

Seminar
University of Cologne
Fall 2019

Foundations of Institutional Theory

Dr. Timur Ergen
Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies (MPIfG)
te@mpifg.de

Office hours by appointment; please send an email to te@mpifg.de.

Meets Fridays at 2 pm in S-242.

Course Description

Theories of institutions have been at the core of the social and behavioral sciences throughout the 20th and early 21st century. The course introduces theories of institutions from across the social sciences. The material covered ranges from institutional theory's classical origins through to recent debates about the explanation of institutional change. Among the main problems discussed are the relationship between social action and institutions, the origins of social order and change, the role of culture and norms in social organization, and the interplay between social power and institutions. While the course delves deeply into theoretical debates, students are encouraged to link theoretical positions to their ongoing empirical research. Corresponding to the field of institutional theory, the course is paradigmatically eclectic. It covers positions from a broad variety of theoretical and methodological perspectives, among them classical anthropology, institutional economics, historical political science, and organizational sociology.

Participation in the seminar

All participants will be expected to read all of the texts on the syllabus, take an active part in class discussions, give a brief presentation and prepare a term paper of 15–20 pages due on 15 February 2020. Term papers have to be handed in in two versions: an electronic version has to be uploaded to the *Ilias* platform; a printed version has to be handed in according to the regulations of the ISS.¹ Both versions have to include a signed declaration on plagiarism. For the term paper original research on literature, data, or archival material is required. Term papers have to be written in English. All texts are made available on the *Ilias* website of the course.

For organizational matters please contact Timur Ergen (te@mpifg.de).

¹ To be found at: <http://www.iss-wiso.uni-koeln.de/studium/studierende/soziologie-und-empirische-sozial-und-wirtschaftsforschung/hausarbeiten/>.

Readings

11 October 2019

Introduction

Hans Joas and Wolfgang Knöbl, 2009. What is Theory? In: Hans Joas and Wolfgang Knöbl, *Social Theory: Twenty Introductory Lectures*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1–19.

Peter A. Hall and Rosemary Taylor, 1996. Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms. *Political Studies* 44, 936–957.

18 October 2019

Durkheim

Émile Durkheim, 1966 [1893]. *The Division of Labor in Society*. New York: The Free Press, 200–225.

Émile Durkheim, 1982 [1895]. *The Rules of Sociological Method*. New York: The Free Press, 50–59.

Émile Durkheim, 2001 [1912]: *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 153–182.

25 October 2019

The American Tradition

Thorstein Veblen, 1967 [1899]. *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. New York: Penguin, 1–67; 167–187.

8 November 2019

The Anthropological Tradition

Bronislaw Malinowski, 1944. *A Scientific Theory of Culture and Other Essays*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 43–119.

15 November 2019

The Structural-Functionalist Approach

Talcott Parsons, 1951. *The Social System*. New York: The Free Press, 24–67; 428–479.

22 November 2019

The Sociology-of-Knowledge Approach

Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, 1967. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. New York: Anchor Books, 47–92.

29 November 2019

Sociological Neo-Institutionalism I

John Meyer and Brian Rowan, 1977: Institutionalized Organizations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony. *American Journal of Sociology* 83, 340–363.

6 December 2019

Sociological Neo-Institutionalism II

Paul DiMaggio and Walter W. Powell, 1983. The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields. *American Sociological Review* 48, 147–160.

Paul DiMaggio and Walter W. Powell, 1991. *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1–38.

13 December 2019

Economic Neo-Institutionalism

Douglass North, 1990. Institutions and their Consequences for Economic Performance. In: Karen Cook and Margaret Levi (eds.), *The Limits of Rationality*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 383–401.

Kenneth A. Shepsle, 1989. Studying Institutions: Some Lessons from the Rational Choice Approach. *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 1, 131–147.

20 December 2019

Institutions and Actors

James G. March and Johan P. Olsen, 1989. *Rediscovering Institutions. The Organizational Basis of Politics*. New York: The Free Press, 21–38; 159–172.

10 January 2020

Historical Institutionalism

Paul Pierson and Theda Skocpol, 2002. Historical Institutionalism in Contemporary Political Science: In: Ira Katznelson and Helen Milner (eds.), *Political Science: The State of the Discipline*. New York: Norton and Company, 693–721.

James Mahoney, 2000. Path Dependence in Historical Sociology. *Theory and Society* 29, 507–548.

17 January 2020

Institutional Change I

Wolfgang Streeck and Kathleen Thelen, 2005. Introduction. In: Wolfgang Streeck and Kathleen Thelen (eds.), *Beyond Continuity: Institutional Change in Advanced Political Economies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1–39.

24 January 2020

Institutional Change II

John F. Padgett and Walter W. Powell, 2012. *The Emergence of Organizations and Markets*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1–29.

31 January 2020

Final Discussion