



Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet
Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

SLUkurs

Syllabus

PNG0078 Critical Theory and Critical Realism, 5.0 credits

Syllabus approved

2018-09-11

Subjects

Other Social Science/Agricultural History/Rural Development/Landscape Architecture/Landscape Planning/Environmental Communication

Education cycle

Third cycle

Grading scale

Pass / Failed

The requirements for attaining different grades are described in the course assessment criteria which are contained in a supplement to the course syllabus. Current information on assessment criteria shall be made available at the start of the course.

Language

English

Prior knowledge

Accepted as a PhD student.

Objective, including learning outcomes

Upon completion of the course, the students shall be able to:

- Account for and critically discuss various aspects and perspectives of critical

theory and critical realism, with a specific focus on their contribution and relevance for social science

- Actively use analytical aspects of critical theory and/or critical realism to deepen and strengthen their own research work
- Account for and critically analyse different forms of reason and rationality
- Account for and critically discuss the relation between theory and praxis

Content

Two of the theoretical paradigms that presently influence and contribute to social science are critical theory and critical realism. At the end of his life Foucault stated that if he had been more knowledgeable about critical theory earlier he would have saved useful time and avoided several errors. Even though critical theory and critical realism are hugely influential in social science on a global level, the knowledge of these paradigms in Sweden is quite limited.

This course offers a general introduction to both critical theory and critical realism, with a specific focus on their contributions to social science. Students will be introduced to the paradigms' major arguments and discussions, concerning issues, such as forms of reasons and knowledge, ontology and epistemology, levels of reality, science's critical capacity and self-reflexivity, the relation between structure and agency and dialectics. There will be a major focus on the theories and arguments of Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno and Jürgen Habermas, who are regarded as major advocates of different versions of critical theory, and Roy Bhaskar, Margaret S. Archer and Bob Jessop, whose research are inspired by theories and arguments of critical realism.

The core of the course will consist of a series of lectures and seminars. The lectures will focus on essential aspects of these theories and their current scientific impacts. The seminars will be dedicated to analysing original texts by social scientists, related to these theories, and to discussing how the participants of the course can use these theories for their own scientific research and production.

The course will be divided into four parts, each devoted to a central theoretical issue.

Requirements for examination

For successful completion of the course the student must write an essay of approximately 12 pages (4 500 words), focused on a subject approved by the teacher, and actively participate in lectures and seminars.

The essay may be written in English or Swedish.

Additional information

The course is offered by the research school Society and Landscape (SL) at the Department of Urban and Rural Development.

Responsible department

Department of Urban and Rural Development