

This Ain't No Knowledge Society.

Revisiting Theories of Classical/Post/Late Modernity in Digitized Societies

Post/Doc Lab Digital Media

#define LECTURERS “Nikolaus Pöchhacker & Jan-Hendrik Passoth”

Schedule

Tuesday 15:00 - 18:00

MCTS, Room 370

Block I: Modernity theorized till the 1970s

17.04.2018	Introduction I: Early ideas on modernity (19th century)	LECTURERS
24.04.2018	Introduction II: Early ideas on modernity (20th century)	LECTURERS

Block II: Problematizing (Post-)Modernity

15.05.2018	Modernity (Re-)Defined I – Concepts & Definitions	LECTURERS
29.05.2018	Modernity (Re-)Defined II – Issues of Modernity	LECTURERS
05.06.2018	Modernity (Re-)Defined III – Post-Modern Solutions?	LECTURERS

Block III: Discussing digitized Modernity

26.06.2018	Progress, State Formation, & Digital Technologies	LECTURERS
03.07.2018	Domination of Nature & Knowledge Production: digitized Sciences?	LECTURERS
10.07.2018	Individualization, personal Freedom & Digitization: contradictions and possibilities.	LECTURERS

We have never been modern! (French: Nous n'avons jamais été modernes). This credo was the title of one of the most famous books of Bruno Latour (1993) in which he proclaimed that modernity was nothing more than a well-crafted illusion. Yet, what exactly does it mean "to be modern" and how can we think about modernity in increasingly digitized societies? In this seminar we will revisit classical theories of modernity (Simmel, Weber, Durkheim, amongst others) and the later critique on their conceptions of "modernity" (Baumann, Latour, etc.). While doing so, the course aims to reflect on the role of digital technologies in these proclaimed post/late/modern societies. Instead of focusing on singular micrological phenomena of digitized societies we will direct our attention on the meso and macro levels of societal transformation through social theory. To do so, the students will learn (and read) different formulated critiques, reconstructing different definitions as well as the resulting issues of modernity and (if given) proposed solutions to overcome shortcomings of modern societies.

The course will be divided in three distinct blocks that build upon each other. In the first block input on classical theories of modernity and societal transformation will be given. In addition, the students will be divided into groups, preparing tasks for the second block. The students will be given four weeks to prepare one theoretical approach/critique of modernity (i.e. one approach per group). The different approaches will then be discussed together in the second block. In the third and final block, the students will then apply the different notions of post/late/modernity on digital phenomena of contemporary societies.

Course Information

Type	Seminar
Course No.	0000004187
Time	Tuesday 15:00-18:00 (Note: not every week – details see above)
Place	MCTS, Augustenstr. 46 Room 370
Language	English
Lecturer	Nikolaus Poehhacker & Jan-Hendrik Passoth
Resources	
Creditable to	Master's program ...
Credits & Requirements	<p>5 ECTS</p> <p>100 % essay on a chosen topic on the relation of post/late/modern societies and digitization. Topic must be coordinated with LECTURERS.</p> <p>Length of Essay: min. $\sum_{i=1}^n \frac{2}{(i+1)}$ 30k characters (including spaces, excluding bibliography), where n is the number of people involved, and $n \in \{1, 2, 3, 4\}$</p> <p>Deadline: 30th of September 2018</p>
Consultation	nikolaus.poechhacker@tum.de jan.passoth@tum.de

17.04.2018 **Introduction I: Early ideas on modernity (19th century)**

LECTURERS

In this session, we will introduce the program of the course and assign the literature that the students have to prepare for the second block. Each student has to read one book discussed in block II and prepare the argument brought forward by the author(s) to present it in class. Then we will start content-wise with an introduction of early ideas of modernity in the 19th century/early 20th century (eg. Simmel, Weber, Durkheim). The session is conceptualized as a lecture with discussion parts.

Literature (optional):

Durkheim, E. (2014). *The Division of Labor in Society*. (W. D. Halls, Trans.). Simon and Schuster.

Lechner, F. J. (1990). *Social Differentiation and Modernity: On Simmel's Macrosociology*. In Georg Simmel and *Contemporary Sociology* (pp. 155–179). Springer, Dordrecht.

Marx, K. (1990). *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*. Volume 1. (B. Fowkes, Trans.) (Reprint edition). London; New York, N.Y.: Penguin Classics.

Weber, M. (2001). *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. (T. Parsons, Trans.) (1 edition). London; New York: Routledge.

24.04.2018 **Introduction II: Early ideas on modernity (20th century)**

LECTURERS

In this session we will discuss later conceptions of modernity in the mid-20th century – till roughly the 1970s (eg. Parsons, Elias, Adorno). The session is conceptualized as a lecture with discussion parts.

