Foundations of Economic Sociology

First Term Seminar 2019-2020

Organised by Prof. Klarita Gërxhani, with Dr. Stefano Ronchi (MWF)

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Course Description and Objectives

This course introduces the field of economic sociology, from both macro and micro perspective. 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, researchers 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, researchers will read and discuss the selected readings. During the last three meetings, researchers will present an application of the theories and approaches covered into their own research topic.

Teaching Methods/Learning Formats

Weekly two-hour class meetings, weekly active participation and discussion, weekly discussion memos, individual presentations in the last three meetings.

Schedule

This seminar takes place on Tuesdays at 15:00-17:00 in Seminar Room 2 at the Badia Fiesolana, with the exception of the session on the 12th of November, which will take place in Capitolo room at the Badia Fiesolana.
The full list of seminar sessions is the following:

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<th>October</th>
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Teaching Criteria

This seminar is worth 20 credits.

Researchers who choose to take this seminar for credit are required to meet Departmental attendance, participate actively, complete the discussion memo tasks, and present their progress in the end.

Researchers 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:

- Researchers 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 researchers come to the meeting well prepared. For this reason, researchers 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 researcher submits them to the course website at the latest every Monday prior to the meeting at 23:00, and takes them to class for the discussion.

- Presentations: By collectively reading a list of studies, researchers 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. In the last three meetings, researchers are asked to present the extent to which this added knowledge has affected their research ideas from their original proposals.

- Term paper: Researchers who choose 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 (Claudia.Fanti@eui.eu). Please
see the 2019-20 Researchers’ Guide for more information regarding the term paper and the deadlines for submission.

Credit is only given to researchers who meet the tasks outlined here above. Moreover, researchers are required to take part in the meetings. Taking part in a meeting implies timely presence, good preparation, and active participation in-group discussions.

Should a researcher decide to submit a term paper for this course, it must be handed in by the deadline indicated in the 2019-20 Researchers’ Guide. A term paper which is handed in late will not be considered.

Feedback
Researchers can expect to receive brief individual feedback on their discussion memos and their presentations. 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.


Readings

**WEEK 1: Introduction, basic background readings - KG**

**WEEK 2: Historical institutionalism in political economy - SR**


**Optional:**


**WEEK 3: New institutionalism - KG**


Optional:


**WEEK 4: Welfare states and the crisis - SR**


Optional:


WEEK 5: Culture, Social Norms and Values - KG


Optional:


- This book can be found on the reserved shelf of the EUI library

WEEK 6: (Network) Social capital - KG


Optional:


**WEEK 7: Gender - KG**


*Optional:*


**WEEK 8-10** Presentations of students (approximately 20 minutes per presentation).