MOSCOW STATE INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
(MGIMO-UNIVERSITY),
THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF RUSSIA

B.A. in Government and International Affairs
School of Government and International Affairs

Department of Sociology

«Approved»

Vice Rector for Educational Development
A. Khudaykulova

«РГ» ○Г.Г.Год. ○01.06.10(2013)

Sociology

The course program developed by Prof. S.A. Kravchenko, 2013

© S.A. Kravchenko, 2013
© MGIMO-University, 2013
The course “Sociology” is elaborated in accordance with the MGIMO Educational Standard for the Bachelor’s Program in International Affairs (program track “Government and International Affairs”).

Author Prof. S.A. Kravchenko
Director of the MGIMO library Marina Reshetnikova
The program is approved by Department of Sociology on

Head of Department Prof. Sergey Kravchenko, Ph.D.
PART 1: INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION, COURSE DESCRIPTION AND TEACHING METHODS

1.1 General Information

• Full course title: Sociology
• Type of course: Compulsory
• Level of course: B.A.
• Year of study: 1st
• Number of ECTS credits allocated: 2
• Name of lecturer(s) and office hours: Thursday, full day.
  Professor Sergey A. Kravchenko
  Phone: 8-495-434-94-26
  Office hours: Thursday 1PM-4PM, office 4115
  E-mail: sociol7@yandex.ru

1.2 Course aims and learning outcomes

The main aim of the course is to provide students with foundational knowledge and sound understanding of the social and cultural dynamics of societies, to analyze and systematize the teachings of the main representatives of the sociology of classical, modern and post-modern world of sociological thought, to determine their relationship, the genesis of meaningful parameters and the theoretical and methodological tools.

Main features:

• Presentation of the material through several paradigms, which allows students to see the strengths and weaknesses of the major sociological theories, the possibility of their use only in specific spatial and temporal coordinates.
• Consideration of cultural diversity through the implementation of a comparative analysis of the Russian situation with their western and eastern counterparts, which contributes to a tolerance for other cultures.
• Emphasis on the development of sociological imagination, helping to identify and analyze the latent aspects of social phenomena.
• Special attention is given to the assimilation of sociological terminology.
• Interactive essence of the course (questions on the development of sociological imagination, role plays).

Learning outcomes:

By the end of this course students should be able to:

• master the basic concepts of the classical, modern and postmodern theoretical sociology;
• become familiar with current scientific paradigms and theories dealing with the social and cultural dynamics of societies;
• be able to conceptualize and analyze modern social and cultural realities.

Competencies:

Analytical competencies:

• knowledge of basic sociological categories;
• ability to operate sociological knowledge to solve concrete social problems;
• readiness to use sociological knowledge for the analysis of different behavioral patterns;
• understanding of socio-cultural peculiarities of Russia;
• understanding of social and cultural background about the effects of globalization;
• ability to analyze the social and cultural foundations of multicultural and multi-polar world.
1.3 Course requirements and grading plan:
30% - attendance and participation in discussions in the class, especially in dealing with the Questions for Critical Thinking and Sociological Imagination.
30% - for 3-page papers on the topics of the seminar.
40% - written test on the knowledge of paradigms, key concepts and terms.

**Academic integrity:**
- All the work that you hand in class must be the product of your own labour for this class. In case there are questions, please, come to talk to the instructor.
- If you miss a class, you must notify the instructor in advance and complete a one-page paper summering the readings for the day.
- Please, come to the class with the readings for that day.
PART 2. COURSE CONTENT

2.1 Course content and readings by topic
Sociology enables students to understand the world we live in, its social and cultural dynamics. I. Prigogine, Nobel prize winner, has worked out the theory “the Arrow of the Time”, according to which all the matter (this concerns as material as social worlds) is being developed increasingly quicker and quicker. We have to deal with the “runaway world”, and sociology is trying to catch up with it in order to reflect it adequately. That is why sociologists are constantly working out newer and newer paradigms.

The fathers-founders of sociology – A. Comte, H. Spencer, E. Durkheim, K. Marx – searched for invariant, “universal” laws of the social world trying to offer both order and progress, thus establishing the so called Positivistic Sociological Paradigm. But very soon due to the dynamics of societies, their increasing diversity it became clear that “universal” laws are not so universal and sociology has moved far beyond their theories. Contrary to them M. Weber, the German sociologist, argued for Interpretive Sociological Paradigm which overarching theme is the specific and peculiar “rationalism” of culture and its unique origins.

