Course Report

Course(s)

- Modern Sociological Theory, SO7021-38295 7.5 hp
- Modern sociological theory, SO1FU12-FO801 7.5 hp
- Modern Sociological Theory, SO7020-OM627 7.5 hp

Semester
Spring 2021

Course Site Name in Athena
Modern Sociological Theory-VT21 (6217)

Department
Department of Sociology

Published:
2021-06-21

Number of respondents
31

Number of answers
16

Compilation
Compilation_SO7021_SO1FU12_SO7020_VT21.pdf

Description of changes since the last course and decisions already made since last course date (if any was made)

There were no substantial changes of the course since last time (spring 2020), but a few practical changes because the course was given over zoom. For example, during the group discussions taking place each class, I usually mix the students so they discuss with different students every time. Because they never had a chance to meet in person this time (2021), I thought it was better for students to discuss in the same group every time, to at least get to know a few of the fellow students of the course. I also assigned a moderator in the group for each class, so that the discussions became more structured and it would be clear who would present the question that the group was assigned to present. This was also new - usually every group discusses several questions and all groups are responsible for saying something about it during the discussion in the entire class. I also provided guiding questions, both general and specific, for all readings in advance and to all students. Previously, I ahve not provided general guiding questions, and only specific guiding questions to the students in the group who will present the specific readings.
The strengths of the course's according to the students
(summary based on quantitative results, text responses from the survey and any other evaluation during the course)

16 out of 31 students had answered the report. According to the result of the report, most students found the course content relevant (62 % answered 5 totally agree or 4). A large majority (87 % 5 totally agree or 4) found that the examination, consisting of a presentation of course literature and a paper on a topic of their own choice, tested how well they achieved the learning outcome. A large majority (80% totally agree 5 or 4) also learned new things during the course.

The weaknesses of the course according to the students
(summary based on quantitative results, text responses from the survey and any other evaluation during the course)

Some of the questions had very mixed responses. Considering teaching conditions, 12 % did almost disagree (answering 2, where 1 refers to disagree), 50 % totally agreed and 25 % were in the middle (answering 3). The evaluation of teaching quality was similar: 50 % thought the teaching was very good, 18 % good and 25 % fair.

The teachers' analysis of the course's implementation and results

This is a difficult course, both because of the literature (which almost 50 % found difficult or very difficult) but also because it requires very active engagement on the part of the student. At the same time, the results show that if the students make the effort to engage in the course - by reading, taking all the opportunities to discuss and present, choosing a topic they are interested in for their research paper - they do well and learn a great deal. Consequently, it is a demanding and difficult course, impossible to skim through by, for example passive listening and browsing the literature, but it is also rewarding. Giving the course over zoom did not affect the result much, but had some advantages because it enabled smoother transitions between different parts of the classes and it seemed good for the students who presented material (during the first part of every class) who did not have to stand in front of the class in the same way, and could, if they desired to do so, "hide" a bit more behind a power point.

Conclusions and suggestions for possible changes in order to develop the course and any decisions already made to develop the course before future course dates.

Overall, the course went well and for next time, it is possible that I will keep the set up of the group discussions, i.e. that students discuss in the same group each time, are responsible for discussing and presenting a specific question and that I assign a moderator in advance. This way of organizing the discussions went very well over zoom and might be good also in a classroom. I will also provide general and specific reading questions in advance next time too. To facilitate the understanding of the course literature, I may include some more contextualization of parts of the course literature and recommend more side-readings, including textbook chapters related to the readings.

Other comments