broader Uses of Hypothetical Factorial Designs in Thought Experiments

9. Causal relations. Defining causality

Two Types of Relationships: Predictive and Causal. Causality and Grounded/Emergent Theory Types of Causal Relationships. Constructing Theories with Causal Relationships. Identifying Outcome Variables. Identifying Direct Causes. Indirect Causal Relationships. Moderated Causal Relationships. Reciprocal or Bidirectional Causality. Spurious Relationships. Unanalyzed Relationships. Expanding the Theory Further. Perspectives on the Construction of Causal Theories

10. Developing causal diagrams from scratch

A practical class on the application of all the knowledge gained in the previous classes. Students have to develop and present their own causal models and middle-range theories for a given case.

Examples of the tasks

Examples of test tasks:

1. Describe the occupation, country and epoch for each of the following persons:

Jean-Jacques Rousseau _____

Nicolas de Condorcet _____

David Hume _____

Thomas Hobbes _____

Jeremiah Bentham _____

Yoon Elster _____

Alexis de Tocqueville _____

Michel Montaigne _____

Pericles _____

Aristotle _____

2. Choose correct option.

1. Distortion of preferences in voting ...

1. Occurs only by secret ballot.
2. Occurs only with open ballot.
3. Is the dominant strategy in most voting cases.
4. Does not happen if the voting settings are the same

2. What is the problem of circular preferences?

1. They are transitive
2. They are unrankable
3. They are insincere
4. They cannot be aggregated

3. Which of these is an essential component of successful bidding?
1. The agent is able to really harm the counterparty with minimal harm to himself
 2. The agent balances the value of his offer and the counterparty's offer
 3. The agent who gives promise has a high discount rate
 4. Both sides show that they are sacrificing their own principles.

Examples of exam tasks:

1. Describe the process of collective decision-making by the jury trial in the USA. NB: Jury consists of randomly selected citizens who do not know each other; the decision has to be made unanimously.
2. Describe the mechanisms behind parental rejection to vaccinate their children (in case of the main vaccines, including ones against measles). Give definitions of the main concepts you use. Describe the type of the causal links you add in your model.

Assessment Methods and Criteria

Assessment Methods

Types of Assessment	Forms of Assessment	Modules			
		1	2	3	4
Formative Assessment	Test	*	*		
	Homeworks	*	*		
	Report/Presentation				
	Project				
	In-class Participation	*	*		
	Other				
Interim Assessment (if required)	In-class written assignment		*		
Summative Assessment	Exam				

Assessment Criteria

In-class Participation

Grades	Assessment Criteria
«Excellent» (8-10)	A critical analysis which demonstrates original thinking and shows strong evidence of preparatory research and broad background knowledge.
«Good» (6-7)	Shows strong evidence of preparatory research and broad background knowledge. Excellent oral expression.

«Satisfactory» (4-5)	Satisfactory overall, showing a fair knowledge of the topic, a reasonable standard of expression. Some hesitation in answering follow-up questions and/or gives incomplete or partly irrelevant answers.
«Fail» (0-3)	Limited evidence of relevant knowledge and an attempt to address the topic. Unable to offer relevant information or opinion in answer to follow-up questions.

Written Assignments (Hometasks, Written Exam)

Grades	Assessment Criteria
«Excellent» (8-10)	Has a clear argument, which addresses the topic and responds effectively to all aspects of the task. Fully satisfies all the requirements of the task; rare minor errors occur;
«Good» (6-7)	Responds to most aspects of the topic with a clear, explicit argument. Covers the requirements of the task; may produce occasional errors.
«Satisfactory» (4-5)	Generally addresses the task; the format may be inappropriate in places; display little evidence of (depending on the assignment): independent thought and critical judgement include a partial superficial coverage of the key issues, lack critical analysis, may make frequent errors.
«Fail» (0-3)	Fails to demonstrate any appropriate knowledge.

Recommendations for students about organization of self-study

Self-study is organized in order to:

- Systemize theoretical knowledge received at lectures;
- Extend theoretical knowledge;
- Learn how to use legal, regulatory, referential information and professional literature;
- Develop cognitive and soft skills: creativity and self-sufficiency;
- Enhance critical thinking and personal development skills;
- Develop research skills;
- Obtain skills of efficient independent professional activities.

Self-study, which is not included into a course syllabus, but aimed at extending knowledge about the subject, is up to the student's own initiative. A teacher recommends relevant resources for self-study, defines relevant methods for self-study and demonstrates students' past experiences. Tasks for self-study and its content can vary depending on individual characteristics of a student. Self-study can be arranged individually or in groups both offline and online depending on the objectives, topics and difficulty degree. Assessment of self-study is made in the framework of teaching load for seminars.

In order to show the outcomes of self-study it is recommended:

- Make a plan for 3-5 presentation which will include topic, how the self-study was organized, main conclusions and suggestions and its rationale and importance.
- Supply the presentation with illustrations. It should be defined by an actual task of the teacher.

Recommendations for home tasks

The home task is a written self-study on a topic offered by the teacher. The topic for home task includes development of skills for critical thinking and written argumentation of ideas. It should include clear statement of a research problem; include an analysis of the problem by using concepts and analytical tools within the subject that generalize the point of view of the author.

Structure of home task:

1. *Introduction and formulation of a research question.*
2. *Body of the task* and theoretical foundation of selected problem and argumentation of a research question.
3. *Conclusion* and argumentative summary about the research question and possibilities for further use or development.

Special conditions for organization of learning process for students with special needs

The following types of comprehension of learning information (including e-learning and distance learning) can be offered to students with disabilities (by their written request) in accordance with their individual psychophysical characteristics:

1. *for persons with vision disorders:* a printed text in enlarged font; an electronic document; audios (transferring of learning materials into the audio); an individual advising with an assistance of a sign language interpreter; individual assignments and advising.
2. *for persons with hearing disorders:* a printed text; an electronic document; video materials with subtitles; an individual advising with an assistance of a sign language interpreter; individual assignments and advising.
3. *for persons with muscle-skeleton disorders:* a printed text; an electronic document; audios; individual assignments and advising.