Since then there appeared newer and newer sociological paradigms that give deeper and move valid interpretations of societies, their dynamics. Nowadays sociology comprises several paradigms and shall study five generations of them because newer paradigms are based on the shoulders of the previous giants of the sociological thought. They take into consideration that the consequences of the social and cultural dynamics are both non-liner and liner in character. Modern sociological paradigms attend to continuities as well as discontinuities.

Commonly sociological paradigms are classified by two criteria: a historical-cultural and national-regional context. Accordingly, it is accepted to allocate the classical sociological theory¹, modern sociological theory² and postmodern social theory³ which loses many actually sociological characteristics of the predecessors, including thus in itself even "antisociology".

In our course we offer another criterion of the classification of sociological paradigms that is the capability of the paradigm to analyze the becoming complicated social and cultural dynamics of the society, accelerated development of human communities, including their discontinuities as well as continuities. There is some basis for it. As the society passes a certain threshold of evolution – such as the ‘ageing’ of socium – it assumes new qualities on a large scale. As a result there appear new challenges to the sociological knowledge and thinking.

Besides, in our course special attention is paid to the development of sociological imagination that will help the students to understand themselves, for they are the products of social and cultural dynamics of the liquid modern world, its “liquid times”, “liquid love”, “liquid fear” etc.⁴. This understanding can help them to gain more control over their lives.

The founder of the theory of the sociological imagination was an American sociologist C. Wright Mills (1916-1962). In the work The Sociological Imagination⁵ he challenged the dominant theorist of his day, T. Parsons, as well as the dominant methodologist, P. Lazarsfeld. According to Mills they overorganized the sociological theory belittling the role of innovative thinking. The Sociological Imagination is also noted for the effort to keep original methodology of the founders of science alive in sociological theory. On the basis of his innovative thinking Mills put forward the ideas of the links of global and region/local problems as well as the relationship between the personal troubles and public issues, the innermost acts of the individual with the widest kinds of socio-historical phenomena, the ambivalent functions of science, the multicultural development of culture, cultural relativism, the dynamics of institutions and social meanings etc. He especially praised the original intellectual thinking of the founders of Sociology, their ideas of imminent

critique of intellectual, social, and political orthodoxies, the liberty based on the reason considering these values to be in danger. Since then these issues have been extraordinarily influential in sociology.

However, Mills’ work is more than a half century old. That is why new theories and models of the sociological imagination including the author’s own one will be introduced to the students. The course will give the understanding of new models of the sociological imagination. One of the attempts to work it out was recently undertaken by the British sociologist Steve Fuller in The New Sociological Imagination. The book critically examines the history of the social sciences to discover what the key contributions of sociology have been and how relevant they remain, demonstrates how biological and sociological themes have been intertwined. This theory of sociological imagination also presupposes a new type of theoretical integrity of sociology with ‘progressive’ sciences of sociobiology, evolutionary psychology, and behavioral genetics. At the same time, the author considers that we should revisit the aspects of biological research from which the classical sociological theorist originally drew intellectual sustenance. The histories of sociology and biology have been always intertwined. The proposed methodological integrity certainly facilitates new opportunities to investigate the reflexive socium, especially it concerns our control over the consequences of human’s activities.

There appeared one more theory of sociological imagination though quite a different one. U. Beck, the author of the theory of ‘Risk Society’ argues that “we need a new sociological imagination, one that is sensitive to the concrete paradoxes and challenges of reflexive modernity and which at the same time, is thoughtful and strong enough to open up the walls of abstraction in which academic routines are captured.” Through his sociological imagination Beck innovatively overthinks the history of humanity: “The concept of risk reverses the relation of past, present and future. The past loses its power to determine the present. Its place as the cause of present-day experience and action is taken by the future, that is to say, something non-existent, constructed and fictitious. We are discussing and arguing about something which is not the case, but could happen if we were not to change course.” Through the prism of his sociological imagination Beck also analyses unintended consequences of the logic of control, manufactured uncertainties, growing unawareness and non-knowledge in the wake of the modernization of knowledge, risk trap, self-critical societies, loss of clear distinction between nature and culture, risks as man-made hybrids, relations to definitions and others.

These and other attempts to work out a new model of sociological imagination or to use its approaches manifest the importance of this problem. But in our opinion all these attempts lack the humanitarian basis and special ethics of humanism that are very important in Russian sociological traditions. Under these conditions we have put forward our interpretation of non-linear and humanistic sociological imagination. It states the increasing speed and complexity of social and cultural dynamics, the interdependence of humanity, takes into account paradoxes, dispersions of...

