# Theory and Method of Social Research

## Prof. Rita Bichi

***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

The aim of the course is to provide students with the basic knowledge of the approaches, issues, concepts, and praxis existing in the development of the epistemology, theory and methodology of the social sciences. For this purpose, the course will cover the main patterns of thoughts that have affected the development and performance of social research, with a special focus on the scientific legitimacy of sociology and on paradigm differentiation. The course aims to offer students the basis on which they can develop research paths based on the knowledge they acquired from the workshops included in the Sociology degree programme.

*Intended learning outcomes*

Intended learning outcomes include:

- Knowledge of the main schools of thought and reference authors of social research (counts 40% towards the final evaluation).

- The ability to correctly use key concepts of the methodology of social research (counts 40% towards the final evaluation).

- The ability to link and articulate these concepts with concrete research designs (counts 20% towards the final evaluation).

***COURSE CONTENT***

First part: The models of scientific knowledge:

– The paradigms of scientific knowledge with special reference to human sciences, and Sociology in particular, with their implications on social research:

– Positivism and its developments

– Comprehensive sociology and its developments

Second part: the research method and its strategies

– The elementary knowledge tools.

– Observation, conceptualisation, theory construction

– The concepts of methodology, method and technique.

– The path of theory – hypothesis – generalisation.

– Quantitative and qualitative approaches to social research.

– The relationships between variables vs the relationships between categories.

***READING LIST***

J.A. Hughes-W.W. Sharrock, *Filosofia della ricerca sociale,* il Mulino, Bologna, 2005.

E. Durkheim, *Il suicidio,* BUR, 2007.

P.L. Berger-T. Luckmann, *La realtà come costruzione sociale*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 1997

***TEACHING METHOD***

Classroom lectures, practical exercises. Interactive teaching with practical examples and invitation to participate in discussions as well as through the use of active learning tools.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

*Expected learning outcomes*

The expected learning outcomes include:

– knowledge of the main schools of thought and reference authors in social reasearch (40% of the assessment),

– ability to correctly use the key concepts of social research methodology (40% of the assessment),

– ability to link and organise such concepts with concrete research plans (20% of the assessment),

*Methods to test the intended learning outcomes*

The exam is conducted orally and includes open questions on topics covered during lectures and / or in the texts indicated during the course and concerning intended learning outcomes as defined therein. Assessment of the intended learning outcomes will also take place regularly during the course, through the use of one or more of the following active learning tools: comprehension quizzes, think-pair-share, brainstorming, concept maps, free- write.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

The course requires basic knowledge of theoretical, conceptual and categorical foundations of sociology.

In case the current Covid-19 health emergency does not allow frontal teaching, remote teaching will be carried out following procedures that will be promptly notified to students.

Further information can be found on the lecturer's webpage at http://docenti.unicatt.it/web/searchByName.do?language=ENG, or on the Faculty notice board.