

Erling Berge, January 2008

SOS3506 Sociological Theory II

Introduction

The overall goal of the class will be to look at the dynamic of development of large social systems, such as the current capitalist world economy. The point of departure will be Naomi Klein's observations presented in *The Shock Doctrine. The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*. The first part of the class will be devoted to understanding what capitalism is and to look critically at the use of the concept by Klein. In this we shall use Elster and North. After this we take a step back to take a look at what appears to be a growing trend across several of the social sciences: thinking about large scale and long term dynamics in terms of non-linear aggregations of assemblages of simpler systems. In thinking about this we will consult Elias and Landa.

Language: The class will be thought in English if anyone so wishes.

Room and time: Room: D108, Dragvoll, Building 4 Level 4, Time: Thursday 12:15 – 16:00		
Classes		THEME
1	31 Jan	Introduction, linking to the classics, plan for the class
2	7 Feb	Explanations and mechanisms (Elster part I)
3	14 Feb	Understanding Economic Change I (North Ch 1-6)
4	21 Feb	Understanding Economic Change II (North 7-13)
5	28 Feb	The shock doctrine (Klein part 1-4)
6	6 Mar	Disaster capitalism (Klein part 5-7)
7	13 Mar	Explaining Social behaviour I (Elster part II-III)
	Easter	
8	27 Mar	Explaining Social behaviour II (Elster part IV-V)
9	3 Apr	Social complexity and assemblages (de Landa 2006)
10	10 Apr	The Symbol Theory I (Elias 1989, 1991) Introduction to Section V
11	17 Apr	The Symbol Theory II (Elias 1989, 1991) Section VI to Section IX
12	24 Apr	Summary and discussions of capitalism

Required reading (pensum):

Elias, Norbert. 1991. *The Symbol Theory*. London: Sage.

Elster, Jon. 2007. *Explaining Social Behaviour: More Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Klein, Naomi. 2007. *The Shock Doctrine. The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*. London: Penguin.

Landa, Manuel De. 2006. *A New Philosophy of Society*. New York: Continuum.

North, Douglass C. 2005. *Understanding the Process of Economic Change*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Tasks:

Participants are expected to write a book review, make an oral presentation and write a term paper:

1. Book review

Write a book review of Klein, Naomi. 2007. *The Shock Doctrine. The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*. London: Penguin. The book review can be maximum 600 words.

The book review is due before or on 28 February.

2. Oral presentation

Make an oral presentation in class (10-20 min) of one topic taken from chapter 4-26 in Elster, Jon. 2007. *Explaining Social Behaviour: More Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

The presentation in class is due either 13 March (selections from part 2-3) or 27 March (selections from part 4-5).

3. Term paper

Deadline for the term paper is 9 May (not 15 as said at first).

An abstract is due on 27 March.

Write a term paper either based on some topic from the class readings or discussions or a topic directly relevant to your MA thesis. It is expected to be some 5600-7500 words or 15-20 pages. In writing the term paper you can follow the standard given by

http://www.svt.ntnu.no/iss/studentinfo/vitenskapelig_form_og_stil.pdf (in

Norwegian). An alternative (in English) might be

<http://www.sv.ntnu.no/thecommonsjournal/CurrentAuthorGuidelines.pdf>

and for citation of literature

<http://www.sv.ntnu.no/thecommonsjournal/CurrentAuthorGuidelinesChicagoStyle.pdf>

Suggestions for further relevant readings (annen anbefalt litteratur):

Beck, Ulrich. 2005. *Power in the Global Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Beinhocker, Eric D. 2005. *The Origin of Wealth. Evolution, Complexity, and the Radical Remaking of Economics*. London: Random House.

Byrne, David. 1998. *Complexity Theory and the Social Sciences. An Introduction*. London: Routledge.

Castells, Manuel. 1996-98. *The Information Age: Economy, Society, and Culture. Volume I-III*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Ensminger, Jean. 1996. *Making a market*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Henrich, Natalie and Joseph Henrich. 2007. *Why Humans Cooperate: A cultural and evolutionary explanations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Luhmann, Niklas. 1984. *Social Systems*. Stanford, Ca.: Stanford University Press, 1995.

Luhmann, Niklas. 1993. *Risk. A Sociological Theory*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

Moeller, Hans-Georg. 2006. *Luhmann Explained. From Souls to Systems*. Chicago: Open Court.

North, Douglass C. 1990. *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ostrom, Elinor. 2005. *Understanding Institutional Diversity*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Platteau, Jean-Philippe. 2000. *Institutions, Social Norms, and Economic Development*. London: Routledge.

Stalder, Felix. 2006. *Manuel Castells: The Theory of the Network Society*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Watts, Duncan J. 2003. *Six Degrees: The Science of a Connected Age*. New York: Norton.

Useful web-links

Goals and content

Goals: The class will discuss sociological topics relevant to understand system developments at the global scale including the nature of capitalism and elements of systems theory.

Har som mål, med utgangspunkt i sentrale teoretikere, å fokusere på aktuelle sosiologiske tema og vise på relevansen og anvendbarheten av moderne sosiologisk teori.

Content: The class will take its departure from recent assessments of the state of economic development (Naomi Klein) discuss how current social theory (Elster, North, Elias) may further a deeper understanding of the dynamic of the world seen as a social system and the consequences for individuals and local communities.

The discussion will emphasise a perspective on what theory is and how it can be used. In writing term papers a focus on topics useful for MA thesis work will be preferred.

I kurset fordypes vi oss i aktuell sosiologisk teori og viktige forfatterskap med sikte på hvordan teoriene kan brukes i konkrete analyser. Spesiell oppmerksomhet vil bli viet sosiologisk teori som verktøykasse og redskap å forstå samtiden og temaer som opptar oss i dag. Kurset har også som siktemål å trene opp evnen til kritisk refleksjon av hva teori er og hva teori kan brukes til. Samtidig vil det bli lagt til rette for å skrive semesteroppgaver tett knyttet opp mot teorier og problemstillinger av relevans for senere bruk i masteroppgaven. Sosiologisk teori II gis som et utvidet og kompletterende tilbud til Sosiologisk teori I.