



Foundations of Economic Sociology

First Term Seminar 2016-2017

Organised by Klarita Gërxhani

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Course Description and Objectives

This course introduces the field of economic sociology. It does so by focusing on modern classics and contemporary literature studying the intersection of economy and society. Its main goal is two-fold. First, to provide an understanding of the ways in which various kinds of institutions and social structure and processes play a fundamental role in explaining economic outcomes. Second, to stimulate an integration of the major theories, approaches and topics covered into students' research interests. At the end of the course, students will be able to:

- have an understanding of the most important thematic literature and the critical analytical capacity to evaluate its scholarly validity from different methodological angles and within both a disciplinary and interdisciplinary context;
- have the capacity to fully participate and adopt a clear position in academic discussions on substantive theories and methodological design;
- have the ability to independently present social science research findings both orally and in writing in English to the required scholarly standard, making use of theoretical insights relevant to the particular research problem under study;
- have the ability to contribute theoretical knowledge and insight to the formulation and resolution of scientifically and socially relevant research problems.

Each week, for seven meetings, students will read and discuss the selected readings. During the last three meetings, students will present an application of the theories and approaches covered into their own research topic. By collectively reading a list of studies, students get to know the different traditions of theory and research in economic sociology, how the theory is connected to empirical research, how particular research designs and methods may be chosen for different research questions, and how new research projects can build on existing studies.

Teaching Methods/Learning Formats

Weekly two-hour class meetings, weekly active participation, and discussion.

Schedule

The seminar takes place on **Mondays at 15.00-17.00** in Seminar Room 2 in the Badia Fiesolana, with the exception of the session on the 7th of November which will take place in Seminar Room 3, and the session on the 12th of December which will take place in Seminar Room 3.

The full list of seminar sessions is the following:

Monday	3 rd October:	Seminar Room 2
Monday	10 th October:	Seminar Room 2
Monday	17 th October:	Seminar Room 2
Monday	24 th October:	Seminar Room 2

The EUI will be closed on Monday the 31st of October

Monday	7 th November:	Seminar Room 3
Monday	14 th November:	Seminar Room 2
Monday	21 st November:	Seminar Room 2
Monday	28 th November:	Seminar Room 2
Monday	5 th December	Seminar Room 2
Monday	12 th December	Seminar Room 3

Teaching Criteria

This seminar is worth 20 credits.

Students who choose to take this seminar for credit are required to meet Departmental attendance, *participate actively*, and complete the *discussion memo* tasks.

Students also have the option of writing a term paper for this course as part of their general term paper requirements. Should they wish to do so, they must discuss their proposed topic with Professor Gërxhani well before the Department's deadline for Term Papers.

In detail:

- Students are required to *participate actively*. This implies that they are required to read the designated literature before each meeting and participate actively in class discussions.
- *Discussion memos*: It is important to carefully study each week's readings prior to the meetings. This improves the quality of the discussion since students come to the meeting well prepared. For this reason, students are requested to prepare a brief discussion memo on the readings programmed for each week. Discussion memos should consist of max 250 words and must include: (1) a reflection of what you find most engaging, exciting, and/or puzzling from the weekly literature; and (2) what you would like the class discussion to focus on (in the form of one or two questions).

The Discussion memos are not meant to be mere summaries of the readings. Instead, they are meant to be food for thought, by reflecting your own intellectual engagement with the material; specifying what is obscure or confusing in the readings; taking issue with some core idea or argument; or, exploring some interesting consequences of an idea. The Discussion memos will be the basis for the meetings' discussions. Each student submits them to the course website at the latest every Sunday prior to the meeting at 23:00, and takes them to class for the discussion.

- *Term paper*: Students who chose to submit a term paper are required to make significant use of the selected literature and provide an application to their research topic. The term paper must be submitted via email to Professor Gërxhani with the administrative assistant in copy (Jennifer.Dari@eui.eu). Please see the 2016-17 Researchers' Guide for more information regarding the term paper and the deadlines for submission.

Credit is only given to students who meet the tasks outlined here above. Moreover, students are required to take part in the meetings. Taking part in a meeting implies timely presence, good preparation, and active participation in-group discussions. Discussion memos are a course requirement, and will not be accepted if handed in late.

Should a student decide to submit a term paper for this course, it must be handed in by the deadline indicated in the 2016-17 Researchers' Guide. A term paper which is handed in late will not be considered.

Feedback

Discussion memos and active participation: students can expect to receive brief individual feedback at the end of each meeting. Group feedback will also be provided, as part of the learning process in class discussions.

