



Jean Monnet Chair

Course Guide

European Political Sociology

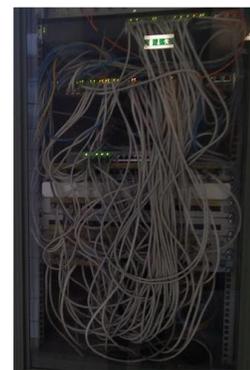
Institute of Sociological Studies, Charles University in Prague



The Jean Monnet Chair in “European Political Sociology” offers a range of sociological courses with strong interdisciplinary content, and with an in-depth focus on Europe. Europe is not just understood as the European Union in terms of a formal integration process, but equally as a ‘sociological laboratory’ in which many classical sociological insights are put to the test. Few people will deny nowadays that European societies are increasingly entangled and European citizens evermore aware of, and sometimes even participating in, events throughout Europe. The growing importance of issues and phenomena that cannot be understood from within the context of one singular society (e.g. migration, terrorism, environmental pollution, economic growth, human rights, constitutions, protest) calls for an updated sociological and interdisciplinary knowledge that helps understanding processes of rapid change in contemporary ‘high-speed societies’.

Courses in European Sociology

The courses offered in the context of the Jean Monnet Chair are interdisciplinary and touch upon key social areas, systems, and problem fields. The rapidly changing and crisis-ridden European economy is the focus of the course *Economic Sociology and European Capitalism*. Classical as well as state-of-the-art economic sociological insights are used to analyze the multiple crises that affect European societies and the European economy at large. Neoliberal and austerity-based policies are still at the forefront in European policy-making, even if many point the finger at the deregulated capitalist model of neoliberalism as one of the main causes of the deep European economic, financial, and debt crises.





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The increased prominence of human rights in our daily lives is the focus of the course *A Sociology of Human Rights in Contemporary Europe*. Human rights are increasingly important and upfront in protests and contestation, and appear as the key instrument in countering discrimination and unjust treatment of individuals. The unprecedented wave of migration with which Europe is now confronted shows the significance of the role of basic human rights as well as social rights in the defence of migrants without any other form of protection. Equally, the current wave of terrorist attacks that hits Europe points at the strong tensions between democracy, equality, and security, in the attempt of government to safeguard the lives and livelihood of their citizens.

We are living in rapidly changing and pluralistic societies in which it seems not possible anymore to invoke a widely shared view of how to live together nor to criticize the current situation. In other words, the inequality, poverty, and discrimination



that we see around us cannot be put into words that make up a general story of how a better society would look like. Critique seems impossible. But is this really the case? What forms of critique are still plausible and have wider resonance amongst citizens? Is there really no alternative other than a globalized,

hyper-competitive and hyper-individualistic society or, alternatively, the dream of a tightly knit national community (e.g. as in Brexit)? The course *A Sociology of Critique* explores classical and state-of-the-art sociological understandings of critique and particularly engages with highly popular French pragmatic sociology or a sociology of critical capacity. The theoretical dimensions of critique are explored, but critique will equally be studied in practice, in particular by looking at the economic crisis that has hit Europe, the increasing problems with representative democracy, the declining social welfare state, and forms of Euroscepticism.



The modern idea of a nation-state characterized by a people, a constitution, and state sovereignty is increasingly put to the test in current times, in particular in Europe. It could be said that at the basis of our modern view of society are constitutions, as inspired by the American and French Constitutions of the late 18th century. Constitutions were (and are?) seen as holding together a particular people (the American people or the French people) and to enshrine the ultimate values of a people. Do such ideas of constitutions still hold today? What role do constitutions actually play in – and beyond –



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modern societies and what are the sociological functions of constitutions? Do constitutions provide the ultimate rules for democracy and protect citizens' rights? But what about the influence of the EU or other international institutions on national societies and their constitutions? Or don't constitutions matter at all? Why is there then so much attention for constitutional reform and even the attempt to create a European Constitution? The course *A Constitutional Sociology of Europe: Law, Politics, and Society* explores these issues on the basis of sociological and legal insights, and focusses not least on the transnational and global levels, to explore for instance whether constitutions are becoming prominent on the global level (the UN? Google?). Constitutions can be related to key sociological matters, such as cohesion and societal integration, values, legitimacy, and citizenship. Current times are often understood as times of intense constitutional turmoil. To understand this turmoil (as is evident in e.g. the United Kingdom, Poland, or Hungary), a robust sociological understanding is badly needed.

Europe is at the centre of global attention for many reasons: in contemporary times the European integration project, the economic and debt crisis, terrorism, and the wave of migration stand out. But how does Europe perceive itself, its own history, and its own future? If European integration is about some kind of idea of a European future, of European belonging and togetherness, and also of a European role in the world, and the 'export' of humanist values, how should we imagine this European future? The course *Sociology of European Cinema* is an attempt to explore

these issues with a particular emphasis on sociological matters, such as social, political and cultural differences between Eastern and Western European societies, protests against the economic crisis of 2008, and the socio-economic impact of the crisis, the common histories of the Second World War, communism and fascism, and the future of the European integration project. The course aims at advancing sociological knowledge of, and through, cinema as well as at ameliorating linguistic capacities.



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