Department of Sociology

Stockholm University

Syllabus

for course at advanced level

Models of Social Change and Social Stability
Modeller av social förändring och social stabilitet

7.5 Higher Education Credits
7.5 ECTS credits

Course code:	SO7300
Valid from:	Spring 2021
Date of approval:	2010-03-25
Changed:	2020-09-22
Department	Department of Sociology
Main field:	Sociology
Specialisation:	AXX - Second cycle, in-depth level of the course cannot be classified

Decision

The syllabus was approved by the board of the Department of Sociology, 2020-09-22.

Prerequisites and special admittance requirements

Bachelor's degree or equivalent. English B/English 6.

Course structure

Examination code	Name	Higher Education Credits
1M01	Models of Social Change and Social Stability	7.5

Course content

Social change and social stability has constituted an essential field of research within sociology ever since the discipline was established as academic. This course introduces important formalised models and methods used to describe and analyse social change and social stability. Its main focus is on demonstrating how simple formalised models can help explain significantly more complex social dynamics than what would have been possible to describe using traditional/conventional theories expressed in everyday language.

Learning outcomes

After completing this course students are expected to:
I. Knowledge and understanding
oBe able to account for the following concepts
- Threshold values
- Stable equilibria
- Cyclic equilibria
- Critical conditions
- Chaotic conditions
- Self-organising systems
- Phases and phase transitions
- Positive and negative feedback

II. Accomplishment and competence
oBe able to describe the models below and the dynamics they cause
- The SI, SIS and SIR models

- The Schellings segregation model
- Cellular automats
- Models of self-organising critical systems
- Evolutionary models
- Models for rational acting and their limitations
- Neural networks
- Agent-based models

oBe able to identify social situations where above mentioned models could contribute to increased understanding of the social dynamics involved

III. Values and evaluation
oBe able to critically discuss whether a model is applicable to describe a social phenomenon

•Be able to formalize a chosen social theory (or part of it)

In terms of values and evaluation:
•Be able to critically discuss whether a model is applicable to describe a social phenomenon

Education

The teaching is provided in the form of 7-8 combined seminars/lectures and compulsory laboratory exercises.

Forms of examination

a. The course assessment is in the form of a takehome exam and a specialised paper on how one elective model in the course has been utilised in empirical research.

b) The assessment uses the following criterion-referenced grades: A=Excellent, B=Very good, C=Good, D=Satisfactory, E=Sufficient, Fx=Not sufficient, F=Fail. The following four dimensions are considered:
1. Account of the following concepts
- Threshold values
- Stable equilibria
- Cyclic equilibria
- Critical conditions
- Chaotic conditions
- Self-organising systems
- Phases and phase transitions
- Positive and negative feedback

2. Description of the models below and the dynamics they cause
- The SI, SIS and SIR models
- The Schillings segregation model
- Cellular automats
- Models of self-organising critical systems
- Evolutionary models
- Models for rational acting and their limitations
- Neural networks
- Agent-based models

3. Discussion of social situations where the above mentioned models could contribute to increased understanding of the social dynamics involved
4 Demonstration of ability to critically discuss whether a specific model is applicable to describe a social phenomenon
A summarising assessment of the course work for each dimension is made by the examiner using three steps:
Good
Passed (some insufficiencies)
Failed

For the grade A, no insufficiencies of any dimension are allowed.
For the grade B, insufficiencies (level Passed) for one dimension are allowed.
For the grade C, insufficiencies (level Passed) for two dimensions are allowed.
For the grade D, insufficiencies (level Passed) for three dimensions are allowed.
For the grade E, insufficiencies (level Passed) for all dimensions are allowed.
Failing one dimension or not carrying out laboratory sessions leads to the grade Fx.

Failing more than one dimension leads to the grade F.

c) Students with the grade Fx or F are entitled to take further examination as long as the course is provided in order to achieve at least grade E. A student with the grade E or higher is not entitled to another examination to raise his/her degree. Students who received grade Fx or F on exams twice from the same examiner can request to be evaluated by another examiner. Such requests should be sent to the Director of Studies. Students can request to have examination according to this syllabus up to three semesters after the syllabus is no longer valid. Such requests should be sent to the Director of Studies.

Plagiarism, cheating and unauthorized cooperation
It is the responsibility of the student to be familiar with the rules for examination. Detailed information is available at Stockholm University's website. Teachers are obliged to report suspicion of cheating and plagiarism to the Director of Studies and the Disciplinary Board. An example of plagiarism is to formally or almost verbatim copy a text (even a single sentence) without indicating where this comes from. This also applies to texts you have previously written (self-plagiarism). Study groups are encouraged, but when it comes to individual course work, students must submit an independent work and not an unauthorized cooperation.

Required reading
Current literature list will be available no later than two months before the start of the course.