Core Texts

Researchers wishing to further their knowledge of Economic Sociology can consult these core texts. These books can be found on the reserved shelf of the EUI library.

1. Neil J. Smelser and Richard Swedberg (Eds.). 2005. *The Handbook of Economic Sociology*, second edition. New York and Princeton: Russell Sage Foundation and Princeton University Press.
2. Mark Granovetter and Richard Swedberg (Eds.). 2001. *The Sociology of Economic Life*, second edition. Boulder, CO: Westview.
3. Mauro F. Guillén, Randall Collins, Paula England and Marshall Meyer (Eds.). 2002. *The New Economic Sociology: Developments in an Emerging Field at the Millennium*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
4. Frank Dobbin (Ed.). 2004. *The New Economic Sociology: A Reader*. Princeton University Press: Princeton.

Readings

WEEK 1: Introduction, basic background readings

1. Swedberg, R. (2003). Ch. 1 "The Classics in Economic Sociology" (p. 1-32), in *Principles of Economic Sociology*. Princeton University Press.
2. Swedberg, R. (2003). Ch. 3 "Economic Organization" (p. 53-74), in *Principles of Economic Sociology*. Princeton University Press.
3. Dobbin, F. (2004). Ch. 1 "The Sociological View of the Economy." (p. 1-46), in *The New Economic Sociology: A Reader*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. [pdf](#)
4. Smelser, N.J. and R. Swedberg (2005). Ch. 5 "Behavioral Economics" (p. 90-109) in *The Handbook of Economic Sociology* (2nd edition). Princeton University Press.

Optional:

1. Swedberg, R. (2003). Ch. 2 "Contemporary Economic Sociology" (p. 32-53) in *Principles of Economic Sociology*. Princeton University Press.

2. Coleman, J.S. (1990). Ch. 1 “Metatheory: Explanation in Social Science” (p. 1-27) & Ch. 2. “Actors and Resources, Interest and Control” (p. 27-45) in *Foundations of Social Theory*. Harvard University Press.

WEEK 2: New institutionalism

1. Ingram, P. and K. Clay (2000). The choice-within-constraints new institutionalism and implications for sociology. *Annual Review of Sociology* 26: 525–46.
2. Nee, V. and P. Ingram (1998). Embeddedness and beyond: Institutions, exchange, and social structure. In: Brinton & Nee (Eds.), *The New Institutionalism in Sociology*. Stanford University Press. (pp. 19-46).
3. Knight, J. and J. Ensminger (1998). Conflict over changing social norms: Bargaining, ideology, and enforcement. In: Brinton & Nee (Eds.), *The New Institutionalism in Sociology*, Stanford University Press. (pp. 105-127).
4. Gërxhani, K. and J. Bruggeman (2015). Time Lag and Communication in Changing Unpopular Norms. *PLoS ONE*, Vol. 10, e0124715.

WEEK 3: Informal economy

1. Portes, A. and W. Haller (2005). The Informal Economy. Ch. 18 (p. 403-429), In Neil J. Smelser and Richard Swedberg (2005). *The Handbook of Economic Sociology* (2nd edition). Princeton University Press.
2. Williams, C. Colin (2015). Explaining Cross-National Variations in the Informalization of Employment. Some Lessons from Central and Eastern Europe. *European Societies* 17/4: 492-512.
3. Feige, E.L. (1997). Underground Activity and Institutional Change: Productive, Protective, and Predatory Behavior in Transition Economies. In Nelson, Joan M., Charles, Tilley and Lee, Walker (Eds.) *Transforming Post-communist Political Economies*, National Academy Press, Washington, D.C. (pp. 19-34)
4. Gërxhani, K. (2004). Tax Evasion in Transition: Outcome of an Institutional Clash? Testing Feige’s Conjecture in Albania. *European Economic Review*, 48(4): 729-745

Optional:

1. Portes, A. and S. Sassen-Koob (1987). Making it Underground: Comparative Material on the Informal Sector in Western Market Economies. *American Journal of Sociology* 93 (1): 30-61.
2. Gërxhani, K. (2004). The Informal Sector in Developed and Less Developed Countries: A Literature Survey. *Public Choice* 120(3-4): 267-300.
3. Gërxhani, K. and Herman van de Werfhorst (2013). The Effect of Education on Informal Sector Participation in a Post-communist Country. *European Sociological Review* 29(3): 464-476.

