# Theory and Method of Social Research

## Prof. Fabio Introini

***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

* The ‘linguistic turn’
* Some relevant ‘paradigms’ of contemporary sociological research (theories of complexity with particular reference to E. Morin and ‘Scientific Humanism’ by B. Latour).

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***

Students may choose between two syllabus options (type A and type B) The first (A) is for attending students; the second one (B) is for students who are unable to attend.

***Syllabus A (attending students)***

J.A. Hughes-W.W. Sharrock, *Filosofia della ricerca sociale*, il Mulino, Bologna, 2005, (further information on extracts to be studied will be communicated at the start of the course).

E. Durkheim, *Il suicidio*, BUR, 2010 (to study: from p. 219 to p. 410).

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

F. Introini, *Un mondo aperto. Itinerari nella sociologia della complessità*, FrancoAngeli, Milano, 2017. (to study: chapter I plus a chapter of student’s choice between ch. II and ch. III)

Further material (reading, videos, documents, etc.) will be provided by the lecturer during the course and will be published and/or indicated on Blackboard and will be part of the study programme for the exam.

***Syllabus B (non-attending students)***

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

E. Durkheim, *Il suicidio,* BUR, 2010 (from p. 219 to p. 410).

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

F. Introini, *Un mondo aperto. Itinerari nella sociologia della complessità*, FrancoAngeli, Milan, 2017

Non-attending students will also produce a written paper (about 30,000 characters or more, spaces included) on a topic of the course to be agreed upon with the lecturer at the beginning of the course (an in-depth study of an author, a concept or a topic.

***TEACHING METHOD***

Classroom lectures, practical exercises. The course will be interactive, with practical examples, discussion, and students will engage in active learning.

***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 (50% of the assessment),

– ability to correctly use the key concepts of social research methodology (30% of the assessment),

– ability to link and organise such concepts with concrete research plans (30% of the assessment),

*Methods to test the intended learning outcomes*

*For students taking option A (attending students)*

The exam consists of an oral exam on: the books in the reading list; the course slides, the topics presented in class and the material indicated or provided by the lecturer during the course. The exam will include a number of open-ended questions both on general and more specific issues. Questions will be coherent with the learning objectives that students should acquire.

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.

*For the students taking option B (non-attending students)*

The overall mark will be the result of the sum of the points obtained in an oral exam (which awards between 0/30 marks up to 27/30 marks) and a written paper (which will award between 0/30 marks up to 4/30 marks). The oral exam assesses students on the reading list (option B) through a number of open-ended questions that will be both on general and specific issues, in accordance with the learning objectives to be reached.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

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

The digital platform Blackboard is a fundamental tool of the course, in particular as a support for archiving documents (also relating to the exam programme) and as the main communication tool between students and lecture. Therefore, students are requested to constantly monitor the platform during the academic year.

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.