---


8 Fuller, S. The New Sociological Imagination. P. 80.


socium, its objective realities as well as socially constructed and virtual ones, but above all it seeks to investigate men’s life to find new forms of humanism

Through the prism of the sociological paradigms and different types of the sociological imagination the course will give the understanding of contemporary problems that will be discussed at seminars. Lectures are read in the form of discussions with students.

**Topic 1.**


The theories considering social development as *linear*. The search for invariant, ‘universal’ laws. A. Comte: Law of the three stages; the search for order and progress. H. Spencer: evolutionary theory; the survival-of-the-fittest process in both the biological and the social realms. E. Durkheim: social facts; the division of labour in society; the theory of anomie. K. Marx: moving the dialectic into the realm of social relations grounded in the material world; conflict and contradiction; alienation; fetishism of commodities; class consciousness and false consciousness. So, there appeared sociological theories that are based on the postulate of *eurocentrism of scientific knowledge, convertibility of social development and linear development in general*. At the same time, the fathers of sociology developed the *sociological imagination* with a specific scientific ethos and innovative thinking in the form of ‘organized skepticism’ (according to R. Merton it requires the scientist to doubt about the existing “truths” and then to check whether the doubt is well founded)\(^{15}\).

**Seminar 1. The birth of sociology. Its subject and first theories.**

*Topics for discussion:*

1. The rise of sociology.
3. E. Durkheim’s theory of anomie.
4. K. Marx’ famous concept is that of alienation.

*Questions for Critical Thinking and Sociological Imagination.*

1. Today is evident that the synthesis of sociology and hard science (for which A. Comte argued) has not been realized. Yet, what do you think about the possibilities of the cooperation of sociology with other sciences?
2. On the one hand, H. Spencer sought to legitimize sociology as an independent science, while on the other – he thought that sociology should draw upon biology (especially the idea of survival of the fittest) and psychology (especially the importance of sentiments). How do you explain the essence of this contradiction?
3. In E. Durkheim’s words, common morality “penetrates us” and “forms part of us”. What changes common morality undergone since Durkheim’s time?
4. E. Durkheim was much concerned with the problem of lessening collective discipline. He put it this way: “History records no crisis as serious as that in which European societies have been involved for more than a century. Collective discipline in its traditional form has lost its authority”. What other factors have appeared to restore and support collective discipline?
5. K. Marx’ famous concept is that of alienation. How does it work now? What has changed in forms of alienation since Marx’ time?

---


**Required reading (obligatory):**

  - Chapter 1. “A historical sketch of sociological theory: the early years”.
  - Chapter 2. “A historical sketch of sociological theory: the later years”.
  - Chapter 3. “Auguste Comte”.
  - Chapter 4. “Herbert Spencer”.
  - Chapter 5. “Karl Marx”.
  - Chapter 6. “Emile Durkheim”.

**Additional reading:**


**Topic 2. Lecture 2. Interpretive sociological paradigms** (the second generation of sociologists - M. Weber, G.H. Mead, C. Cooley. The theories that are based on the assumption that the human society is not something ‘historically inevitable’, but the result of many alternatives. Accordingly, their theoretical and methodological instruments interpreted the causality as probability of the fulfillment of events. The methodology of these paradigms – substantive sociology (M. Weber), symbolic interactionism (G.H. Mead, C. Cooley).

**Seminar 2. Interpretive sociological paradigms.**

*Topics for discussion:*

2. Sociology of G.H. Mead.

**Questions for Critical Thinking and Sociological Imagination.**

1. Imagine that you have been sent for a business trip abroad with the task to estimate the possibilities for economic cooperation. Applying to M. Weber’s methodology what would you pay special attention to?
2. M. Weber articulated the idea that the West developed a distinctively rational religious system (Calvinism) that played a key role in the rise of a rational economic system (capitalism). May we apply this approach for eastern societies?

**Required reading (obligatory):**

**Additional reading:**

**Topic 3. Lecture 3. Phenomenological sociology** (A. Schutz) and sociology of knowledge (K. Mannheim). These paradigms are based on the postulate that each socium has unique values and the social worlds are always subjectively designed worlds. The research instruments used by these scholars are aimed at declaring the inevitability of pluralism of valuable systems and of alterativeness of social realities. Their representatives worked out the antipositivistic sociological imagination with a new model of thinking – the socium appears as a set of human actions and is socially constructed. Its essence was well expressed in W.I. Thomas’ theorem: “If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences”\(^{16}\). Later the principles of the antipositivistic thinking were developed within the critical theory by M. Horkheimer and T. Adorno in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*\(^ {17}\) that facilitated the development of critical thinking.

