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Theory and Research in Comparative Sociology

July 1- July 26, 2002

Course director: Ivan Szelenyi (Yale University)

Resource persons: Michael Burawoy (University of California, Berkeley)
Henryk Domanski (Polish Academy of Sciences)
David Grusky (Cornell University)
Gail Kligman (UCLA)
Peter Mateju (Czech Academy of Sciences)
Szonja Szelenyi (Cornell University)
Bruce Western (Princeton University)

Course objectives

The resource persons who teach in this course are scholars from leading academic institutions (Cornell, Princeton, Berkeley, UCLA), who distinguished themselves with their creative work in combining cutting edge methodologies with sophisticated theories in their empirical research in comparative social analysis. The aim of the course is to expose young faculty, who is teaching sociology, political science, gender and ethnic studies in various emerging democracies to such innovative comparative research theories and methodologies and offer them help in improving their teaching methods as well.

Course level

Advanced. It is anticipated that participants have a Ph.D. or equivalent in social sciences (or be advanced Ph.D. students at American research universities) and they need further training in new research and teaching methods. The aim is to attract junior faculty who teaches sociology, political science, or gender and ethnic studies in Central, Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, Mongolia and emerging democracies and to attract advanced Ph.D. students from leading US research universities.

Course format

There are eight workshops in the course (each workshop meets four times, for a three hour session) and 2 public lectures. From the eight workshops three are methodological, two theoretical and three substantive.

The methodology workshops combine a short lecture, with a seminar discussion with participants. Participants are also asked to work with examples, so for instance to prepare a plan how to teach a methodology class, takes field notes and present those in class. The theory workshops engage participants in discussion of text, based on close reading of those texts. The substantive workshops combine lectures with the discussion of the assigned readings in a seminar format. The public lectures follow the traditional lecture format.

Assessment is based in creative assignments, such as short essays, outline of a lecture, design of a research method.

Course content

In terms of methodology the course begins with a workshop (to be taught by Szonja Szelenyi, a successful teacher of statistics both at the undergraduate and graduate level at Cornell University) on questions of how to teach social statistics. The aim of this workshop is to improve the teaching skills in courses, which usually are not particularly

popular. Bruce Western – one of the most sophisticated methodologists in the world today – will teach a workshop on advanced statistical methods, which will introduce students to the most novel statistical techniques in social sciences. Gail Kligman, a Professor of Sociology at UCLA, with long standing research experience in Eastern Europe will teach a workshop on new developments in ethnographic field research.

The two theory workshops complement each other. Recently Ivan Szelenyi and Michael Burawoy in the American Journal of Sociology (January 2001 issue) engaged each other in a lively debate on “neo-classical” and “post-socialist” social theory. Ivan Szelenyi will teach an in depth workshop on “Reading Weber”, an introduction to “neo-classical sociology”, while Michael Burawoy will offer his alternative approach in his workshop on “post-socialist theory.”

All three substantive courses are comparative in orientation and offer instruction to the participants how to combine advanced methodologies with complex theoretical issues, such as discussed by Burawoy and Szelenyi in the theory workshops. David Grusky, the foremost authority in the world today on social inequality will teach a workshop on comparative approaches to the study of social inequality, Szonja Szelenyi will complement this with a workshop specifically on gender inequalities. Finally Bruce Western will teach a workshop on comparative study of labor markets and labor movements.

Two Central European sociologists, who distinguished themselves with their methodological and theoretical sophistication will offer two public lectures on various aspects of social transformation in post-communist societies.

Course syllabus

Topics	Resource person	No. of hours	Teaching methods	Discussion points
Teaching Social Statistics	Szonja Szelenyi	12	Lecture and seminar discussion	How to improve teaching of introductory statistics?
Advanced Statistical Methods	Bruce Western	12	Lecture and seminar discussion	Which are the latest developments in regression analysis?
On Ethnography	Gail Kligman	12	Lecture and seminar discussion	A comparative analysis of classical and contemporary ethnographies
Reading Weber	Ivan Szelenyi	12	Seminar discussion	A close textual analysis of the most important texts from Max Weber.
Post-socialist theory	Michael Burawoy	12	Seminar discussion	A case for a post-socialist theory, which does not abandon the idea of socialism
Social Inequality in Comparative Perspective	David Grusky	12	Lecture and seminar discussion	A comparative analysis of poverty and inequality in various societies
Gender Inequality	Szonja Szelenyi	12	Lecture and	Historical and

			Seminar discussion	contemporary patterns of gender inequalities
Labor Markets and Labor Movements in Comparative Perspective	Bruce Western	12	Lecture and seminar discussion	Main perspectives on labor organization and its effects on labor markets in Europe and North America
Changes in Social Stratification in Eastern Europe	Henryk Domanski	3	Lecture	Who are the winners and losers of transition in Eastern Europe?
Status Consistency and Middle Class Formation	Peter Mateju	3	Lecture	How successful is the formation of the middle class in former communist societies?

For more detailed biographies, updated course description, syllabus, reading lists please check <http://www.ceu.hu/sun/sunindx.html>

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