SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

VINCENZO MELE

Anno accademico	2018/19
CdS	SOCIOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
Codice	247QQ
CFU	6

Moduli	Settore	Tipo	Ore	Docente/i
TEORIA SOCIOLOGICA	SPS/07	LEZIONI	42	VINCENZO MELE

Learning outcomes

Knowledge
By the end of the semester, students are expected to be able to:

- - understand theoretical ideas of the key theorists of modern and contemporary sociology like Georg Simmel and Karl Marx
- - make connections between contemporary theories and classical theories
- - have a sense of the historical and intellectual circumstances in which each of these thinkers emerged
- - compare similarities and differences between the perspectives of different thinkers
- - identify relative strengths and weaknesses of given theories
- - discuss contemporary social phenomena in light of the theories learned in course
- Read and understand original texts of the chosen authors.

Assessment criteria of knowledge
The knowledge will be tested through a continuous debate in classroom and the final oral proof. If the course numbers will allow, students will have the possibility to write and discuss a term paper.

Skills

Students will be able to read and understand complex theretical texts, to do bibliographical research, to write and present a term paper.

Assessment criteria of skills
The skills will be tested through the texts comment in classroom, collective discussion and the final oral proof. If the course numbers will allow, students will have the possibility to write and present in class a term paper.

Prerequisites
Students require basic knowledge in social and political thought.

Teaching methods
METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:

- Lectures
- Class and small discussion
- Independent student writing and reflection
- Videos and films
- In-class activities
- Any other instructions as appropriate for learning needs

Syllabus
Syllabus of the course: Sociological Theory. *Money, capital and modernity in Karl Marx and Georg Simmel*

The year 2018 marks the 200th anniversary of Karl Marx's birth and the 100th anniversary of Georg Simmel's death. This course wants to take the occasion to reflect on the relation between their works and diagnosis of modern society and culture.
The relevance of Marx's writings to Simmel's oeuvre is out of question: in the premise of his major work, *Philosophy of Money*(1900),Simmel declares his intention "to construct a new storey beneath historical materialism" (from the *Preface*). The continuities between Simmel's work and Karl Marx's *Capital*are most striking at the level of the diagnosis of modern society: the analysis of alienation, commodity fetishism, and capital's quantifying and accelerating tendencies are not only critically discussed but also expanded in Simmel's investigations of the paradoxes of modern culture, to the point that David Frisby once said, *The Philosophy of Money* is a *Capital*written in dialogue with Kant's *Transcendental Aesthetic* instead of Hegel's *Logic*. These analysis, however, have very different philosophical and political foundations: whereas Marx relied on the tradition of Left Hegelianism, English political economy, and French socialism, Simmel dialogued mainly with neo-Kantianism, neoclassical economics, and vitalism. To what extent, then, do Simmel's investigations on money supplement, widen or contradict Marx's analysis of capital? Do their different philosophical and methodological starting points prevent a productive dialogue between their arguments? How to reconcile Marxian analyses of class and exploitation with Simmel's focus on pathologies affecting the totality of modern individuals? In what way can the confrontation between their perspectives become relevant for current sociology and social philosophy?
This course will try to reflect on these aspects of the relation between Marx and Simmel.

1. **WEEK**

Capital, money and the experience of modernity in the work of Marx and Simmel: an introduction

1. **WEEK**

Marx: The Materialist Conception of History

- **WEEK**

Marx: The *Grundrisse*

1. **WEEK**

Marx: *Capital* I, Unpublished Ch. VI: The Critique of Capitalist Alienation

1. **WEEK**

Marx: Primitive Accumulation, Capitalism and Surplus Value

1. **WEEK**

Marx: The Last Studies

- **WEEK**

Simmel: *On Social Differentiation*, metropolis and modernity

- **WEEK**

Simmel: *The Problem of the Philosophy of History*(I and following versions)

1. **WEEK**

Simmel: *Philosophy of Money*: lineaments of a theory of value (analytical part)

1. **WEEK**

Simmel: *Philosophy of Money*: the construction of individuality in the sequence of purposes (synthetic part)

1. **WEEK**

Conclusion: not all that is solid melts into air? Marx, Simmel and solid/liquid modernity

A detailed class calendar and readings will be available on the moodle platform of the course.

Bibliography

Georg Simmel (ed. by Levine),*On Individuality and Social Forms,* University of Chicago Press, 1971.
Excerpts from Karl Marx, *Grundrisse* (Penguin, 1993), Karl Marx, *Capital* (Penguin, 1990), and Marcello Musto *(ed.), Karl Marx's Grundrisse. Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy* (Routledge, 2008)
Volumes of *Marx-Engels Collected Works* are available online at http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/cw/index.htm

Notes

The course will be entirely in English, in partnership with Prof. Marcello Musto, York University.

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