FDV | UNIVERSITY OF LJUBLJANA
Faculty of Social Sciences

## Doctoral Programme Humanities and Social Sciences 2026/27

# THEORIES OF SOCIETY

Academic year 2026/27
Weekly sessions: Tuesdays, 5 PM – 8 PM
Location: Lecture room 21

## Course requirements and final examination

The course consists of four lectures delivered by the course coordinators, six invited guest lectures, two moderated discussions based on the students' reflections on the required readings, and four final seminars with the coordinators. The course outline lists the required reading for each session, which should be read before the class. Each class will combine a lecture, discussion, and student responses to the set reading material. Students are encouraged to seek out additional scholarly and non-scholarly resources of their own initiative. Students are expected to attend all lectures and seminars. Each student should respond to the weekly readings by writing a position paper of 300–400 words and submitting it to the relevant course coordinator no later than Monday of each week. The two class meetings after the series of lectures will be devoted to seminar discussions of the position papers, which will be moderated by the course coordinators.

Grading will be based on participation and a final exam. The two-hour exam will consist of four problem questions. Performance will be evaluated based on four short essays in response to questions related to the assigned readings. Students are expected to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the required texts, as well as an advanced level of critical analysis. Each essay will be graded separately by one of the four course coordinators. Students must demonstrate at least a satisfactory level of knowledge in all four essays and receive a passing mark for each one. If three out of four essays are marked positively and one is marked negatively, the student may defend the content of that essay alone orally before the relevant examiner. If two or more essays are marked negatively, the student must retake the entire written examination at one of the subsequent examination sessions.

# Schedule of Lectures and Seminars

27th October, 2026 **Introduction to the Course**

Introductory meeting with the course coordinators: prof. dr. **Aleš Črnič,** prof. dr. **Tanja Kamin,** prof. dr. **Aleksandra Kanjuo Mrčela,** prof. dr. **Igor Lukšič**

3rd November, 2026 **Aleš Črnič** (University of Ljubljana)

**Entwined Histories: Islam, Christianity, and the Making of European Culture**
Our times appear to be shaped by the perceived threat that an allegedly radically different Muslim immigrants poses to contemporary European culture. However, the roots of European Islamophobia extend far beyond the present, reaching back to the era of the Crusades and even earlier. Following an exploration of these historical roots, this lecture will illuminate the undeniable Christian foundations of European culture, while also highlighting other essential influences without which it could not have developed: notably the antecedent Greco-Roman antiquity, and the subsequent Renaissance, Humanism, and Enlightenment. This trajectory outlines the emergence of modern European and Western culture, characterised primarily by secularity, which serves as the precondition for the religious freedom of non-Christian, alternative, and "non-native" religions alike. It would, however, be misleading to include Islam among the latter category, as Islam has contributed significantly to the shaping of European culture over the centuries. The enduring antagonism between European and Islamic cultures does not therefore arise from their irreconcilable differences, but rather from their profound similarities. In other words, in the West, we do not fear Muslims because they are radically different; we fear them because they are strikingly similar to us.

**Reading:** Debeljak, A. (2009): 'In praise of hybridity: Globalization and the modern western paradigm.' *Eurozine.* (The text is accessible at https://www.eurozine.com/in-praise-of-hybridity-2/.)

**Aleš Črnič** is Professor of Religious Studies at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana. His research focuses on the critical study of contemporary religion(s) in various social and cultural contexts, as well as the epistemological and methodological basis of the discipline of Religious Studies. Since 2025 he is the Deputy Secretary General of the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR). He initiated the Regional Religious Studies Network in 2019 (which brings together scholars from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Slovenia). He is also the founding president of the Slovenian Association for the Study of Religions. He has held visiting research positions at the Sapienza University of Rome, as a Fulbright Scholar at the University of California, Berkeley, and at the University of Oxford.

10th November, 2026 **Benedetta Brevini** (University of Sydney & KU Leuven) (Host T. Kamin)

**Questioning the values of an Artificial Society**

In recent years, headlines have been dominated by the rise of "AI capitalism" and the infinite ways it will supposedly reshape our lives. Major interventions have thus focused on how AI will change society and how AI will change capitalism in a future that feels both ever unfolding and almost unattainable. In this lecture, Brevini asks us to reverse this question. Instead of placing AI at centre stage, the lecture invites to places society at centre stage. The central question, then, should not be "how is AI changing society". If AI is "always in a full sense social" (Williams 1981), then our intellectual focus should be reversed to ask: what kind of society are we building by embracing this AI discourse? What are its defining values?

