

Invitation – PhD course On Concepts

Dear PhD students,

We are happy to announce once again the PhD course *On concepts*. The 7,5 credit course is arranged by the Lund University Department of Sociology and will take place in April and May 2024. Course conveners are Chares Demetriou and Bo Isenberg. Deadline for application is March 15. Applications should be sent to charalambos.demetriou@soc.lu.se or bo.isenberg@soc.lu.se.

Course description

The chief aim of the course is to provide a deeper understanding of social-scientific concepts. While it covers the content of several chosen concepts, the course pays particular attention to meta-conceptual issues. As there are various ways about how to conceptualize and how to employ concepts in research, and as concepts travel through history and across academic disciplines and contexts of use, changing their meaning along the way, it is clear that meta-conceptual issues are wide-ranging. They range from etymology and conceptual history, to contemporary theoretical status and empirical application. The course examines several of these issues through discussion-friendly lectures. It also asks students to conduct a detailed investigation of one key concept taken from their dissertation work. This investigation is expected to cover both meta-conceptual issues and substantive issues particular to the chosen concept

The course consists of lectures and, ultimately, meetings related to the completion of the course essay assignment. While the course stretches from early April through early June, 2024, the lectures are delivered during the first two weeks of the course. The two course conveners will take turns to deliver a number of lectures aiming to not only present various authors and ideas on meta-conceptual issues but to engage students on these issues in connection to students' own research concerns. In addition, a number of senior researchers from the Department of Sociology will participate in the course by presenting and discussing their own research in relation to a respective key concept.

The course essay assignment is rather open. It should discuss a concept that is deployed in the student's PhD thesis, focussing on origin, development, implementations, and other meta-conceptual issues connected to the chosen concept. The approximate length of the essay should be 6000–8000 words. Students introduce their concept of choice at the end of

the second week, then write the essay and, after submitting it, participate in a paper seminar in which they defend their essay against an opponent and oppose another essay.

Instructors and examiners

Chares Demetriou (CD) and Bo Isenberg (BI)

Registration/Application

By email to charalambos.demetriou@soc.lu.se or bo.isenberg@soc.lu.se.

Deadline for application

March 15, 2024

Schedule (content is preliminary)

Tuesday, April 9, 13–16, room M128

BI – Introduction to the course. Presentation and discussion: On concept formation – ideal types (Weber).

Wednesday, April 10, 13–16, room Sh108

CD – Presentation and discussion: On the ladder of abstraction and on “radicalization” (Sartori, Demetriou and Alimi, and Demetriou)

Monday, April 15, 13–16, room Eden 222A

BI – Presentation and discussion: On the history of concepts (Koselleck, Richter).

Wednesday, April 17, 10–17, room M128

Researchers and PhD students present concepts – part 1. NN on xx...

Friday, April 19, 10–17, room M128

CD – Presentation and discussion: On concepts and words (Williams, Skinner) & sensitizing concepts (Blumer, Bowen).

Researchers and PhD students present concepts – part 2. NN on xx...

Friday, May 24 12.00

Deadline for submitting research paper. STRICT!

Monday, June 3, 10–16, room Sh108

CD, BI – Paper seminar with discussants. If needed in two parallel sessions.

Course requirements

- Active participation in the scheduled meetings.
- Seminar presentation of concepts.
- A research paper, 6000–8000 words, submitted on time.

Admission requirements

- Must be accepted into a PhD program. Students from the Department of Sociology at Lund University have priority.

Grading

- Pass or Fail, assessment based on participation and paper.

Mandatory readings

The following reading list is under construction but may give hints on topics that will be discussed.

- Max Weber, “Objectivity in Social Science”, in *Essays in the Methodology of the Social Sciences*, The Free Press, 1949, pp. 89–105.
- Reinhart Koselleck, “Begriffsgeschichte and Social History”, in *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, Columbia UP, pp. 75–92.
- Melvin Richter, “Appreciating a Contemporary Classic. The Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe and Future Scholarship”, in *Finnish Yearbook of Political Thought* (Vol 1, 1997), pp. 25–38.
- Raymond Williams, “Culture”, in *Key Words: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, Glasgow: Fontana, 1976, pp. 76–82.
- Quentin Skinner, “Language and Social Change”, in *Meaning and Context. Quentin Skinner and his Critics*, ed. James Tully, Polity Press, 1988, pp. 119–132.
- Herbert Blumer, “What Is Wrong with Social Theory”, in *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method*, University of California Press, 1996, pp. 140–152.
- Glenn A. Bowen, “Grounded Theory and Sensitizing Concepts”, *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 5(3), 2006, pp. 12–23.
- Giovanni Sartori, “Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics”, *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 64, No. 4 (Dec, 1970), pp. 1033–1053.
- Chares Demetriou, “Charles Tilly and Relational Sociology”, in *The Palgrave Handbook of Relational Sociology*, ed. Francois Depelteau. Palgrave Handbooks, 2018, pp. 307–324.

– Chares Demetriou and Eitan Alimi, “Relational Radicalization,” in in *The Palgrave Handbook of Relational Sociology*, ed. Francois Depelteau. Palgrave Handbooks, 2018, pp. 558–578.

Additional readings

Readings in relation to the specific concept under investigation are decided by the student and are expected to be in the range 300–500 pages.