

Introduction to sociology. Sociology as science.

Fall 2015/2016

Agenda for the lecture

1. What is sociology?
2. Sociology and common sens.
3. The beginnings of sociology.
4. Major theoretical perspectives.
5. Conducting sociological research.

What is sociology?

Individual perspective



What is sociology?

Broad perspective



What is sociology?

„A systematic study of human society”
(Plummer 2002)

But it is not only listings of facts and figures

„A form of consciousness, a way of thinking, a critical way of seeing things” (Berger 1963)

You need to see strange in the familiar, „The first wisdom of sociology is this: things are not what they seem” (Berger 1963)

Definition

„**Sociology** is the scientific study of social behavior, including its origins, development, organization, and institutions.^[1] It is a social science that uses various methods of empirical investigation^[2] and critical analysis^[3] to develop a body of knowledge about social order, social disorder and social change.”
(Wikipedia)

Common sens vs Sociological thinking

Common sens

- Based on own experience
- Familiar routines of daily life
- Based on stories we've heard
- Limited to our social millieux
- Stereotypes
- Personal troubles

Sociological thinking

- Uses broader perspective
- Can be based on data (statistical, historical, interviews)
- Sociological imagination:
 - "thinks him/herself away" from the familiar routines of daily life
 - Public issues

Sociological thinking

Benefits

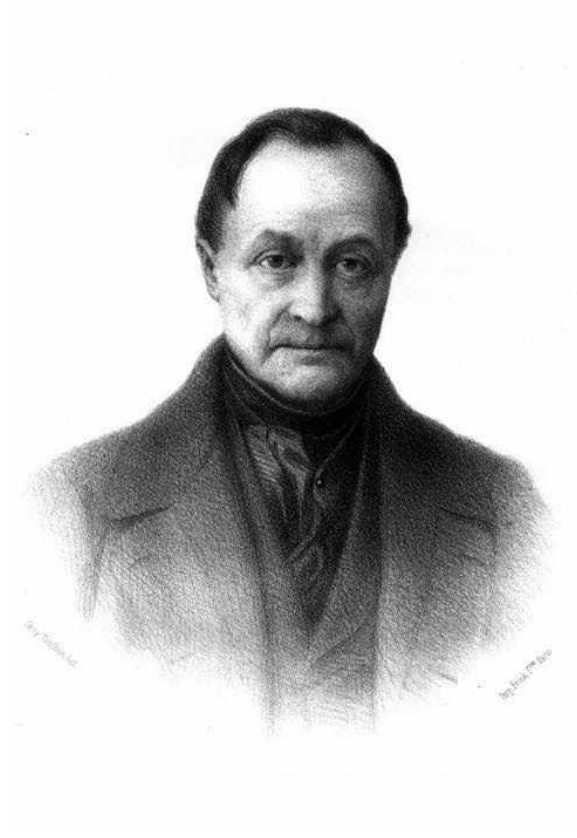
- Thanks to sociological awareness and critical thinking we can assess the truth about common assumptions
- We can assess opportunities and constraints that characterize our lives
- Empowerment to participation
- Confrontation of challenges in diverse world

Problems

- Sociology is a part of changing world
- Sociologists are part of what they study
- Sociological knowledge becomes a part of society

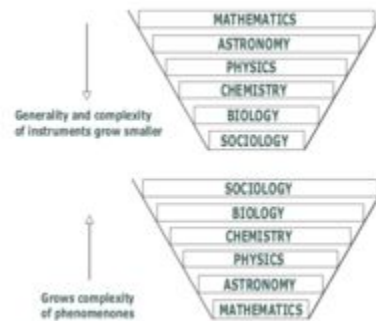
August Comte

1798 - 1857



- 1838 – Sociology
- Phases of social evolution:
 - the *theological* stage
 - the *metaphysical* stage
 - the *positive* stage

Comte's Theory of Science



Theoretical perspective

- A basic image that guides thinking and research.
 - Research
 - Fact
 - Verification

The functionalist perspective

- Functionalism is a framework for building theory that envisages society as a complex system whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability (Plummer 2002:22)

The conflict perspective

- is a framework for building theory that envisages society as an arena of inequalities that generate conflict and change (Plummer 2002:24)

Social action perspective

- A focus on social interaction in a specific situation (Plummer 2002:26)
- How social actor assemble social meaning
- Symbolic interaction perspective envisages society as the product of the everyday interactions of people doing things together

Agenda for the semester

1. What is sociology? Sociology and common sense. The beginnings of sociology. Major theoretical perspectives. Conducting sociological research.
2. Culture and society. Types of societies. Social change. Modernity and Globalization

Agenda for the semester

3. Socialization. Social control. Conformity. Social roles. The social collectivity and the social group. Basic characteristics of social groups. Typology of groups. The social institution - definition.
4. The social structure and stratification. Major stratification factors.

Agenda for the semester

- 5. Interactions.Communication. Mass media. The information society.
- 6. Population and urbanization
- 7. Social diversity: ethnicism and migration, gender order and sexuality, age stratification

Exam

Exam app. 1 hour

Test (close) questions

Open questions

App.20 questions

To pass: 50% + 1

Readings: photocopied in library