

## ECONOMIC SOCIOLOGY

2021-22 L-36 6 ECTS

Prof. Matteo Villa

### Course title

*Economic Sociology: Studying the economies of past and present societies*

**Programme (contents of the course).** Syllabus and examination program are divided into three parts, connected to each other:

The *first part*, "Getting Started. Origins and developments of contemporary economic sociology", introduces to a first-level knowledge about the origins of economic sociology and the classical scholars, some recent developments and the main differences with regard to the economic science.

The *second part*, "Institutional. Studying the economies of past and present societies: some assumptions," provides an understanding of the main assumptions of the so-called New Economic Sociology, stemming from the works of Karl Polanyi and Mark Granovetter and discussing the main assumptions and research tools helpful to observe the different economies in different historical and cultural contexts, the modes of social embeddedness of economic relations, and the roles of individual and collective actors, institutions, dynamics of power, trust, cultural and moral values.

The *third part*, "Research. Themes and research perspectives for the economies of the twenty-first century", proposes an in-depth study referred to some topical research fields in the current economic sociology and anthropology and ecological economy. There are four options among which the student must choose one:

- *Option 1*: "Complexity, cybernetics, and systems thinking: reconnecting economics and ecology in the age of out-of-control processes".
- *Option 2*: "Debt: the myth and the story. Beyond the traditional version on markets' birth".
- *Option 3*: "Emotions, norms, and values: the role of mental constructs in economic relationships and human adaptation".
- *Option 4*: "For a substantive economy: heterodox approaches on economics, society, and the environment".

### Bibliography (Required texts):

I PART – Getting Started: Origins and developments of contemporary economic sociology

- R. Swedberg, *Principles of Economic Society*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2003 – Only Preface and the Chapters 1 and 2

II PART – Institutional: Studying the economies of past and present societies: some assumptions

- K. Polanyi, *Primitive, Archaic and modern economies*. ed. G. Dalton, New York: Doubleday and Company Inc., 1968 – Only Chapters I, II, III, IV, VII.
- M. Granovetter, *Society and Economy. Framework and principles*, Cambridge, The Belknap press of Harvard University, 2017

III PART – Research: Themes and research perspectives for the economies of the twenty-first century. Chose one option between the following:

*Option 1: Complexity, cybernetics, and systems thinking: reconnecting economics and ecology in the age of out-of-control processes*

- M. Bonaiuti, *La grande transizione. Dal declino alla società della decrescita*, Torino, Bollati Boringhieri, 2013 – Only the Chapter 1 "Verso un approccio di complessità".
- G. Bateson: *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, Chandler publications, New York, 1972 – Only the Chapter "Ecology and Flexibility in Urban Civilization".

- G. Bateson, *A sacred unity: further steps to an ecology of mind*, Milano, Adelphi, 1997 – Only the Chapter 8 "The New Conceptual Frames for Behavioral Research".
- T.H. Eriksen, *Overheating. An Anthropology of accelerated change*, London, Pluto Press, 2016 – Only: Preface and Chapters I, II, III e VIII.

Option 2: *Debt: the myth and history. Beyond the traditional version of market's birth*

- D. Graeber, *Debt. The First 5.000 Years*, New York, Melville House, 2011 – Only the Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 12

Option 3: *Emotions, norms, and values: the role of mental constructs in economic relationships and human adaptation*

- J. M. Barbalet, *Emotion, Social Theory, and Social Structure. A Macrosociological Approach*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998 – Only the Chapter 2 "Emotion and rationality".
- G. Bateson: *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, Chandler publications, New York, 1972 – Only the Chapters: "Bali: The Value System of a Steady State" e "Style, Grace, and Information in Primitive Art".
- A.R. Hochschild, *The Commercialization of Intimate Life: Notes from Home and Work*, Berkley, University of California Press, 2003 – Only the Chapters 5, 6, 9.
- V. Zelizer, *Economic Lives: how culture shapes the economy*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2011 – Only the Chapter 10. "The Purchase of Intimacy".

Option 4: *Economic sociology and Ecological economics: heterodox views on economics, society, and the environment*

- S. Latouche, *L'invenzione dell'economia*, Torino, Bollati Boringhieri, 2010 – Only the Chapter 4. "L'ordine naturale come fondamento immaginario della scienza sociale"
- F. Block and M.R. Somers, *The power of market fundamentalism. Karl Polanyi's Critique*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2014. Only the Chapter 2. "Beyond the economic fallacy".
- N. Georgescu-Roegen, *Bioeconomia. Verso un'altra economia ecologicamente e socialmente sostenibile*, Torino, Bollati Boringhieri, 2003 – Only the Chapter 2 "La legge di entropia e il problema economico" (*The Entropy Law and the Economic Problem*).
- C. Spash, *Routledge Handbook of Ecological Economics. Nature and Society*, London, Routledge, 2017 – Only the Chapters: 1. "Social ecological economics", 4. "Political ecology and unequal exchange" 5. "Ecofeminism", 6 "Ecological Marxism and ecological economics: from misunderstanding to meaningful dialogue".

**Methodological indications.** Lectures are based on theoretical-active teaching methods, mainly based on Action-Research methods for learning and integrated use of Theory, Experience, Reflection. Lessons include mixes of oral presentations, practical exercises, discussion and comparison. Whether online (remote teaching) it will be adapted to the possibilities offered by the available tools, trying to encourage the active participation of students. Information will be available on the lecturer's website: [https://people.unipi.it/matteo\\_villa/](https://people.unipi.it/matteo_villa/)

**Exam mode.** Exams are based on oral test according to the art. 23 of University Regulations on Teaching Activity. The third part of the program can be addressed in a different way, a practical exam consisting of a group oral presentation (2 or 3 people) to be performed in the classroom based on the contents of the texts of the chosen option. Those who choose this way will not be asked to answer questions on the third part of the programme during the individual exam. Group presentations can be made in one of the three planned days per year. Dates and other information can be found on Lecturer's Institutional website at the page Studenti > Esami.

At the student's choice it is possible to take the exam in English.

Depending on the security and organizational conditions related to the Covid-19 pandemic, oral and practical tests will be handled online or in attendance. Information on the lecturer's website [https://people.unipi.it/matteo\\_villa/](https://people.unipi.it/matteo_villa/) and on [Valutami](#).

**Indications for non-attendants.** All the Students, particularly Non-attending students, Not Italian Native Speakers and Erasmus Students, are encouraged to get as soon as possible all the informations about courses, exams and other teaching issues from the Professor's Institutional website (see below). To clarify any possible doubt, getting further information about courses, lectures and examinations held by the lecturer, or to discuss the syllabuses you can write an e-mail or access to the Office Hour (see below).

**Where to find more information:**

Students are encouraged to carefully check the institutional Professor's web site to find additional information on programs and on their validity for courses of previous Academic Years and information on where to find the required texts.

E-mail lecturer: [matteo.villa@unipi.it](mailto:matteo.villa@unipi.it)

Lecturer institutional website: [https://people.unipi.it/matteo\\_villa/](https://people.unipi.it/matteo_villa/)

Course Web Page: [https://people.unipi.it/matteo\\_villa/sistemi-di-welfare-comparati/](https://people.unipi.it/matteo_villa/sistemi-di-welfare-comparati/)

Other students' info: [https://people.unipi.it/matteo\\_villa/studenti/](https://people.unipi.it/matteo_villa/studenti/)

**Where to find texts:** All required texts for this course can be found in bookstores, online stores, and the University of Pisa library, or through the links above.