

Sociological Analysis I -- Fall 2023

Masters in Social Science, Carlos III University

Thursdays 10:30-13:30. Room 18.1.A04

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This course provides Masters students with a broad introduction to multiple ways in which sociologists carry out social scientific analysis and to the wide-ranging ‘payoffs’ of their varied approaches to this collective enterprise. Although the course will introduce students to a number of important substantive and theoretical contributions of this discipline – and to the debates generated by the works discussed – the emphasis throughout the semester will center on *how* sociologists examine the problems that they address. The course is intended to help students develop their own analytical abilities and ‘instincts’, building on the examples offered by the material read and on our discussions regarding the varied approaches found in those works. In pursuit of the large goal of social scientific explanation and understanding we will devote considerable attention to several major components of the sociological enterprise: specifying the social components of human experience and historical developments, locating patterns of regularity in those phenomena, identifying the mechanisms of causality capable of generating those regularities, elaborating complex configurations of causality and interconnection among those mechanisms, and exploring the interconnections between levels of analysis. The relevance of history and historical change will also draw recurrent attention during the semester.

The course is designed to be accessible to those with little or no previous exposure to this discipline but it is also intended to be useful and engaging for students with extensive previous reading in sociology. The emphasis on drawing out and developing analytical insights (or, where students find them, analytical shortcomings) from the readings is the core purpose of the course. Students are, of course, encouraged to raise questions, uncertainties or ideas that cannot be fully resolved during regular class time – whether by discussion via email, Skype or office hours. Course reading assignments are fairly extensive but they should prove to be very much worthwhile. Discussions in class in advance of each week’s readings should facilitate the work of students reading through the assigned material. For the weeks that have the longest reading assignments the primary responsibility for specific sections of the reading may be divided in advance – during the class session immediately prior to the assignment. The course begins with works by four classic social theorists – Max Weber, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim and Alexis de Tocqueville – but our primary objective in reading them will be to draw analytical lessons from the work. The remaining readings are drawn from a wide range of works including classic texts in empirical sociology and recent contributions including those found in books as well as articles. The readings include works by a number of Carlos III sociologists.

The course includes many works that weave together several types of sociological analysis. In one way or another the assigned readings are engaged in at least one – if not two or all three, of the following types of sociological analysis: socio-demographic work, macro-sociological analysis and relational work. Many innovative examples of sociological analysis build in creative ways on the effort to *interconnect* these types of analysis but having said that, each type of analysis is, on its own, fully legitimate and important.

The socio-demographic analysis of social patterns and causation in *individual experience* constitutes a major area of rigorous work and ongoing discovery in sociology. The number of substantive specializations covered by such work is quite large, including: family demography, the time use analysis of couple dynamics, labor market outcome studies, educational attainment studies, various forms of analysis of stratification and inequality, and of course the analysis of migration flows and experiences, to name only some significant areas of study for those engaged in such research. Work of this nature typically requires the use of state of the art quantitative methodologies although qualitative approaches involving in-depth interviewing or other qualitative methodologies can also be quite useful; modelling techniques are not the only area for methodological advancement in such studies. Much of the most important work in socio-demographic analysis involves the drawing of connections across thematic domains – for example between educational, labor market and family dynamics.

The macro-sociological and often institutional analysis of dynamics involving actors and structures operating above the individual level constitutes another major area of rigorous and ongoing discovery in sociology. Differences between nations and phenomena occurring at the institutional, national, sub-national, supra-national or global levels are of great significance for much work in sociology and cannot be fully captured by socio-demographic work oriented primarily toward the individual level. Much work in political sociology, economic sociology and cultural sociology falls within this large constellation of areas of investigation. The study of conflict and social movements, the analysis of public policy regimes and their consequences, and the investigation of European and global integration all can be undertaken to a large extent in ways shaped by macro-sociological approaches. There are strong synergies between macro-sociological and socio-demographic approaches to sociology. That is the message found in many important works, to name a few examples Esping-Andersen's *Social Foundations of Postindustrial Economies* or Hall and Lamont's *Successful Societies* and their more recent *Social Resilience in the Neoliberal Era*.

Relational work that emphasizes the significance of networks and structures of connection as well as culturally defined forms of interaction, instead of relying on the use of theoretically-rooted categories such as social class, constitutes another significant approach in sociology, especially in the work of scholars influenced by Harrison White. The study of networks and culture as well as much work on conflict and peace-making can be usefully advanced through this approach. The relational approach to sociological analysis can be woven together with either of the other two styles of analysis outlined above or simultaneously with both of them. However, the analytical underpinnings of relational work are distinctive ones that view in at least a somewhat critical light many of the classic assumptions of conventional work that relies on category-based concepts for posing hypotheses and advancing explanations. The distinction between categorical and relational approaches will be discussed in class.

As noted above, these three broad approaches or constellations of areas of work are not in any sense mutually exclusive. In fact, many recent advances in sociological analysis gain leverage from their effort to draw simultaneously on these styles of analysis. Through a consideration of existing work students will be encouraged to draw out implications for their own possible contributions in the future and for their ability to read sociological works critically.

Assignments and assessment:

The core assignment is to attend class, participate in discussions and do the required readings. More than two unjustified absences are sufficient basis to fail the course. Students are also required to turn in eight ungraded one page memos on the assigned reading. Eleven of the twelve course weeks involve reading assignments. Students are required to turn in a memo on the assigned readings in advance of at least eight of those eleven sessions. Each student can choose the eight weeks in which to turn in a reading memo. In the reading memos students should discuss what they found especially useful and persuasive – or unpersuasive and insufficient – in the assignment(s). The memos are ungraded but turning in eight of them in advance of the class in which the readings are discussed is an absolute requirement. At the end of the semester students will turn in an eight to ten page graded paper in which they will assess and compare the sociological analyses of any five of the authors covered during the semester. Participation in class discussions will be the basis for 30% of students' final grade. The final paper will provide the other 70% of the final grade.

