

Sociological analysis; How to use theory in the analysis of empirical data.

May 3-5, 2021

Course code: SOS9004

Number of points: 2,5 ECTs including essay

Campus: Bodø

Course start: May 3, 2021

Course language: English

Campus: Bodø

Prerequisites: Applicants must be admitted to a PhD-program.

Faculty:

Professor Berit Skorstad, Nord University

Professor Isaac Reed, University of Virginia

Introduction

How do we generate knowledge about the human world? How can we make valid claims about social phenomena? The simple answer is by conducting good analyses, based on relevant data. But what does it mean to conduct (good) analyses in social sciences? Analysis in social science always involves the use of theory in some way or another. But how do theory and evidence interact? How should we perceive theory in relation to empirical data? And, how do we go about to utilize theory productively in our analyses?

These are questions we aim to answer in this course, which uses as its main source the book of Isaac Ariail Reed (2011): *Interpretation and Social Knowledge: On the Use of Theory in the Social Sciences*. While Reed is a sociologist, and the course has a particular focus on sociological analyses, the book is aimed at social science in general. Professor John R. Hall at University of California, Davies, says about the book:

“This pithy, deeply intellectual account — strongly based in classic sources and contemporary debates — demands the attention of the widest range of scholars in the social and historical disciplines because it offers all of us an understanding of how diverse practices contribute to our larger enterprise”.

The course offers a theoretical and practical approach to the use of theory in social analysis. The course aims to give the participants both a deeper understanding of how valid knowledge about the human world can be created, and practical knowledge about how to proceed in order to develop such knowledge.

The course is organized as a two-day workshop with lectures and practical assignments. Active participation in discussions and practical assignments is

compulsory. Awarding of credits require a short paper to be submitted and approved after the course.

Learning outcomes:

These are the following learning outcomes expected upon completion of the course.

Knowledge

After completing the course, students should have gained advanced knowledge about:

- What constitutes social knowledge
- Different modes of knowing
- How theory and evidence interact
- The relation between interpretation, understanding and explanation

Skills

After completing the course, students should have advanced their ability:

- To choose theory applicable to a given set of evidence.
- To actively use theory in analyzing data
- To make theoretical claims about the human world
- To validate and justify theoretical claims

General competence

After completing the course, students should have advanced their ability:

- To analyze empirical data
- To develop social theory
- To generate knowledge

Program:

Date: May 3-5, 2021

Place: Zoom

May 3, 09:15 - 14:00

09:15: Presentation of the course – goals and expectations

10:15-11: Knowledge

Lunch

12:15: The Realist mode

13:15 The Normative Mode

May 4, 10:15 - 17:00

10:15-12 The Interpretation Mode

Lunch

13:15 – 14:30 Explanation

15:00 -17:00 Isaac Reed presents: Interpretation and Social Knowledge – on the use of theory in the Human Societies

May 5, 09:15 – 14:00

09:15 Student presentation/reflections of their essays – how they think about their use of data, theory and interpretations

Lunch

13:15 wrapping up

Required reading:

Isaac Ariail Reed (2011). *Interpretation and Social Knowledge: On the Use of Theory in the Social Sciences*. The University of Chicago Press. 216 pages.