The lecture draws on a critical sociological tradition that considers technology as a social relationship and crucially sees technological discourse as a key instrument for legitimising a particular social and political order (Gramsci,1971; Habermas,1970), effectively validating a specific type of society. Brevini refers to this emerging social order as "the Artificial Society": one that celebrates illiteracy, disregards human knowledge and expertise, rewards self-censorship, represses dissent, values creativity theft and fails to confront the climate emergency. The lecture asks us to question the Artificial Society with urgency, because only by doing so can we begin to imagine another way forward that reasserts a wider (and sustainable) new horizon for human beings.

**Reading:** Brevini, B. (2021). Is AI good for the planet?. John Wiley & Sons. https://www.wiley.com/en-be/Is+AI+Good+for+the+Planet%3F-p-9781509547944

**Benedetta Brevini** (PhD) is an interdisciplinary scholar specialising in the political, economic and environmental implications of tech capitalism systems and artificial intelligence. A journalist, and media and technology policy consultant, she is the author of several books. Her volume "Is AI good for the Planet ? "(2021) has been named best science book of the week by Nature in 2021. Her other books are Amazon, Understanding a Global Communication Giant (2020), News Corp: empire of influence (2024), Public Service Broadcasting online (2013), Beyond WikiLeaks (2013), Carbon Capitalism and Communication: Confronting Climate Crisis (2017), Climate Change and the Media (2018). She is currently BOFZAP Research Professor of Platforms and Society at KU Leuven University, Belgium and Associate Professor of Political Economy of Communication at the University of Sydney. Before joining academia, she worked as a journalist in Milan, New York and London for CNBC, RAI and the Guardian and held tenured positions at City University London and Brunel University London. She writes on The Guardian's Comment is Free and contributes to several print and web publications including South China Morning Post, OpenDemocracy and the Conversation.

17th November, 2026 **Igor Lukšič** (University of Ljubljana)

**Apolitical Democracy**

Democracy has always been a political project with a great goal to widen emancipation of the individual and of the people. Neoliberalism transformed that project into a-political or even anti-political with making democracy just a formal technique. The lecture will present

contradictions of the democratic project in a modern period through ideas of Kant, Hegel and Marx. From the introduction of capitalism, the process of concentration of capital has always required a concentration of political power: at the beginning on the level of nation-state, in some cases in the form of state-capitalism and dictatorship, today more and more in the hands of different institutions of the "international community". Can democracy as an emancipatory and political project survive?

**Reading:** Charles S. Maier: Democracy since the French Revolution. In: Dunn, John. 1992. (ed.) The Unfinished Journey 508 BC ad 1993.Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, Cape Town. (125-151) (The text is available at Study Materials section of the course at Web Office)

**Igor Lukšič** is Professor of Political Science at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana. He is head of the Department of Political Theory at the Faculty of Social Sciences. His research includes political theory, political anthropology and history of political ideas.

24th November, 2026 **Dorota Heidrich (**University of Warsaw) (Host I. Lukšič)

**The English School as a theory of International Relations and its usefulness for the analysis of the current state of multilateral order**

This lecture introduces the English School as a distinctive theoretical tradition in International Relations and tests its analytical purchase on the present crisis of the multilateral order. The first part reconstructs the school's conceptual core: the triad of international system, international society and world society; the pluralist - solidarist debate; and the distinction between primary institutions (sovereignty, diplomacy, international law, great power management, the balance of power) and the secondary, organizational institutions of multilateralism such as the UN system. The second part applies this toolkit to the contemporary moment, asking whether what we are witnessing is a breakdown of international society itself or a contested renegotiation of its institutions, i.e. the erosion of the liberal, solidarist layer built after 1945, the return of great power management and spheres - of - influence logic and the return of a more pluralist international society. The aim is to show that the English School, precisely because it theorizes order as a historically evolving social institution rather than a fixed structure, offers resources for analyzing the current transformation that neither realism nor liberal institutionalism fully provides. Students should read the assigned text with two questions in mind: (1.) what does the concept of international society add to the analysis of world politics and (2.) which of its institutions are today most under strain?

**Reading:** Buzan, B. (2001). The English School: an underexploited resource in IR. Review of International Studies, 27(3), 471–488**.** doi:10.1017/S0260210501004715 (full text available from: http://www.rochelleterman.com/ir/sites/default/files/buzan%201991.pdf)

**Dorota Heidrich** is Associate Professor of International Relations in the Department of Diplomacy and International Institutions at the University of Warsaw, where she has taught since 2004. She holds a Habilitation (D.Sc.) in Political Science and a doctorate on the international protection of internally displaced persons. Her work sits at the intersection of international relations, migration studies, and international legal studies, with particular

expertise in comparative displacement law, post-conflict gender justice, the application of international human rights standards to displacement, and the contestation of normative frameworks by states and non-state actors. She has led national and international research projects on transitional justice, refugee protection, and norm contestation, and held visiting professorships at Ruhr University Bochum, Sichuan University and Australian National University. A former adviser to the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Polish Sejm and a regular media commentator, she has coordinated double-degree programs linking Warsaw with partners in China and Kosovo.