**Seminar 3. Interpretive sociological paradigms.**
*Topics for discussion:*
1. Theory of A. Schutz
2. Sociology of Knowledge.

**Questions for Critical Thinking and Sociological Imagination.**
1. P. Berger and T. Luckmann agree that “society is socially constructed”. What is the essence of this statement? Prove with concrete examples.
2. Imagine such a situation. You have not seen your best friend for ages. You are very glad to see each other. Suddenly it turns out that it becomes difficult to find common topics for discussion. How can you explain it using phenomenological sociology?

**Required reading (obligatory):**
  Chapter 11. “Karl Mannheim”
  Chapter 13. “Alfred Schutz”.

**Additional reading:**


Topic 4.
Lecture 4. The Integral sociological paradigm of P.A. Sorokin. (the third generation of sociology). It states that social and cultural changes are becoming more and more dynamic, in fact the development of socium consists of uncertain fluctuations. P.A. Sorokin’s theories of fluctuations, social mobility and revolution. The methodology of the integral paradigm postulates cultural pluralism, assumes integrated use of channels of knowledge. Such methodology was claimed by the increase of the dynamic complexity of the social life.

Seminar 4. P. Sorokin’s integral paradigm.
Topics for discussion:
1. The methodology of the integral paradigm.
2. P.A. Sorokin’s theory of fluctuation.
3. Social mobility.
4. Sociology of revolution

Questions for Critical Thinking and Sociological Imagination.
1. P. Sorokin has worked out the “law of positive and negative polarization”. Are there evidences that the “law” is valid nowadays during the modernization of Russia?
2. What is the essence of the correlation, according to P. Sorokin, between the horizontal and vertical mobilities?
3. Compare P. Sorokin’s and K. Marx’ theories of revolution? What are their strong and weak points?

Required reading (obligatory):

Additional reading:
• Sorokin, P. Social and Cultural Dynamics (any edition).

Topic 5.
Lecture 5. The integral functional theories. T. Parsons offered the theory of non-equilibrium systems proving that the complete systems based on the determinist processes, are exception and R.K. Merton – the theories of anomie and ambivalences. At this historic time Ch. Mills worked out the first theory of sociological imagination the essence of which was dynamic-integral thinking that required a new sociological ethos and thinking in terms of increasing varieties
and ambivalences. As R. Merton argues: “In this situation of stress, all manner of adaptive behaviors are called into play, some of these being far beyond the mores of science”\(^{18}\).

**Seminar 5. Integral functional theories.**

**Topics for discussion:**
1. T. Parsons’ theory of non-equilibrium system.
2. R. Merton’s theory of anomie.

**Questions for Critical Thinking and Sociological Imagination.**
1. Compare the approaches of M. Weber and T. Parsons to social actions. Are the Russians ready for market relations as well as the peoples in the West?
2. According to T. Parsons, the main factors of instability of Soviet Russia are in the dictatorship of the Communist Party. What are his arguments based on his theory of Integral structural functionalism?
3. What are the manifest and latent functions of a university (use R. Merton’s methodology)?
4. What are the ambivalences of the competitive success orientation or “achievement syndrome”?

**Required reading (obligatory):**

**Additional reading:**

**Topic 6.**

**Lecture 6. The reflective paradigms of radicalized / reflexive modernity** (the fourth generation of sociology). A. Giddens’ and P. Bourdieu’s theories analyze a contemporary society, its main characteristics such as institutional and individual reflexivity taking into consideration that more dynamic societies are being crystallized under the influence of fragmentation, dispersion, and breaks of the social reality in which self-organized actors operate. The methodology of these paradigms defines the extreme dynamism of “runaway world” (A. Giddens) while the individuals become predisposed to change their self-identifications. So the tendencies of structural and functional “ageing” of the societies of Europe that became the subject of special sociological investigation\(^{19}\).


Topics for discussion:
1. A. Giddens’ “runaway world”.
2. A. Giddens’ theory of structuration.
3. P. Bourdieu’s reflexive sociology.

