

Research Master: Networks and Cohesion (400889)

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S809

GENERAL AIM

The objective of the course is to acquire a thorough knowledge of the concept of social capital, its sources and its consequences. In this course, students are first of all introduced to the social capital concept, its main sub-dimensions of social networks and social trust, and how the concept fits the study of social cohesion. Secondly, a particular emphasis in this course lies on the critical reading of the sources of social capital, i.e. what explains why some (people or societies) have more social capital than others. Even though the list of sources is exhaustive, a selection is made to understand the mechanisms undergirding social capital-formation. The literature is selected in such a way that it offers a wide variety of research approaches within quantitative methodology.

Upon completion of this course, students are able to (1) critically reflect upon and articulate informed opinions about the concept of social capital; (2) understand why social capital is a vital component in the study of social cohesion; (3) understand the main sources of social capital and the mechanisms that undergird them; (4) understand the (nuanced) consequences of social capital; (5) develop empirical research strategies and eventually conduct sociological research involving social capital, which is presented in a scientific paper.

CONTENTS

Without any doubt, one of the key questions within sociology concerns social cohesion: What keeps society together? By the end of the 20th century, the study into social cohesion has become more accessible and as well popularized by a focus on social capital, i.e. the structural (involvement in voluntary associations or networks) or cultural (norms of trust and reciprocity) dimensions of social organization that facilitate social cooperation. The focus on these aspects of society made social cohesion more tangible and measurable. The aim of this course is to provide in a thorough introduction into the social capital concept, and provide in a theoretical and empirical framework that allows for the study of the sources and consequences of social capital.

In the introduction and the first two sessions of the course, we set the stage by reviewing why there has been such a strong emphasis on social capital in the last decades, as well do we review the key components of social capital, namely social networks (its structural dimension) and social trust (its cultural dimension). In the subsequent five sessions, some of the principle sources of social capital are being discussed, namely generational change (which responds to the question whether social capital is in decline), institutional determinants (whether associations are important for democracy or vice versa), socioeconomic inequality (if socioeconomic gaps are bad for all), ethnocultural diversity (if immigration erodes civil society) and do we look at the biological roots of social capital.

The second part of the course is dedicated to the empirical study of the sources and/or consequences of social capital, which in the end will lead to an empirical paper. The weekly gatherings concern combined lab sessions to work on the assignment, as well as feedback sessions between the lecturer and each group. The main set-up of the paper, as well as preliminary findings, are being presented in a conference-style of session, for which also discussants are assigned.

SCHEDULE Research Master – Networks and Cohesion

Date	Time	Room	Type	Topic
<i>Week 1 (29 August – 4 September)</i>				
Monday	14:45-16:30	CZ111	Introduction	Setting the stage
Wednesday	12:45-14:30	TZ011	Lecture + Discussion	Social Networks
<i>Week 2 (5 September – 11 September)</i>				
Monday	14:45-16:30	CZ111	Lecture + Discussion	Trust
Wednesday	12:45-14:30	TZ006	Lecture + Discussion	A Generational Decline?
<i>Week 3 (12 September – 18 September)</i>				
Monday	14:45-16:30	CZ111	Lecture + Discussion	Institutional Explanations
Wednesday	12:45-14:30	TZ011	Lecture + Discussion	Inequality
<i>Week 4 (19 September – 25 September)</i>				
Monday	14:45-16:30	CZ111	Lecture + Discussion	Ethnocultural Diversity
Wednesday	12:45-14:30	TZ011	Lecture + Discussion	Biological Sources
<i>Week 5 (26 September – 2 October)</i>				
Monday	14:45-16:30	M021	Lab	
Wednesday	TBA	S809	Progress report	
<i>Week 6 (3 October – 9 October)</i>				
Monday	14:45-16:30	M021	Lab	
Wednesday	TBA	S809	Progress report	
<i>Week 7 (10 October – 16 October)</i>				
Monday	14:45-16:30	M021	Lab	
Wednesday	TBA	S809	Progress report	
<i>Week 8 (17 October – 23 October)</i>				
Monday	14:45-16:30	M021	Lab	
Friday	08:45-12:30	WZ103	Presentation	
Friday 4 November 2016			Paper deadline	(16:00; S822)
Friday 23 December 2016			Resit (if necessary)	(16:00; S822)

GENERAL SETUP OF WEEKS 1-4

- The first meeting in week 1 is a 60-90mins introduction to the course, as well as a short introduction to the most important concepts within social capital research. The next seven sessions are combined lectures (approximately. 45-60mins) and group discussions (30-45mins).
- Students are required to read two manuscripts in preparation of every session.
- At the end of every Wednesday session, the lecturer will introduce two discussion statements concerning the literature of next week.
- Attendance is mandatory, except for extraordinary circumstances (illness, etc.). The lecturer should always be informed about absence. Substitute assignments might be given.