1st December, 2026 **Aleksandra Kanjuo Mrčela** (University of Ljubljana)

**A new balance of power in the global platform economy**
In recent decades, we have witnessed the accelerated development of the platform economy, which is characterised by the global presence of new forms of work organisation supported by information and telecommunications technology. The rapid growth trend and success of the platform economy's business model are based on the standardisation and precarisation of work, as well as the externalisation of business operating costs and risks. As this new economic model exacerbates the unequal power relations between labour and capital, the term 'platform capitalism' has emerged to describe the current economic and social changes (Srnicek, 2017; Kenney and Zysman, 2016; Langley and Leyshon, 2017; Murillo et al., 2017). This lecture will present the theoretical debate on the current state of the global economic system and its implications for the redistribution of social and economic power.

**Reading:** Kanjuo Mrčela, A. 2022. In search of the Good Life: Weaknesses of the Ever-stronger Global Platform Economy. Theory and Practice. Vol 59. Issue 3. Ljubljana: FDV UL
(The text is accessible at https://www.fdv.uni-lj.si/docs/default-source/tip/v-iskanju-dobrega-%C5%BEivljenja-%C5%A1ibkosti-vse-mo%C4%8Dnej%C5%A1e-globalne-platformne-ekonomije.pdf?sfvrsn=2**)**

**Aleksandra Kanjuo Mrčela** is a professor of the Sociology of Work and Economic Sociology at the University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences. Her teaching and research activities are in the fields of work and organisation, industrial relations, gender. From 1999-2001 she was a visiting scholar at the London School of Economics and Political Sciences. Since 2003 she is the coordinator of the national center for Eurofound at UL. Since 2004 she has been a member of the Network of Experts in the Fields of Employment, Social Inclusion and Gender Equality Issues (European Commission). From 2011 she is an associate editor and from 2015 an editor of Social politics: International Studies in Gender, State and Society (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

8th December 10, 2026 **Sanja Bojanić** (University of Rijeka) (host A. Kanjuo Mrčela)

**The New Woman, a Century of Questioning in Germany**
In 1914 Marianne Weber answered Georg Simmel's account of sexual difference with what she called an imperative: that woman unite her special vocation with her general human one. Simmel's essays ground femininity in a culture built to male measure, while Weber's reply

insists on moral autonomy and completeness of being. Theresa Wobbe's study of Germany's first women sociologists shows what institutional conditions that argument had to pass through, and where 1933 broke it. Read together, the three trace a question about women's participation in objective culture that a century has not settled.

**Reading:** Weber, M. (1919). The new woman [Unpublished translation by Sanja Bojanić) "Die neue Frau," 1919].
Weber, M. (1919). Die neue Frau. In Frauenfragen und Frauengedanken: Gesammelte Aufsätze (pp. 134–142). J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck).
(The texts are available at Study Materials section of the course at Web Office)

**Sanja Bojanić** is engaged in the philosophy of culture, focusing on contemporary gender, racial, and class issues that intensify social and affective inequalities. She completed her initial studies in philosophy, later earning an M.A. in Hypermedia Studies and a Ph.D. from the Centre d'Études féminines et d'étude de genre at the University of Paris 8. Her work spans interdisciplinary research involving experimental artistic practices, queer studies, and affect theory. Sanja's professional career has included positions at the Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art (Louvre, Paris), the Nouvel Observateur, and the Laboratory for Evaluation and Development of Digital Editing at the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme (Paris Nord, St. Denis). Prior to her current position as Executive Director of the Center for Advanced Studies Southeast Europe (CAS SEE) at the University of Rijeka, she taught at the Universities of Aberdeen and Paris 8. She teaches Semiotics, New Media Theories and Practices, and Visual Methodologies at the Academy of Applied Arts. Her extensive research projects have been supported by the EU Commission, the Volkswagen Foundation, UNESCO and others. She is the author and editor of several books and more than 40 peer-reviewed papers, making significant contributions to her fields of study.

