

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:

1. Luc Boltanski, Laurent Thévenot, *On Justification: Economies of Worth*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006
2. Charles Tilly, *Why?* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006
3. Bruno Latour, *We have never been modern*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993
4. Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the social: an introduction to actor-network theory*. Oxford: Clarendon, 2006.

Week 1: Giving Reasons

Charles Tilly, *Why?* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006

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

Pierre Bourdieu, *Participant objectivation*, in: Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, 9, 2003, pp. 281-294.

Luc Boltanski, Laurent Thévenot, *Finding one's way in social space: a study based on games*, in: Social Science Information, 4/5, 1983, pp. 631-680.

Exercise: classroom-based "classification game"

Week 3: Critical sociology vs. sociology of critique

Social Space and Symbolic Power, in: Pierre Bourdieu, *In Other Words: Essays towards a reflexive sociology*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990.

Structures, habitus, practices, in: Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, pp. 52-65.

Luc Boltanski, Laurent Thévenot, *The Sociology of Critical Capacity*, in: European Journal of Social Theory, vol. 2, no. 3 (August), 1999, pp. 359-377.

Peter Wagner, *After Justification*. Repertoires of Evaluation and the Sociology of Modernity, in: *European Journal of Social Theory*, 2(3), 1999, pp. 341-357.

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

Week 4: Sociology, Political Theory, and Everyday Life

Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice. A Defense of Pluralism and Equality*. N.Y.: Basic Books, 1984. Chs. 1-2: pp. 3-63.

Luc Boltanski, Laurent Thévenot, *On Justification: Economies of Worth*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006, *preface and parts 1-2: pp. 1-124*.

Week 5: Conflict, compromise, and conventions

Luc Boltanski, Laurent Thévenot, *On Justification: Economies of Worth*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006, *parts three and four: pp. 125-274*.

Week 6: Sociology, activism, and politics

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

What kind of liberation?, in: Luc Boltanski, Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, London: Verso, 2007, pp. ?? (*pp. 509-528 in French edition*)

Week 7: Do things have interests?

Bruno Latour, *To modernize or to ecologize? That is the question*, in: N. Castree and B. Willems-Braun (eds.): *Remaking Reality: Nature at the Millenium* (see <http://www.bruno-latour.fr/articles/article/073.html>)

Bruno Latour, *Where are the missing masses? Sociology of a door*, in: Wiebe Bijker and John Law (eds.). *Shaping Technology / Building Society*. Studies in Sociotechnical Change. Cambridge/Mass.: MIT Press. 1992. P. 225-259.

Michel Callon, "Some Elements of a Sociology of Translation: Domestication of the Scallops and the Fishermen of St Brieuc Bay." in *Power, Action and Belief: A New Sociology of Knowledge*, edited by John Law. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. Pp. 196-233

Week 8: Can everything be translated?

Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the social: an introduction to actor-network theory*. Oxford: Clarendon, 2006. Introduction and part I: pp. 21-158.

Week 9: Are social ties special?

Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the social: an introduction to actor-network theory*. Oxford: Clarendon, 2006. Part II: pp. 159-262.

Week 10: We have never been modern

Bruno Latour, *We have never been modern*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993.

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.