THEORIES OF SOCIETY
Mandatory course for first-year PhD students

Academic year
2019–2020

Weekly sessions:
Tuesdays, 17:00–20:00

Location: to be announced
# INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

**Meeting with four course coordinators.**
prof. dr. Ivan Bernik, prof. dr. Igor Lukšič, prof. dr. Breda Luthar, prof. dr. Peter Stankovič

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# APOLITICAL DEMOCRACY

**Igor Lukšič (University of Ljubljana)**
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.

**Summary:**
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 in 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 institution of the “international community”. Can democracy as emancipatory and political project survive?

**Required reading:**
A SUBJECT MATTER UNLIKE ANYTHING ELSE
- THE CONTROVERSIAL NEGOTIATION OF RELIGION IN SCHOOLS IN EUROPE

Wanda Alberts (Leibniz Universität Hannover)
Wanda Alberts is Professor at the Institute for the Study of Religion at Leibniz Universität Hannover. Her research focuses on religion in the public sphere, with a special focus on education.

Summary:
The lecture focuses at the special role that religion is given in European educational systems, referring to examples from England, Germany and Norway, with a particular focus on human rights issues. Special arrangements for the subject matter “religion” include both organizational and conceptual issues, often contradicting the otherwise generally secular approach to education in school. It will be argued that popular religious notions of religion that permeate much social discourse about religion inhibit the “normalization” of religion as a subject matter. Thus, a secular approach to religion in school is hard to be found – even for those children who explicitly do not wish to take part in any kind of religious activity in school.

Required reading:
USES OF SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY(-IES): THE CASE OF SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF HUMAN SEXUALITY

Ivan Bernik (University of Ljubljana)
He is a former Professor of Sociology at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana. His research interests are in the areas of social modernization and globalization and of social organization of human sexuality.

Summary:
A declared aim of sociological theories is to explain “the social dimension of human existence”, but in actual practice ambitions of sociological theorizing vary significantly and can be placed on a continuum stretching from studies providing basic conceptual tools for describing social phenomena to grand attempts to explain the ontology of social reality. The multifaceted character of sociological theorizing can be well exemplified by sociological approaches to the study of human sexuality. The lecture will focus on contributions of various sociological perspectives to the explanation of social organization of sexuality and their ability to provide theoretical frameworks for empirical studies of sexual conduct and attitudes.

Required reading:
IDEOLOGY OF RUSSIAN CONSERVATIVES

Tihomir Cipek (University of Zagreb)

Tihomir Cipek is a political scientist, Full Professor, and Head of the Croatian Politics Department at the Faculty of Political Science at the University of Zagreb. In 2006 he won the Croatian National Award for Science. He was a visiting professor and researcher at the University of Göttingen, Marburg an der Lahn, Vienna, Bonn, Bratislava, London, Ljubljana and at the Institute for the Science of Man in Vienna. He is a member of the International Editorial Board of “The International Encyclopedia of Political Science” published by APSA. He is also a member of the editorial board of the journal “Annals – Croatian Political Science Association,” and “Journal of Contemporary History”; is also a member of the Editorial Council of the “Yearbook-Faculty of Political Science-University of Belgrade” and “Yearbook-Faculty of Political Science-University of Sarajevo.” The subject of his research interests are political ideologies, comparative politics and European studies.

Summary:

The lecture will point to the main features of the relationship with the West in the ideology of the Russian Conservatives. Firstly, it will discuss the differences in the understanding of the West between the “Westerners” and the “Slavophiles”. After that, Dostoyevsky’s ideas will be presented and the lecture will explain why those ideas were popular among the German theoreticians of the conservative revolution. In the second part, the ideas of Nobel prize winner Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and the ideas of Oscar winner Nikita Mihalkov will be demonstrated. It will be explained why they believe in “enlightened conservatism” and respect Vladimir Putin’s statehood. Finally, through the reconstruction of Putin’s policy of history, his understanding of the Russian nation will be elucidated.

Required reading:

RANCIÈRE AND THE POLITICS OF AESTHETICS

Peter Stanković (University of Ljubljana)

Peter Stanković (1970) is Professor at Department of Cultural Studies at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana. He specializes in cultural studies, film studies, popular music, food studies and identity politics. His recent publications include a monograph on the history of Slovenian cinematography and several articles on popular music heritage, food as a medium of cultural exchange, and mechanisms of symbolic exclusion of immigrants from the other former Yugoslav republics in Slovenia.

Summary:

After Bourdieu’s critique of art as a mechanism of reproduction of class differences, art has become almost something like an opponent in the critical project of cultural studies. In recent years, however, there is a notable surge of voices that argue that art could be understood as an important tool of emancipatory politics as well. One of the most important theorists, who think in this way, is Jacques Rancière. His work is based on a synchronic and diachronic analysis of three different regimes of art that constitute three different relationships toward society. These regimes are ethical, representative in aesthetic. According to Rancière, it is only the aesthetic regime that is connected to life and therefore capable of changing it (together with wider social circumstances).