15th December, 2026 **Andrea Rota** (University of Oslo) (host A. Črnič)

**Worldviews, Risk Assessment, and Social Ontology: Theoretical and Empirical Approaches**
In recent years, pandemics, military occupations, new forms of artificial intelligence, and much more have become staples of public debate, contributing to the picture of the present as an era characterized by polycrisis. Such a perspective, however, potentially conceals the lack of consensus about what constitutes the “real dangers” to our individual and collective well-being. Climate skeptics, anti-vaccination activists, and longtermists, to name a few, exemplify distinct understandings of the threats facing our societies. While research on conspiracy theories offers some insight into their modes of thinking, it often entails normative judgments that may hinder analytical understanding.

Against this backdrop, this paper examines the contribution of the study of religion to the academic understanding of risk by analyzing the role of religious and non-religious worldviews in shaping individual and collective risk assessment. From a theoretical perspective, it integrates a constructivist understanding of both religion and risk with a critical realist framework. The constructivist orientation is geared toward critiquing, on the one hand, essentialist and determinist understandings of worldviews as clear-cut doctrines capable of directly shaping personal behavior and, on the other hand, objectivist and rationalist understandings of risk as statistically predictable threats.

A critical reflection on the work of anthropologist Mary Douglas will provide the conceptual tools to counter both atomistic understandings of worldviews and holistic interpretations of risk and to build a bridge between worldviews and risk at the level of social ontology. This move will further draw on classical and contemporary sociologists such as Georg Simmel and Dave Elder-Vass. The main argument emphasizes the role of social structures in shaping how individuals select and assess the dangers to which they are potentially exposed. At the same time, it nuances a strong Durkheimian position by arguing that the power of social structures is an emergent feature of collective intentionality.

The potential and limits of this approach will be tested empirically by drawing on selected examples of expert and everyday risk assessments that relate worldviews to the fields of ecology, artificial intelligence, and public health.

**Reading:** Dave Elder-Vass: Top-down causation and social structures. *Interface Focus,* 2012; 2 (1): 82–90. (The text is available at Study Materials section of the course at Web Office)

**Andrea Rota** is a professor of the study of religions at the Department of Culture, Religion, Asian and Middle Eastern Studies (IKOS), University of Oslo. He obtained his PhD from the University of Fribourg, Switzerland and received his post-doctoral "habilitation" qualification from the University of Bern, where he served as an assistant professor of theory and method in the study of religions. He is the current head of the Center for Religion and Politics at IKOS. He recently published the monograph *Collective Intentionality and the Study of Religion: Social Ontology and Empirical Research* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2023) and edited the volume *Religion and Academia Reframed: Connecting Religion, Science, and Society in the Long Sixties* (Brill, 2023).

5th January, 2027 **Tanja Kamin** (University of Ljubljana)

**Health Communication in Contemporary Society**

This lecture critically examines health communication as a dynamic field shaped by shifting societal norms, policy priorities, and media environments. We will explore how meanings of health are constructed and contested across interpersonal, institutional, and technological contexts, with attention to how communication strategies influence public understanding, behavior, and identity. The lecture will address core themes such as risk communication, social marketing, and the role of media in framing health issues. Special focus will be given to the rise of digital health technologies and the Quantified Self movement as examples of how individuals are increasingly positioned as responsible health citizens through self-monitoring, data sharing, and algorithmic feedback. Drawing on critical and interdisciplinary perspectives, the lecture invites reflection on the tensions between empowerment and surveillance, individual agency and structural constraint, as well as commercial and public interests in health communication.

**Reading:** Kamin, T., and Vezovnik, A. (2022). Quantified Self: From citizen science to commodified subjects. In Kubacki, K., Parker, L., Domegan, C., and Brennan, L. (Eds.): The Routledge companion to marketing and society (pp. 55-68). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003028079

**Tanja Kamin** is a professor of communication studies and head of the Social Psychology Research Centre at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana. Her research focuses on critical analyses of everyday life as an intersection of micro- and macro-level politics, with special attention to health, food culture, and sustainable energy transitions. She specializes in developing strategies for behavioral and social change, grounded in interdisciplinary approaches. Kamin has led or coordinated numerous national and international research projects and collaborated extensively with the National Institute of Public Health. She has held visiting fellowships at the University of Sydney, Griffith University, Auckland University of Technology, and the Venice International University, and received several academic and professional awards. She is the founder of the Slovenian Social Marketing Association and national representative in the European Social Marketing Association and an active science communicator across academic, policy, and public platforms.

