

## **SYLLABUS**

### **Seminar Paradigms and Current Trends of Sociological Thought II Conflict, Power, and Domination**

**Seminar:** Sommer Term 2023

**Instructor:** Univ.-Prof. Dr. Susanne Pernicka, Dep. of Economic and Organizational Sociology

**Education level:** Bachelor's programme 1st year

**Pre-requisites:** The ability and willingness to read, write and participate in discussions during the seminar lessons in English language. Please note, your fluency in English does not need to be perfect. Completion of the introductory and orientation phase in Sociology (Steop); For international and ERASMUS students: basic knowledge in sociology (equivalent of at least 2 introductory courses in sociology; course certificates must be send to seminar instructor before the start of the seminar; please provide certificates by email to [susanne.pernicka@jku.at](mailto:susanne.pernicka@jku.at)

**Workload:** 6 ECTS credits (1 ECTS = 25 hours; 150 hours), 10 hours per week; please note that the seminar requires intensive preparation for each lesson incl. reading of literature, writing of short summaries and critiques (min. 4 pages); the search for, presentation and discussion of classic or contemporary sociological theory texts; the preparation of a presentation handout and 1-2 questions for further discussion in the class.

**The attendance of seminar lessons is compulsory.**

#### **Description and objectives of the seminar:**

This seminar deals with sociological paradigms and current trends of sociological thought and seeks to provide students with a better understanding of theoretical conceptions that emphasize conflicts, power and authority in past and contemporary societies. Besides conflicts over scarce material resources, the seminar will also shed light on struggles over recognition, cultural power or relations of dominance and subordination. While the term "conflict sociology" crystallized in the 1950s as Lewis Coser and Ralf Dahrendorf criticized the then dominant structural functionalism in sociology, there exists no independent theoretical paradigm in sociological thinking about conflict and the interrelated concepts of power and domination (Rössel 2013). Therefore, students receive an overview of classical and contemporary sociological paradigms and thinkers who regard conflicts as key in understanding societal change and continuity: the seminar starts with Karl Marx, Max Weber and Georg Simmel (classics) who provided the basis for the theories discussed next: theory of group conflicts, critical theory, feminist theory, rational choice theory and Pierre Bourdieu's class and culture perspective (contemporary works); finally these theories will be applied to selected fields of contemporary societal conflicts (globalization of economic and political processes).

Each seminar lesson will consist of an interactive introduction provided by the seminar instructor, a short presentation by students and ensuing plenary discussion of questions (about 15 minutes), the presentation of various video clips and subsequent small groups and plenary discussions.

Rössel, J. (2013) Conflict theory. Oxford Bibliographies. [www.oxfordbibliographies.com](http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com)

#### **Assessment criteria:**

- Written summaries and critique of provided literature according to questions as stated below to be submitted at **the beginning of each lesson as hard copy** (max. 4 assessment points for each summary can be achieved; in sum 40 pts.)
- Presentation of an article, book section or alternative text by an outstanding sociological theorist who has extensively written on the chosen topic, e.g., a section in Max Weber's book *Economy and Society*, or a piece by James Coleman who was an important representative of Rational Choice Theory, from a **conflict and power sensitive perspective. What do these authors tell us about conflicts, power and domination in society?** (max. 20 pts)
- Collect participation points by actively engaging in discussions during the seminar. (max. 1 point each session)

#### **Grading scale:**

> 56 points: Very Good (1); 55 – 51 points: Good (2); 50 – 46 points: Satisfactory (3); 45 – 41 points: Sufficient (4); < 40 points: Not sufficient (5)

#### **Seminar dates, times and contents:**

The Seminar takes place weekly on Tuesdays from 13:45–15:15.

**March 7:** Introductory remarks by seminar instructor, course requirements and assessment criteria

**March 14:** Conflict theory as a theoretical paradigm? Brief overview of classical and contemporary sociological theories on conflict, power, and domination; **assignment of presentation topics and dates**

**March 21:** Classics of the conflict theory paradigm: Karl Marx

[Dillon 2014 Introduction to Sociological Theory: Karl Marx \(pp. 34-41 & 50-63; 21 pages\)](#)

**March 28:** Classics of the conflict theory paradigm: Max Weber

[Dillon 2014 Introduction to Sociological Theory: Max Weber \(pp.135-150: 16 pages\)](#)

**April 18:** Classics of the conflict theory paradigm: Georg Simmel

[Münc 1994 Sociological Theory Vol. I.: The Dialectics of Conflict: Georg Simmel \(pp. 94-117: 22,5 pages\)](#)

**April 25:** Contemporary works of conflict theory: Consensus and conflict

[Münc 1994 Sociological Theory Vol. II.: Lewis A. Coser and Ralf Dahrendorf \(pp. 189-213: 24 pages\)](#)

**May 2:** Contemporary works of conflict theory: Critical theory

[Dillon 2014 Introduction to Sociological Theory: Critical Theory \(pp. 191-201 and 208-217: 20 pages\)](#)

**May 9:** Contemporary works of conflict theory: Redistribution or recognition

Ritzer and Stepnisky 2017 *Sociological Theory: Criticisms of Critical Theory and Critical Theory today* (pp. 287-292, 6 pages) & Warnke 2013 *Feminism*, Frankfurt School, Nancy Fraser (7 p.)

**May 16:** Contemporary works of conflict theory: Class and culture

Dillon 2014 *Introduction to Sociological Theory: The Social Reproduction of Inequality. Pierre Bourdieu's Theory of Class and Culture* (428-447, 20 pages)

**May 23:** Contemporary works of conflict theory: Rational choice theory

Dillon 2014 *Introduction to Sociological Theory: Exchange Theory and Rational Choice Theories* (pp. 246-257 and 260-264; 16 pages)

Please note: No lessons take place on May 30 and June 6.

**June 13:** Fields of conflict: Globalizing economic processes

Dillon 2014 *Introduction to Sociological Theory: Economic and Political Globalization* (pp. 455-471, 17 pages)

**June 20:** Fields of conflict: Globalizing political processes

Dillon 2014 *Introduction to Sociological Theory: Economic and Political Globalization* (pp. 472-487, 16 pages]

**Guidelines for the preparation of written summaries and critique of provided literature:**

Please read carefully the literature (text) provided for each seminar lesson (from March 21 onwards) via the Kepler University Study Support System KUSSS and provide written answers to the questions depicted below. Write at least **15.000 characters (including spaces)**. Print out two copies (one for submission; the other as a basis for our discussions during the seminar).

- 1) What role do conflicts, power and relations of dominance play in society from the sociological perspective outlined in the text?
- 2) How are conflicts, power and relations of dominance theoretically conceived by the authors of the text? Provide also definitions of the concepts used if available.
- 3) What are the main points of criticism that can be raised in relation to the theory and in relation to its concepts of conflict, power and dominance? [if necessary, use further literature to develop your critique)