Required reading:
MEDIA HISTORY: REVOLUTION, EVOLUTION AND MEDIATIZATION

Jukka Kortti (University of Helsinki)

Jukka Kortti is Professor in Economic and Social History at the University of Helsinki and in Television Studies at Aalto University. He is a media historian of intellectual history whose publications include several extensive studies on Finnish television history and the history of cultural journalism. His latest publications include a monograph Media in History. An Introduction to the Meanings and Transformations of Communication over Time (Macmillan Red Globe Press 2019) and the article “Media History and Mediatization of Everyday Life” Media History. Kortti has been the director of the Doctoral Program of Cinema and Audiovisual Media. Currently, he is the chair of the Nordic Media History Network. He is also the director of the master’s degree program Society & Change and the member of steering group of the Doctor program in Philosophy, Arts, and Society at the University of Helsinki. He has been teaching courses on media history, television studies, world politics, integration and globalization, management communication, intercultural communication, qualitative methods, interview studies, history and analyzing of advertising, and history of consumption.

Summary:
Our current media culture with the continuing flow of digital applications has created assumptions that we would live in an extraordinary era. Particularly, the rise of social media has increased the talk about “a digital revolution”. This ahistorical talk is often fuelled with market-oriented purposes. For instance, “revolutionary” is a good selling point for a Silicon Valley innovation. This is nothing new since this kind of revolution talk can be found in every phase of the development of communication, at least in the post-Gutenberg era. My methodology and theory oriented lecture discusses the ways of seeing media history emphasizing the essence and division of revolutionist and evolutionist views. Secondly, I introduce my idea how the fashionable concept of mediatization could be adapted to the revolutionist/evolutionist discussion on media history.

Required reading:
# MEDIA AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF VISIBILITY

**Breda Luthar (University of Ljubljana)**

Breda Luthar is Professor at the Department of Media and Communication Studies at Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana. She has a background in Sociology and publishes articles on media and popular culture, class distinctions and cultural consumption and consumer culture/material culture.

**Summary:**

One of the key questions concerning media’s role in social life is how media represent the social and how they change social theory’s other terms of references (class, gender, ethnicity, etc.). Through media the social world gets represented and condensed through readymade distinctions and hierarchies – categories. These distinctions and hierarchies have a long term consequences for the space of the social and for specific fields. At the backdrop of these conceptual issues we will address the commodification and personalization and their manifestation in the phenomenon of celebrification and branding. I am interested in the consequences of fame or visibility as a “regime of justification” (Boltanski and Thevenot) that is so pervasively used in media and is in fact constitutive for contemporary media culture.

Yet celebritization cannot be reduced to commodification. It represents the transformation of authority and the power of the media to shape the discursive resources of everyday life. It has become a defining characteristic of our mediatized societies and has deeply affected many social fields - including political. In particular, through the celebrity discourse the popular media establish cultural myth of social egalitarianism and culturally constructing the mythological “community of sameness” by displacing the question of class and its intersection with gender and ethnicity as a key stratifying principle. I would like to argue first for the central role of popular culture in hegemonic struggles in current conjuncture. Second, that the celebritification/personification and the spectacle have important role for the populist imaginary and its articulation with anti-elitism, racism and misogyny. And further, that the personalization/celebrification, in its local articulation and consequences, has to be conceptualized at the backdrop of growing differences between the European “center” and “periphery”.

**Required reading:**

COLLECTIVE REMEMBRANCE: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

Vjeran Pavlaković (Faculty of Philosophy, University of Rijeka)

Vjeran Pavlaković is Assistant professor and Chair of the Department of Cultural Studies at the University of Rijeka, and holds a PhD in History from the University of Washington. He is lead researcher on the project Framing the Nation and Collective Identity in Croatia: Political Rituals and the Cultural Memory of Twentieth Century Traumas funded by the Croatian Science Foundation, 2014–2018. He has written numerous articles on the topics of Yugoslavs in the Spanish Civil War, the politics of memory, and transitional justice in the former Yugoslavia. Recent publications include: The Battle for Spain is Ours: Croatia and the Spanish Civil War 1936–1939 (2014), “Symbols and the Culture of Memory in Republika Srpska Krajina,” Nationalities Papers (2013), and “Fulfilling the Thousand-Year-Old Dream: Strategies of Symbolic Nation-building in Croatia,” in Pal Kolsto, ed., Strategies of Symbolic Nation-building in South Eastern Europe (2014). He is a co-editor of the book Confronting the Past: European Experiences (2012). Pavlaković lives and works in Rijeka.