12th January, 2027 **Shireen Hassim** (Institute of African Studies, Carleton University (host A. Kanjuo Mrčela)

**Gender inequality, infrastructures of state and redistribution policies in Africa**
For feminist democracy theorists, it is a conundrum that decolonisation and the overthrow of authoritarian governments has not resulted in greater gender equality. Why did the increased presence of women in formal political institutions not lead to the redistribution of public resources? This lecture draws on the case of postapartheid South Africa, a poster child for substantive democracy in the global south, to consider the relationship between redistribution, state infrastructures and redistributive politics. We will consider some general theories of democracy in feminist debates, the nature of African states after colonialism, and the radical demands for substantive democracy.

**Reading:** Shireen Hassim "Gender, social imaginaries and democracy in South Africa: the view from the margins", forthcoming in Nic Cheeseman, Maame Adwoa Appiaah Gyekye Jandoh, Edalina Sanches and Sishuwa Sishuwa, History of Democracy in Africa: Views From Below, Cambridge University Press 2026. (The text is available at Study Materials section of the course at Web Office.)

**Shireen Hassim** is a South African political scientist, historian, and scholar of gender studies and African studies. She is a Professor in the Department of Political Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand, where she is also affiliated with the Institute for Social and Economic Research. In 2019 she became a Canada 150 Research Chair in Gender and African Politics, beginning a seven-year term in the Institute for African Studies at Carleton University. Hassim was the first woman of colour full professor of political science in South Africa

19th January, 2027 **Tihomir Cipek** (University of Zagreb) (Host I. Lukšič)

**Conservative Revolution and Nationalism**
In the lecture, the fundamental ideas of the conservative revolution will be analyzed. This will be done through the reconstruction of the basic theses of the political thought of Thomas Mann, Arthur Moeller van den Bruck, Ernst Jünger, Oswald Spengler and Carl Schmitt. The

analysis focused on the way in which they interpreted the relationship between language and nation, war and nation, liberalism and nation, and the nation's relationship with the West. It has shown that language was thought to reflect the spirit of the nation, that war was considered as the foundation of the national identity, that liberalism was given the role of the main ideological enemy of German national identity, and that the West was rejected while Russia and Dostoevsky were praised. The subsequent conclusion is that the ideology of the conservative revolution was based on German nationalism and the rejection of liberalism. Finally, it has been noted that, although conservative revolutionaries advocated for a dictatorship, they did not want a return to the old regime of the monarchy but an authoritarian conservative utopia. It is precisely those utopian elements of the conservative revolution that still make its ideas appealing to the radical right.

**Reading:** (PDF) Conservative Revolution and Nationalism

**Tihomir Cipek**, Ph.D., a political scientist, is a full-time professor in tenure at the Faculty of Political Science in Zagreb. He twice won the Croatian National Award for Science. He served as the president of the Croatian Political Science Association. He was a visiting professor and researcher at the universities in Austria, Brazil, Germany, Slovakia and Slovenia, as well as IWM institute in Vienna. He was a member of the International Editorial Board of The International Encyclopaedia of Political Science published by APSA. The subject of his research interests are political ideologies, comparative politics and European studies.

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## SEMINARS

26th January MODERATED DISCUSSION ON READINGS **T. Kamin and A. Črnič**

2nd February MODERATED DISCUSSION ON READINGS **A. Kanjuo Mrčela and I. Lukšič**

9th February, 2027 SEMINAR **Aleksandra Kanjuo Mrčela**

**Reading:** Jones, Pip and Bradbury, Liz. 2018. *Introducing social theory*. Third Edition. Cambridge: Polity Press.

16th February, 2027 SEMINAR **Igor Lukšič**

**Reading:** Rosanvallon, Pierre. 2008. *Counter-Democracy. Politics in an Age of Distrust*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

23rd February, 2027 SEMINAR **Tanja Kamin**

**Reading:** Lindell, J. 2024. Bourdieusian media studies. London: Routledge.

2nd March, 2027 SEMINAR **Aleš Črnič**

**Reading:** Ulrich Beck (2010): A God of One's Own: Religion's Capacity for Peace and Potential for Violence. Polity Press.

## EXAM DATES

16th March, 2027 at 17:00

1st June, 2027 at 17:00

7th September, 2027 at 17:00

## EXAM READINGS


1. Beck, Ulrich. 2010. A God of One's Own: Religion's Capacity for Peace and Potential for Violence. Polity Press.
2. Jones, Pip and Bradbury, Liz. 2018. *Introducing social theory*. Third Edition. Cambridge: Polity Press.
3. Lindell, J. 2024. Bourdieusian media studies. London: Routledge.
4. Rosanvallon, Pierre. 2008. *Counter-Democracy. Politics in an Age of Distrust*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.