An Introduction to Contemporary French Sociology

Sociology is practiced differently in different countries. In this course, we will look at the work of several contemporary French authors (such as Bourdieu, Boltanski, Thévenot, and Latour) and try to see if anything can be gained from adopting a "French" perspective on US society and notions such as class and race. Films and practical exercises will help us see the relevance of some of the questions that have been considered crucial by contemporary French sociologists: should sociology be a martial art? Are we morally justified in studying other people? What is the relationship between sociology and everyday life?

Required books:

Week 1: Giving Reasons


Week 2: Are we morally justified in studying other people?


Exercise: classroom-based “classification game”

Week 3: Critical sociology vs. sociology of critique


Film: Sociology is a martial art (Pierre Carles, 2002, 146 mins.)

**Week 4: Sociology, Political Theory, and Everyday Life**


**Week 5: Conflict, compromise, and conventions**


**Week 6: Sociology, activism, and politics**

*Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences Back into Democracy.*


**Week 7: Do things have interests?**


**Week 8: Can everything be translated?**

**Week 9: Are social ties special?**


**Week 10: We have never been modern**


**Week 11: Flashback: some historical context**

Readings from Tarde, Durkheim, Mauss, and Levi-Strauss.

**Week 12: Case studies**

*Students will be assigned a set of case studies (“virtual research projects”) and asked to analyze them through the prism of critical sociology, the sociology of justification, and actor-network theory.*