Literature (optional):

Horkheimer, M., & Adorno, T. W. (2002). *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. (G. S. Noeri, Ed.) (Anniversary edition). Stanford, Calif: Cultural Memory in the Present.

Elias, N. (2000). *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*. (E. Jephcott, Trans.) (Revised edition). Oxford; Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishing.

Foucault, M. (2008). *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979: Lectures at the College De France, 1978-1979*. (A. I. Davidson, Ed., G. Burchell, Trans.) (2008 edition). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Parsons, T. (1971). *The system of modern societies*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

15.05.2018 **Modernity (Re-)Defined I – Concepts & Definitions**

LECTURERS

In this session, we will discuss together different approaches and critiques to modernity and the formation of concepts like post and late modernity together. To do so, the students will shortly present the definitions of modernity from the perspective of the theoretical approach. In the group discussion, we will then discuss the different conceptions of modernity, if they hold and how they correspond to definitions and theoretical approaches before the 1970s.

Literature

Bauman, Z. (2000). *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge, UK : Malden, MA: Polity Press.

Beck, U. (1992). *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. SAGE Publications.

Latour, B. (1993). *We Have Never Been Modern*. Cambridge, MA: Prentice Hall / Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Lyotard, J.-F. (1984). *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Manchester University Press.

29.05.2018 **Modernity (Re-)Defined II – Issues of Modernity**

LECTURERS

In this session, we will build on the last session and discuss together different conceptions of post/late/modernity in respect the formulated critique and assumed breaking points of modernity. To do so, the students will shortly present the critique formulated in the books they had to prepare. In the group discussion, we will then discuss the formulated critique and how they correspond to each other. Also, we will begin to think of the implications of such a critique for digital phenomena.

Literature

Bauman, Z. (2000). *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge, UK : Malden, MA: Polity Press.

Beck, U. (1992). *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. SAGE Publications.

Latour, B. (1993). *We Have Never Been Modern*. Cambridge, MA: Prentice Hall / Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Lyotard, J.-F. (1984). *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Manchester University Press.

05.06.2018 **Modernity (Re-)Defined III – Post-Modern Solutions?**

LECTURERS

In this session, we will build on the last session and discuss together different proposed solutions for the identified issues of modern societies in respect the formulated critique and assumed breaking points of modernity. To do so, the students will shortly present the proposed solutions found in the prepared literature. In the group discussion, we will then discuss these solutions and how they correspond to each other. Also, we will begin to think of the role of digital technologies in relation with these new formations of post-modern societies. At the end of the session we will also re-shuffle the student groups and assign tasks for the last block of the seminar.

Literature

Bauman, Z. (2000). *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge, UK: Malden, MA: Polity Press.

Beck, U. (1992). *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. SAGE Publications.

Latour, B. (1993). *We Have Never Been Modern*. Cambridge, MA: Prentice Hall / Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Lytard, J.-F. (1984). *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Manchester University Press.

26.06.2018 **Progress, State Formation, & Digital Technologies**

LECTURERS

Based on the first two blocks, the students should have developed an understanding of the relationship between modernity, the idea of progress and the formation of states. For this session, each of the groups will research one social phenomenon of digitized societies that is related to the idea of progress and state formation. In class, the students will shortly present their empirical case and the theoretical framings based on the literature of the course. We will then discuss each of the cases and try to find similarities, which should lead us to a critical reflection of these ideas in post/late/modern societies.

03.07.2018 **Domination of Nature & Knowledge Production: digitized Sciences?**

LECTURERS

Based on the first two blocks, the students should have developed an understanding of the relationship between modernity, the idea of domination of nature and modern modes of knowledge production. For this session, each of the groups will research one social phenomenon of digitized societies that is related to these ideas. In class, the students will shortly present their empirical case and the theoretical framings based on the literature of the course. We will then discuss each of the cases and try to find similarities, which should lead us to a critical reflection of these ideas in post/late/modern societies.

10.07.2018 **Individualization, personal Freedom & Digitization: contradictions and possibilities** **LECTURERS**

Based on the first two blocks, the students should have developed an understanding of the relationship between modernity, the idea of individualization and personal freedom in developed and modern societies. For this session, each of the groups will research one social phenomenon of digitized societies that is related to these ideas. In class, the students will shortly present their empirical case and the theoretical framings based on the literature of the course. We will then discuss each of the cases and try to find similarities, which should lead us to a critical reflection of these ideas in post/late/modern societies.

In this session we will also discuss possible topics and formal requirements of the term papers. At the end of the session, there will also be a short feedback round and a collective reflection on the course.