Summary:
The interdisciplinary field of Memory Studies, following in the footsteps of the global “memory boom” of the 21st century, is now present not only at universities around the world but has recently formed an international professional organization (MSA – Memory Studies Association). Memory Studies has thus incorporated an increasing number of disciplines and accompanying theories and methodologies, from history and comparative literature to transitional justice and digital humanities. With numerous theories and approaches to choose from, the field is ideally suited for analysing post-socialist societies (such as those in the former Yugoslavia with a host of contested historical narratives and competing ideological frameworks), but also carries a host of challenges in how to apply the theories to actual case studies. With much of the original research drawing on the remembrance of the Holocaust and Western European experiences, the approaches are not always suited for different transitional societies such as Eastern and Southeastern Europe or non-European contexts.

This lecture seeks to introduce several theories and methodologies from Memory Studies and then present the result of research projects on memory issues in Croatia and other former Yugoslav states conducted at the Cultural Studies Department at the University of Rijeka.

Required reading:
MARX’S CONCEPTION(S) OF SOCIAL CHANGE: BASIC IDEAS, CRITIQUE, ACTUALITY

Mladen Lazić (University of Belgrade, Serbia)

He is Professor of Sociology at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade and member of the Academia Europaea. He is the author and editor of 15 books and dozens of papers in journals and edited volumes. His interests include social stratification, economic and political elites, social change, and value studies. He coordinated many surveys in stratification, political and economic elites, and value changes.

Summary:
Marx formulated two conceptions of fundamental mechanisms of social change. The first one is based on structural factors (developing “forces of production”) while the second promotes social actors (classes) as the main agents of change. The problem that Marx did not try to solve is: how these two approaches mutually relate, do they complement or contradict each other? While the structural (evolutionist) solution “promises” the inevitability of the communist “end of (pre)history”, the actors’ solution introduces an uncertain course of history. We may therefore ask ourselves: does the continuous development of technology (“forces of production”) mean that structural factors might bring the end of capitalism in a foreseeable future? What, on the other hand, are the possibilities of the end of capitalism in a world in which material production is becoming a minor part of the economy, with the industrial working class – which is, according to Marx, supposed to be the main actor of a forthcoming historical change – being replaced by an educated precariat? Does the failure of both predictions – continuous development of forces of production in capitalism (“forth industrial revolution”) instead of the ultimate systemic crisis, and radical changes in the structure of the working class instead of the constitution of a class-conscious proletariat – mean that Marx’s analyses are irrelevant in contemporary world?

Required reading:
WHAT RESEARCHING AFFECT IN MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION STUDIES CAN DO?

Brigitte Hipfl (University of Klagenfurt, Austria)

Brigitte Hipfl is Professor of Media Studies at the Department of Media and Communication Studies at the University of Klagenfurt, Austria. Her research interests are cultural studies, media and gender, subject formations, affect studies, and postcolonial Europe. Among her recent publications is a book co-edited with Kristín Loftsdottir and Andrea L. Smith, Messy Europe – Crisis, Race, and Nation-State in a Postcolonial World (Berghahn 2018).

Summary:

In this presentation I will make the claim that a Deleuze-Guattarian understanding of affect is productive for media and communication studies because it enables us to grasp some of the dynamics and relations that characterize contemporary social processes. Referring to my recent explorations of the Netflix series *13 Reasons Why* and Austrian films on migration issues, I want to illustrate how such an approach not only pays attention to phenomena often overlooked but is also always an intervention and invention. In particular, I will address the responsibilities for us as researchers and what the effects of our research are.

Required reading:

- Affect in Media and Communication Studies: Potentials and Assemblages”. Available at: https://www.cogitatiopress.com/mediaandcommunication/article/view/1470
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Required readings:


Course requirements and final examination:

The course is structured in four lectures by four course coordinators, invited guest talks and four concluding seminars with coordinators. The course outline indicates the required readings for each meeting. Each class meeting will combine lecture, discussion and students’ responses to the readings. All readings listed above are required readings and are to be read prior to the class meeting. It is therefore essential that students are familiar with them prior to each lecture or seminar. Students can use their initiative and seek out additional scholarly and non-scholarly resources. Students are expected to attend all lectures and seminars and each student should respond to the weekly readings by contributing a position paper – between 300–400 words.

Evaluation will be based on the active participation and a final examination. In the two-hour examination students will receive four problem questions. Performance evaluation will be based on four short essays that respond to four questions referring to the assigned readings. Students are expected to demonstrate a close reading of the required texts and exhibit a method of critical analysis at an advanced level. Each of the four essays will be evaluated separately by four coordinators of the course. Students are required to perform satisfactorily in all four essays and receive a minimum grade 6 for each of the four short essays.