WEEK 4: Social capital

1. Portes, A. (1998). Social capital: Its origins and applications in modern sociology. *Annual Review of Sociology* 24: 1-24.
2. Lin, N. (2001). *Social Capital: A theory of social structure and action*. Chapter 11: “Institutions, networks, and capital building: societal transformations”, in pp. 184-210, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
3. Coleman, J.S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American Journal of Sociology* 94: s95-s120.
4. Fidrmuc, J. and K. Gërkhani (2008). Mind the Gap: Social capital, East and West! *Journal of Comparative Economics* 36: 264-286.

Optional:

1. Bourdieu, P. 1986. “The Forms of Capital.” Pp. 241 –58 in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, edited by J.G. Richardson. New York: Greenwood Press.
2. Ostrom, E. (2000). Social capital: A fad or a fundamental concept?, in Dasgupta, Partha and Ismail Serageldin, eds., *Social Capital: A Multifaceted Perspective*, pp. 172-215, The World Bank, Washington.
3. Lyon, F. (2000). Trust, networks and norms: The creation of social capital in agricultural economies in Ghana, *World Development* 28(4): 663-681.

WEEK 5: Labor market

1. Granovetter, M. (2005). The impact of social structure on economic outcomes. *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 19(1): 33-55.
2. Gërkhani, K., J. Brandts, and A. Schram (2013). The Emergence of Employer Information Networks in an Experimental Labor Market. *Social Networks* 35: 541-560.
3. Wegener, B. (1991). Job mobility and social ties: Social resources, prior job, and status attainment. *American Sociological Review* 56: 60-71.
4. Reskin, B.F. (2002). Rethinking Employment Discrimination and Its Remedies. Ch. 9 (pp. 218-245), in Guillen et al. (Eds.) *The New Economic Sociology: Developments in an Emerging Field*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Optional:

1. Bridges, W.P. and W. J. Villemez (1986). Informal hiring and income in the labor market. *American Sociological Review* 51: 574-82.
2. Di Stasio, V. and K. Gërkhani (2015). Employers’ Social Contacts and Their Hiring Behavior in a Factorial Survey. *Social Science Research* 51: 93-107.

3. Kalleberg, A. L. and A.B. Sorensen (1979). The Sociology of Labor Markets. *Annual Review of Sociology* 5: 351-379.

WEEK 6: Migration

1. Portes, A. and J. Sensenbrenner (1993). Embeddedness and Immigration: Notes on the Social Determinants of Economic Action. *The American Journal of Sociology* 98/6, pp. 1320-1350.
2. De Haas, H. (2010). Migration and Development: A Theoretical Perspective. *International Migration Review* 44(1): 227-64.
3. Czaika, M. and H. De Haas (2012). The Role of Internal and International Relative Deprivation in Global Migration. *Oxford Development Studies* 40/4: 423-442.
4. Garip, F. (2008). Social Capital and Migration: How Do Similar Resources Lead to Divergent Outcomes? *Demography* 45(3): 591-617.

Optional:

1. Saskia, S. (1990). *The mobility of labor and capital: a study in international investment and labor flow*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
2. Tilly, C. (2007). Trust networks in transnational migration. *Sociological Forum* 22/1:3-24.
3. Massey, D.S., and F. García España (1987). The Social Process of International Migration. *Science* 237(4816): 733-38.

WEEK 7: Gender

1. England, P. and N. Folbre (2005). Gender and Economic Sociology. Ch. 27 (p. 627-650), in Neil J. Smelser and Richard Swedberg (2005). *The Handbook of Economic Sociology* (2nd edition). Princeton University Press.
2. Burt, R.S. (1998). The Gender of Social Capital. *Rationality and Society* 10, pp. 5-46.
3. Barbara, R.F. and D. McBrier (2000). Why Not Ascription? Organizations' Employment of Male and Female Managers. *American Sociological Review* 65: 210-33.
4. Schram, A., J. Brandts and K. Gërkhani (2014). Status Ranking: A Hidden Channel to Gender Inequality. *Barcelona GSE Working Paper No. 817*.

Optional:

1. Bielby, W.T. and D.D. Bielby (2002). Telling Stories about Gender and Effort: Social Science Narratives about Who Works Hard for the Money. Ch. 8 (pp. 193-218) in Guillen et al. (Eds.) *The New Economic Sociology: Developments in an Emerging Field*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

2. Reuben, E., P. Sapienza, and L. Zingales (2014). How Stereotypes Impair Women's Careers in Science. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 111: 4403–4408.

WEEK 8-10

Presentations of students (approximately 20 minutes per presentation).