Sociological Imagination for the 21st Century (K001272)

Course Specifications
Valid as from the academic year 2019-2020

Course

Valid as from the academic year 2019-2020

Course offerings and teaching methods in academic year 2019-2020

A (semester 2)

Dutch

seminar: coached exercises

30.0 h

lecture

15.0 h

Offered in the following programmes in 2019-2020

Master of Science in Teaching in Social Sciences (main subject Sociology)

5

A

Master of Science in Sociology

5

A

Teaching languages

Dutch

Keywords

sociological theory, sociological imagination, sociological argumentation, public sociology, societal challenges of the 21st century, interdisciplinariteit

Position of the course

This theoretical course centrally aims to foster students' 'sociological imagination' as sociological professionals of the 21st century. The emphasis is on contemporary social theory that 1) makes students aware of the historical and socially situated nature of sociology as a scientific discipline and a form of knowledge production; 2) provides students with insight in the multiple roles that sociologists could perform in contemporary society; 3) challenges students to develop a distinct sociological perspective on the key societal challenges of this early century. This course proceeds from the theoretical bachelor courses Sociology of Modernity and Contemporary Sociological Theories.

Contents

The main point of departure for the course is the 'sociological imagination' of C. Wright Mills (1959). We explore contemporary critiques and reinterpretations of this famous concept as a starting point for a more general critical reflection on the scientific discipline of sociology as a historically situated and contested social practice. Approaching the field through the lens of the sociology of knowledge, we become aware of the construed nature of the established role and distinctiveness of sociology vis-à-vis other disciplines, and we become familiar with feminist and postcolonial critiques on mainstream sociology. These insights form the basis for an exploration of contemporary visions on the possible roles and contributions of sociology hence also of the sociologist in current societies. We reflect upon Burawoy's plea 'for public sociology' (2005) and what this means for our own role as sociological professionals. In addition, we learn to see classic and contemporary authors in terms of different styles of sociological argumentation (Crow, 2005) and reflect upon how to implement them in our own sociological practice. Finally, we gain insight in current social theorizing to sharpen our sociological imagination vis-à-vis the central issues of our time, such as the refugee crisis, ethnic and cultural diversity, climate change, urban development, biomedical innovation and genetics, ... These issues are deeply interdisciplinary in nature, and challenge us as sociologists to contribute with a distinct perspective.

(Approved)
Besides gaining profound theoretical insight, this course also explicitly aims to make this theoretical knowledge practically relevant. Through creative teaching formats and assignments, we seek to apply our newly gained insights, and through this, to develop broader competences to successfully operate as sociological professionals in 21st century societies.

Initial competences

Contemporary Sociological Theories’ (3ba)

Final competences

1. Demonstrate insight in the historically and socially situated nature of sociology as a scientific discipline and mode of knowledge production
2. Clarify and apply the different roles of the sociologist and different styles of sociological argumentation
3. Demonstrate profound insight in recent theoretical developments
4. To use one’s sociological imagination to reflect on contemporary social phenomena and problems
5. Contribute in a significant and constructive way to a group assignment
6. Present advanced theoretical insights using academic and creative formats
7. Discuss the work of peers in an empathic, critical, and constructive way

Conditions for credit contract

Access to this course unit via a credit contract is determined after successful competences assessment

Conditions for exam contract

Access to this course unit via an exam contract is unrestricted

Teaching methods

Lecture, seminar: coached exercises

Extra information on the teaching methods

lectures

collective exercises: 1) collective discussion and group presentations about core texts based on reading assignments; 2) group assignments in preparation of the public lecture that is linked to this course

Learning materials and price

Reader made available by the lecturer (estimated cost: 10 euro)
Slides made available at Minerva
Personal notes
Learning Material is in English

References


Course content-related study coaching

interactive support through Minerva
By appointment with the lecturer

Evaluation methods

end-of-term evaluation and continuous assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic evaluation during the first examination period

Written examination with open questions

Examination methods in case of periodic evaluation during the second examination period

Written examination with open questions

Examination methods in case of permanent evaluation

Participation, peer assessment

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent evaluation

examination during the second examination period is possible in modified form

Extra information on the examination methods

Periodic: written examination with open questions (with 1 take-home question)

(Approved)
Permanent:
• Participation
• Peer assessment (only if problems with the group collaboration occur)

Calculation of the examination mark
• Periodic assessment: 70%
• Permanent assessment: 30%

If one does not participate in the evaluation of one or more parts of the evaluation, or obtains a score lower than 10/20 for one of the parts, one cannot pass for the course. If the general score is equal to or higher than 10/20, this score will be reduced to 9/20.

Facilities for Working Students
An alternative assignment for the permanent evaluation is offered upon request.