GENERAL SETUP OF WEEKS 5-8

- An essential part of the course is studying social capital. To facilitate writing the paper, there are weekly lab sessions during which questions concerning the empirical part (data-analysis) can be asked. The format of this session therefore is a helpdesk with the lecturer as helping hand; in the meanwhile the sessions provide you time to work on the data analysis. It is recommended but not obligatory to be present during these sessions. To facilitate technical feedback, feel free to submit your questions beforehand (e.g. Monday morning).
- During the weeks of the paper writing (weeks 5-8), the lecturer will invite the students to discuss their paper progress at his office (S809). These weekly gatherings are mandatory. To facilitate the feedback, the problems that certainly need to be discussed should be e-mailed no later than 12pm (noon) the day prior to the feedback session.
- A short theoretical intake and preliminary findings are being presented in a conference style presentation session on Friday 21 October. In order that all groups receive sufficient feedback on their preliminary findings, discussants are assigned. Draft versions of the paper should therefore be distributed to the lecturer and discussants no later than Tuesday 18 October 8pm.

DISCUSSION STATEMENTS

- Two Discussion Statements will be introduced at the end of the Wednesday session: one discussion statement for the Monday session, and one for the Wednesday session of the subsequent week.
- Responses to this discussion point should be elaborated on at a maximum of two pages (12-point font) – keep in mind that the focus is on the quality of the argument, not on the quantity. Because these discussion points force you to critically review the paper, all literature of that week should be included. E.g., the discussion on the literature of a generational decline should include both Putnam (2000) and Stolle and Hooghe (2004).
- In these discussion points, the primary goal is for you to provide your own reflections and thoughts on the assigned readings for that day before we have a chance to engage and discuss them as a group. It are discussion statements, meaning that often there are no right or wrong answers, but responses should distill the consulted literature. Therefore, do remember that because these are formal responses, I want more than a personal opinion. Instead, you should formalize your reflections and reactions, using academic jargon, concepts and information you have been learning along the way, to the extent that you can. As you progress through the course, you are of course welcome to draw connections from later readings, concepts, and responses back to earlier ones. Above all, remember this is your place to shine individually. What catches your eye in one or more of these reading assignments? What strikes you the most when reading them? How do they move you, both intellectually and emotionally? Do you agree or disagree – and why? What is sociologically relevant here?
- Due to the organization of the course (sessions every Monday and Wednesday), it is too much to ask for responses to Discussion Statements every session. For this reason, it is obliged to have handed in four responses to Discussion Statements at the end of the theoretical sessions (Week 4). You are free to hand in more – in such case, the four highest grades will make up the grade for the Discussion Statements.
- The deadline for handing in responses to Discussion Statements is 10am, the day of the meeting. The deadlines are strict. There is a deduction of -1 per hour that the paper is handed in too late.
- It is not possible to redo the separate weekly assignments. In case less than four Discussion Statements are submitted, an alternative assignment will be given.

FINAL PAPER

- The final research paper is a 2 to 3-person group project. By the end of week 3 (18 September), I would like you to inform me about the group composition, and also tentative ideas about a paper topic. In the next week, the lecturer will invite the groups to discuss the paper topic, and will provide with some literature suggestions, and information about sources for empirical data.
- Students are expected to write and submit a final paper (approximately 5000 words, excluding references, and tables and graphs) on a topic that serves the primary aim of the course, the sources or consequences of social capital (whether that be the structural or cultural dimension). The paper follows the format of a regular research paper, i.e. (1) an introduction in which the research question and the relevance is introduced, (2) a (modest) literature review in which hypotheses are presented, (3) a short section describing the used data and operationalization, (4) a results section showing the outcomes of the analyses, (5) a discussion & conclusion section.
- The deadline for the final paper is Friday 4 November 2016 (16:00; S822). The paper should be submitted through Ephorus Plagiarism Check on BlackBoard as well as in hard copy.
- In case of an insufficient grade,