Course Schedule:

Week 1: Introduction to the course. Forms of sociological analysis, themes of investigation, major substantive and conceptual contributions. Discussion of requirements and introduction of class participants.

Week 2: Economy, political system and their social embeddedness. Categories of analysis and historical complexities. Comparing the analyses of Marx and Weber.

Readings: Max Weber, *Economy and Society, Volume I*, pp. 212-254; 262-271; 333-337. Marx-Engels reader, pp. 3-6; 203-17; 594-617.

Week 3: The social implications – and explanatory import – of culture and religion. Comparing the analyses of Durkheim and Tocqueville.

Reading: Durkheim, *Suicide*, pp. 35-53; 145-151; *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, pp. 37-63; 488-496. Tocqueville, *Old Regime and the Revolution*, pp. 138-148 and additional pages TBA.

Week 4. Macro-level social change – and its micro-level implications: Analyzing social revolution.

Readings: Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*. Pp. 3-43; 47-99; 109-111. Jocelyn Viterna, *Women in War: The Micro-processes of Mobilization in El Salvador*. Pp. 1-62; 203-220.

Week 5: Paradoxes in the analysis of individuals and social context: Network analysis and related approaches.

Readings: Granovetter, 1973, "The Strength of Weak Ties" *AJS* 78(6): 1360-80; 1978, "Threshold Models of Collective Behavior", *AJS*, 83(6) 1420-1443; Edling and Sandel, 2001. "Social Influence and Corporate Behavior: A Case Study of the Interdependent Decision-Making in Sweden's Publicly Traded Firms", *ESR* 17(4): 389-399; Garvía, 2007. "Syndication, Institutionalization and Lottery Play", *AJS* 113(3): 603-52.

Week 6: Culture in social context.

Readings: David Stark, *The Sense of Dissonance*. Pp. 1-34; 204-212. Peter Bearman, *Doormen*. Pp. 1 – 37; Swidler, 1986. "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies", *ASR* 51(2): 273-286; Polavieja, 2015, "Capturing Culture: A New Method to Estimate Exogenous Cultural Effects Using Migrant Populations". *ASR* 80(1): 166-91.

Week 7: History, cultural frameworks and cultural change.

Readings: Sewell, 1996. "Historical Events as Transformations of Structures: Inventing Revolution at the Bastille." *Theory & Society* 25(6):841-881; Fishman and Lizardo, 2013. How Macro-Historical Change Shapes Cultural Change: Legacies of Democratization in Spain and Portugal", *ASR* 78(2): 213-239; Diez Medrano, *Framing Europe*. Chapter Two.

Optional additional reading: Fishman, *Democratic Practice*.

Week 8: Analyzing social determinants of employment and occupations.

Readings: Esping-Andersen, *Social Foundations of Postindustrial Economies*. 33-72; 99-142; 170-184. Oesch, *Occupational Change in Europe: How Technology and Education Transform the Job Structure*. Pp. 59-126.

Week 9: The social scope of identity, tolerance and activism.

Readings: Polavieja, 2016. "Labor Market Competition, Recession and Anti-immigrant Sentiments in Europe: Occupational and Environmental Drivers of Competitive Threat", *Socio-Economic Review* 14(3): 395-417; Diez Medrano, 2018. "Multilingualism and European Identification", *Sociological Inquiry* 88(3): 410-434. Stomatov, 2010. "Activist Religion, Empire and the Emergence of Modern Long-Distance Advocacy Networks", *ASR* 75(4): 607-28.

Week 10: Participation, organizations and social foundations of democratic life.

Reading: Lipset, Trow and Coleman, *Union Democracy*. Pp. 33-140; 393-418. Lancee and Radl, 2014. "Volunteering over the Life Course", *Social Forces* 93(2): 833-62.

Optional additional reading: Fishman, *Democracy's Voices*.

Week 11. Gender and race discrimination and their embeddedness in structures of class inequality.

Readings: Torre, 2019. "Women in Blue: Structural and Individual Determinants of Sex Segregation in Blue-Collar Occupations", *Gender and Society* 33(3): 410-438; Pettit and Western, 2004. "Mass Imprisonment and the Life Course: Race and Class Inequality in US Incarceration", *ASR* 69(2): 151-69; Jaime-Castillo, Fernández, Valiente and Mayrl, 2016. "Collective Religiosity and the Gender Gap in Attitudes towards Economic Redistribution in 86 Countries, 1990-2008", *Social Science Research* 57: 17-30.

It would also be useful to quickly reread the Viterna assignment from week 4.

Week 12: Globalization, inequality and efforts to reduce it.

Readings: Western and Rosenfeld. 2011. "Unions, Norms and the Rise in US Wage Inequality", *ASR* 76(4): 513-37; Beckfield, 2006. "European Integration and Income Inequality", *ASR* 71(6): 964-985; Fernández and Jaime-Castillo, 2018. "The Institutional Foundation of Social Class Differences in pro-redistribution attitudes, A cross-national analysis, 1985-2010", *Social Forces* 96(3): 1009-1038; Snyder and Tilly, 1972. "Hardship and Collective Violence in France, 1830 to 1960", *ASR* 37(5): 520-532. Ciocca Eller and DiPrete, 2018. "The Paradox of Persistence: Explaining the Black-White Gap in Bachelor's Degree Completion", *ASR* 83(6): 1171-1214.