# Jean Monnet Course - Sociology of Critique

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<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Institute of Sociological Studies, Charles University</th>
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<td>Date</td>
<td>Winter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Dr. Paul Blokker, Charles University</td>
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<td>Credits</td>
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## Course Description

The course provides both an introduction to the sociology of critique, in particular as developed by Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot in their seminal *On Justification* and an overview of sociological analyses of the role of critique, justification, and conventions in the economy (capitalism), politics (democracy), human rights and on the supranational level (the European Union).

The course introduces students to French pragmatism or the sociology of critique, distinguishing the sociology of critique from critical theory and critical sociology, and exploring main concepts such as justification, different orders of worth, conventions, tests (of truth, reality, and existentiality), commonality, and reality and the world. The sociology of critique will be situated in the context of sociology and social theory as well as more specifically linked to economic, cultural, political, and legal sociology.

In the second part, the course will explore distinctive applications of a sociology of critique to capitalism, democracy, human rights, and European integration.

## Objectives of the Course

- Understanding and analyzing the role of dispute, conflict, and compromise in European societies
- Introduction to the sociology of critique as a distinctive research programme
- Understanding of the role of critique in societal integration, European integration, and transformation
- Understanding of the role of justification in both societal stability and change
- Relating sociology to notions and theories of justice
- Understanding of the role critique and social change in the European economy, European politics, as well as in European society
- Understanding of the role of conventions in social interaction
- The utilization of insights of a sociology of critique in empirically-driven sociological analysis

## Teaching Methodology

- Lectures
- In-class debate
- Collaborative projects (in-class)

## Event

Guest lecture by prof. Laurent Thévenot (EHESS) and workshop on pragmatic sociology (15-16 December)
Weekly Programme

Part I. Introduction to a Sociology of Critique

1. Introduction: dispute, conflict, and compromise in Europe
   - Critique as an inherent dimension of sociology
   - Uncertainty as the ontological basis of society
   - The roles of dispute, claims-making, conflict and compromise in European societies and in social change stability and change
   - The importance of collective meanings and social grammars in social interaction and social integration
   - Uncertainty, justification, and critique in the project of European integration

Readings

2. The sociology of critique
   - sociological context; relation to classical sociology
   - critical theory and a theory of critique
   - understanding of actors and action
   - the role of justification
   - different regimes of social action

Readings

3. On justification, orders of worth, and critique
   - the role of justification in social interaction
   - 6 justificatory worlds
   - 6 orders of worth
• different forms of critique
• different tests

**Readings**

4. Regimes of engagement

- Thévenot's three regimes of engagement 'under the public': regime of familiarity; regime of regular, planned action; regime of justification
- The production of categories, conventions, stability, and the sacrifices involved

**Readings**

5. Economic conventions: a critique of neo-classical economics

- Historical-sociological critique of neo-classical economics
- Critique of neo-liberalism
- Cultural economy

**Readings**

6. A sociology of critique and critical theory

- critique of Bourdieu/critical sociology
- affinities with critical sociology
- possibilities of a critical sociology

**Readings**
Part II. Applying Critique: European Capitalism, Politics, and Society

7. A sociology of critique and European integration

- Sociology of critique and critical social theory
- Justification in a transnational context: problématiques
- Critical sociological analysis of European integration

Readings

8. The new spirit of European capitalism

- capitalism and its spirit
- forms of critique and capitalist absorption
- economic conventions
- neo-liberalism and the project order of worth

Readings

9. The European Social Model

- the role of orders of worth and conventions in shaping the market economy
- the European Social Model

Readings
10. A sociology of critique and European democracy

- A sociology of critique as a sociology of democracy
- justification, critique and democracy
- political sociology
- the public sphere

Readings


11. Contestation in the European Public Sphere

- Euroscepticism
- European media
- European public sphere

Readings


12. A sociology of critique and European society

- European society
- Civil society
- Solidarity

Readings

Some of the readings might be updated during the course.

**Prerequisites**

Some knowledge of classical sociological theory, critical theory, and the sociology of social change is recommendable.

**Further relevant literature**