GRADING

- Final Paper [weight: 50%], Discussion Statements [weight: 30%], Participation and Presentation [weight: 20%]
- Grades on the Final Paper will depend on (1) the clear argumentation of the research question (including originality and creativity); (2) an adequate reading of the literature and the derivation of hypotheses; (3) research design; (4) competent analyses, good presentation, and interpretation of the results; (5) good discussion and critical conclusion; (6) stylistic aspects, including language, lay-out, and syntax, (7) independence. To be clear: you all are enrolled in the Research Master, which puts a lot of emphasis on the state-of-the-art research methods. Keep in mind that this is first and foremost an empirical course, where your research method serves the research question. Being advanced in formulating a refined research question and derive clear hypotheses should therefore be the priority.
- Grades on Discussion Statements (ranging from 0-10) will be posted in due time on BB. The grade depends on (1) how innovative or original the discussion questions are, as well as (2) how much they stimulate debate and (3) how well they are elaborated. Individual feedback will be given via comments in Word document. For this reason, submit your Discussion Statement in Word format, following the format SX_ANR_Name.docx (SX = Session X, e.g. S.3; ANR = your ANR-number; Name = your last name).
- Participation is graded as negative (-) in case of no participation in a specific session, neutral (0) in case of participation, yet without input that rests on the literature, positive (1) in case of participation with input for the discussion that is well-informed.
- Presentation is graded according an oral presentation rubric that can be found [online](#).
- In case of an insufficient grade, an alternative assignment as resit will be given in case of the Discussion Statement, or an improved Final Paper is expected (deadline is December 23). Evidently, this additional time will be taken into account into the grade calculation.

LITERATURE

1/ Introduction (Monday 29 August 2016 | CZ111)

Putnam, R. D. (1993). *Making Democracy Work. Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Chapter 6: pp. 163-185). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

2/ Social Networks (Wednesday 31 August 2016 | TZ011)

Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital. *American Journal of Sociology*, 94(S), pp. S95-S120.

Granovetter, M. S. (1973). The Strength of Weak Ties. *American Journal of Sociology*, 78(6), pp. 1360-1380.

3/ Trust (Monday 5 September 2016 | CZ111)

Hardin, R. (1993). The Street-Level Epistemology of Trust. *Analyse & Kritik*, XIV, pp. 152-176.

Uslaner, E. M. (2002). *The Moral Foundations of Trust* (Chapter 2: pp. 14-50). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

4/ A Generational Decline (Wednesday 7 September 2016 | TZ006)

Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (Chapter 14: pp. 247-276). New York: Simon & Schuster.

Stolle, D., & Hooghe, M. (2004). Review Article: Inaccurate, Exceptional, One-Sided or Irrelevant? The Debate about the Alleged Decline of Social Capital and Civic Engagement in Western Societies. *British Journal of Political Science*, 35(1), pp. 149-167.

5/ Institutional Explanations (Monday 12 September 2016 | CZ111)

Howard, M. M. (2002). The Weakness of Post-Communist Civil Society. *Journal of Democracy*, 13(1), pp. 157-169.

Van Ingen, E., & van der Meer, T. (2016). Schools or Pools of Democracy? A Longitudinal Test of the Relation between Civic Participation and Political Socialization. *Political Behavior*, 38(1), pp. 83-103.

6/ Inequality (Wednesday 14 September 2016 | TZ011)

Putnam, R. D. (2015). *Our Kids. The American Dream in Crisis* (pp. 1-45). New York: Simon & Schuster.

Reeskens, T., & van Oorschot, W. (2014). European Feelings of Deprivation amidst the Financial Crisis: Effects of Welfare State Effort and Informal Social Relations. *Acta Sociologica*, 57(3), pp. 191-206.

7/ Ethnocultural Diversity (Monday 19 September 2016 | CZ111)

Putnam, R. D. (2007). E Pluribus Unum. Diversity and Community in the 21st Century. *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 30(2), pp. 137-174.

Abascal, M., & Baldassarri, D. (2015). Love Thy Neighbor? Ethnoracial Diversity and Trust Reexamined. *American Journal of Sociology*, 121(3), pp. 722-782.

8/ Biological Sources (Wednesday 21 September 2016 | TZ011)

Sturgis, P., Read S., Hatemi, P., Zhu, G., Trull, T., Wright, M., & Martin, N. (2010). A Genetic Basis for Social Trust? *Political Behavior*, 32(2), pp. 205-230.

Mondak, J. J., Hibbing, M. V., Canache, D., Seligson, M. A., & Anderson, M. R. (2010). Personality and Civic Engagement: An Integrative Framework for the Study of Trait Effects on Political Behavior. *American Political Science Review*, 104(1), pp. 85-110.