

PUBLIC SOCIOLOGY, LIVE!

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Sociology 185, Spring 2012

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The conventional course in sociology deals with knowledge accumulated in a particular subfield – economic sociology, political sociology, sociology of development, social theory, deviance and social control, etc. There are other courses that explain how sociologists go about doing research – the methods they use, survey research, ethnography, archival research, experimental research, etc. This course will be different. It will be concerned with the way sociologists (rep)resent sociology to the worlds they study, the ways and means sociologists use to disseminate their knowledge. How does sociological knowledge become part of other people’s worlds? This is what we call “public sociology”.

Sociologists may write books that are widely read, they may contribute to the opinion pages of newspapers, they may appear on radio or television, they may create their own blogs, they may share their expertise with social movements or voluntary associations, or they may advise governments or corporations. These are just some of the ways sociology becomes “public”. While there is an emerging literature on public sociology -- and it has generated a lot of controversy because of the way some see it as a threat to “professional” and “policy” sociology - - there are few courses on the topic. In some countries public sociology has a powerful presence, for example, Brazil, South Africa, Portugal and India. In other countries, like the United States, it is more subdued. The idea behind this course is to explore how public sociology is practiced in different countries including Lebanon, Colombia, Brazil, South Africa, India, Philippines, China, Ukraine, Spain, France, and the United States

Through skype or video-conferencing distinguished sociologists from different countries will discuss their public sociology with Berkeley students. The seminar will be recorded, downloaded and made available to all. Berkeley students will then be joined by students in parallel courses from around the world, all watching the videos and posting their comments on facebook. In this way we will build up a global conversation about public sociology, a project of public sociology in itself. Throughout we examine the variety of possible meanings, practices and dangers of public sociology.

This course will be open access, downloaded on to the website of the International Sociological Association (ISA). It coincides with the run-up to the ISA International Forum that will take place in Buenos Aires, August 1-4, 2012, whose theme, “social justice and democratization,” closely intersects with our own. The course will begin with a discussion of the meaning of public sociology and proceed to an understanding of the modern world through Manuel Castells’s theory of the network society. Our course can be understood through and is an exemplification of Castells’s theory. We will then tour the world visiting some great sights of public sociology, stopping to discuss them with local experts.

This is an experimental course in many ways. While we have conducted a global seminar before – see Global Sociology, Live! <http://www.isa-sociology.org/global-sociology-live/> -- this semester we will be organizing the filming of the seminars ourselves in a revamped laboratory in

Dwinelle 127. The laboratory is brand new and we will be its test group! Second, we have never tried to coordinate relations among parallel seminars across different countries. Third, and most important, the success of the seminar will be dependent on the initiative of the students who participate in the course. You will participate in various committees that will support the project as it develops. This syllabus is a work in progress that will evolve over the semester in accordance with the collective dynamics of this global venture.

REQUIREMENTS. The course will be organized and led by Michael Burawoy and Laleh Behbehanian.

- It meets twice a week for two hours, Mondays and Wednesdays, 10-12 in Dwinelle 127. Mondays will be preparatory for the public seminar on Wednesdays. Students have to turn up, help organize both sessions, and get involved in support committees. (30% of the Grade)
- Students have to read 30-40 pages from the work of the sociologist of the week, and write short comments (250 words) on the reading, in preparation for the class discussion on Mondays. Those memos will be due midnight on Saturday. The readings will be available on b-space. (30% of the grade)
- Over the semester students will be responsible for (a) a summary of one week's discussions around the meaning and practice of public sociology, and (b) comments directed at the summaries of, at least, two separate weeks. All these will be posted on facebook, thereby making them available to all our partners who will be posting their own discussion summaries. (15% of the Grade)
- Students will write a short final paper, maximum 3,000 words, evaluating the course. (25% of the Grade)

People who have agreed to participate with tentative topics in no particular order:

- Michael Burawoy: What is public sociology?
- Manuel Castells: The Network Society and World Crisis
- Marta Soler and Ramon Flecha: Overcoming Inequality in Spain
- Michel Wieviorka: Political Right in France
- Cesar Rodríguez-Garavito: Environmental Conflicts in Latin America
- Francisco de Oliveira: Citizenship Rights in Brazil
- Pun Ngai: Labor Rights in China
- Karl Von Holdt: Violence in South Africa
- Volodymyr Ishchenko and Anastasia Riabchuk: Protest Movements in Ukraine
- Walden Bello: Focus on the Global South (from the Philippines)
- Nandini Sundar: State Repression in India
- Sari Hanafi: Refugee Camps in Lebanon
- Barbara Ehrenreich: Ideology and reality in the US