Questions for Critical Thinking and Sociological Imagination.
1. When A. Giddens writes about radicalized modernity he means the realities of the West. What can you say about the realities of other countries including Russia?
2. A. Giddens analyses the effect of threats to humanity calling it “Giddens’ paradox”. According to it, “since the dangers posed by global warming aren’t tangible, immediate or visible in the course of day-to-day life, however awesome they appear, many will sit on their hands and do nothing of a concrete nature about them… People find it hard to give the same level of reality to the future as they do to the present”\(^{20}\). Does this thesis work in reference to your own life, to the policy of the Russian elite?
3. How do the cultural and symbolic capitals influence the political participation (use P. Bourdieu’s methodology)?
4. What is the essence of the correlation, according to P. Bourdieu, between different forms of capital and habitus while choosing a marriage mate?

Required reading (obligatory):

Additional reading:

Topic 7.

Lecture 7. Sociology of modernity, its uncertainties and risks. The radicalized modernity has brought institutional, culturally cultivated risks in our life that is why the life becomes disorienting. A. Giddens’ theory of risk and ontological security. We shall also discuss the difference between the theories of risk society and world risk society (U. Beck). These quite new theories manifest the demand for a new model of sociological imagination. Thus, there appeared the reflexive type of sociological imagination. P. Sztompka made a fruitful effort to work out a new theory of the sociological imagination that is aimed at interpreting reflexive social life in constant dynamics. According to him, the essence of this type of the sociological imagination is “innovative, reflexive thinking about social becoming”\(^{21}\).

Seminar 7. Risks and uncertainties in the contemporary turbulent times.

Topics for discussion:


1. The essence of risk. Risks and dangers in different times.
3. Risk solidarities: their ambivalences.
4. Z. Bauman: liquid fear.

**Questions for Critical Thinking and Sociological Imagination.**
1. What are the main differences between U. Beck’s theories of risk society and world risk society?
2. What is the essence of U. Beck’s “a risk trap”. What concrete risk traps can you point out?
3. What are the newer advantages of P. Sztompka’s sociological imagination?
4. Z. Bauman postulates “liquid fears”. Are there any other feats of nowadays?

**Required reading (obligatory):**

**Additional reading:**

**Topic 8.**

**Lecture 8. The sociological postmodernism** (the fifth generation of sociologists - Z. Bauman, G. Ritzer, J. Baudrillard, M. Castels, J. Urry, U. Beck, J. Alexander). The theories that study non-linear social and cultural dynamics, the processes of self-organizing socium, providing the appearance of a new type order developed from chaos and also the theories analyzing the desocialized socium, putting “the end to the social”. As J. Baudrillard writes: “The only «sociological» work I can claim is my effort to put an end to the social, to the concept of the social”\(^{22}\). G. Ritzer argues that the social world is “increasingly characterized by “nothing”. In this case “nothing” refers to a social form that is generally conceived, controlled, and comparatively devoid of distinctive substantive content\(^{23}\). The following theories will be discussed: Liquid modernity (Z. Bauman); the Mc Donaldization of society (G. Ritzer); simulation and simulacrum (J. Baudrillard); the network society (M. Castels); mobilities and postcarbon society (J. Urry); cultural sociology (J. Alexander). The theories of the fifth generation manifest the newest non-linear paradigms of postmodernity. According there is the need for different types of sociological


imagination, the pluralism of them. In G. Ritzer’s view, “different imagers of the subject matter are the key paradigmatic splits in sociology”24. As a result, sociologists have to deal with the pluralism of models of sociological thinking and imagination among which are: Steve Fuller in *The New Sociological Imagination*25; U. Beck - “we need a new sociological imagination, one that is sensitive to the concrete paradoxes and challenges of reflexive modernity and which at the same time, is thoughtful and strong enough to open up the walls of abstraction in which academic routines are captured”26.

**Seminar 8. Sociological postmodernism.**

*Topics for discussion:*
2. J. Urry: “societies, systems and peoples on the move”.
3. P. Virilio: dromology.
4. Cultural sociology of J. Alexander

**Questions for Critical Thinking and Sociological Imagination.**
1. How does the network society transform space and time (according to M. Castells’ methodology)?
2. What does J. Urry mean saying that “societies and systems on the move”?  
3. How does spiral of signification (J. Alexander) work in the image-building of political leaders nowadays?

**Required reading (obligatory):**

**Additional reading:**

**2.3 Essay topics**
To be taken from “*Topics for discussion*” from the topic breakdown given above.

**2.4 Tests and exam timing**
- Oral exam – during examination session from January 8th till January 25th, exact date TBA for every academic year

---

2.5 Consolidating reading list (All the recommended books in print are available at the sociological chair office or see other information).

A. Obligatory reading:


B. Recommended reading (concrete chapters and parts are given at seminars):


15