

Lesson Plan: Introduction to Micro-Sociology

Teacher: Associate Professor Kevin Perry Ph.D. in Social Sciences.

Department of Social Work, Ilisimatusarfik.

Teaching Language: British English.

Purpose:

The course aims to introduce students to micro-sociology and micro-sociological theories. The teaching focuses on theories developed by the late Erving Goffman, emphasising concept understanding and analysis.

The teaching is an interactive, hands-on approach with many examples from research and everyday life drawn on to illustrate Goffman's concepts. Moreover, the course includes group work, where students work together in the classroom with questions relating to the literature. Finally, students are encouraged to participate actively during the course by participating in discussions and contributing with relevant examples from their experiences.

Learning Goals:

Active participating students should acquire an introductory knowledge of micro-sociology and a deeper appreciation of Erving Goffman's micro-sociological theories.

Moreover, through active participation, students should acquire basic presentation skills.

ECTS: 10:

Course Assessment:

All students are expected to participate actively during the sessions and must submit an individual written assignment after the course (date to be arranged). Active participation contributes to the final grade.

Bachelor students' assignment length: Seven pages (excluding front cover, list of contents, and literature list).

Masters' students' assignment length: Twelve pages (excluding front cover, list of Contents, and literature list).

Internal exam assessment from SØJ.

Grades are per the GGS-Scale (from A downwards to F).

1st session: 14th September 2022:

Introduction to micro-sociology:

The first session introduces micro-sociology. After that, we will look at Erving Goffman's dramaturgical approach to micro-sociology.

The *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* was published in 1959 and written by Erving Goffman. Goffman puts forth a theory of social interaction that he refers to as the dramaturgical model of social life. To portray the nuances and significance of face-to-face social interaction, Goffman utilises theatre imagery.

Goffman likens social interaction with people in everyday life to actors on a stage, each playing various roles. The audience consists of other individuals who observe the role-playing and react to the performances. There is a 'front stage' region where the actors are on stage before an audience. While on the 'front stage,' being conscious of the 'audience' and their expectations for their role influence the actor's behaviour. Moreover, there is also a back region, or 'backstage,' where individuals can relax, be themselves, and rehearse their roles before meeting the audience.

Literature for session 1:

Goffman, E. (1990): *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Penguin Books, London, England.

Students should read The Introduction & chapter 1 (performances) in preparation for the first session.

2nd Session: 21st of September 2022:

'On Face-Work':

Social interaction is a central theme in micro-sociology, and society is a consequence of these social interactions. Goffman's essay on face-work provides its reader with a clear and concise explanation of social interaction. Goffman illustrates how face-to-face interaction generates emotions that form the foundations of social life and views human interaction as part of a play where we take on parts accordingly. His essay on face-work expands on this concept by showing how sometimes the play encounters disruptions. Goffman's essay 'On Face-Work' explores approaches to human interaction and focuses on the concept of the face. On Face-Work proposes an analytic study that explores interaction as a ritual process. Crucially, Goffman's essay provides a solid understanding of the definition of the face and is a comprehensive insight into basic kinds of face-work.

Literature for session 2:

Goffman, E. (2008): *Interaction Ritual – Essays in Face-to-Face Behaviour*. AldineTransaction, New Brunswick (USA & London).

Students should read: On Face-Work (pages 5 – 45).

3rd Session: 28th of September 2022:

Role Distance, and the Construction of Identity:

The creation of space distance between the performer and performance, what Goffman call's role distance, is one of the most important aspects of his conceptual framework. By noticing the importance of Role Distance, Goffman can situate the concept of identity within a single coherent structure. In this structure, identity is not preconceived or presupposed but constructed. Identity becomes a product of performance. Identity here is not defined by the role alone, allowing in this way for manipulation and detachment to be part of the field of analysis. He uses the concept of role distance to account for behaviour whereby the social actor actively manipulates the situation to detach from the role.

Literature for session 3:

Goffman, E. (1986): Encounters – Two Studies in the Sociology of Interaction.

Students should read 'Role Distance' (pages 85 – 152).

4th Session: 5th of October 2022:

Stigma Theory:

In the fourth session, we will look more closely at Erving Goffman's Stigma theory. Stigmatising is a powerful way of excluding people from social interaction and resources. Moreover, stigmatising people as undesirable is a powerful tool for framing others and ostracising them from the local community. Following Goffman (1963), stigma is a phenomenon whereby individuals with an attribute (trait) can become profoundly discredited and rejected by society due to their characteristics. Stigmatisation is a process by which the reaction of others spoils' 'normal' identity. During the session, we look at the 'Super Snitch Patrol' (Perry, 2015) and the process of stigmatising a group of youth workers by a group of young men with minority ethnic heritage.

Literature for session 4:

Goffman, E. (1990): Stigma. Penguin Books, London, England (there are Danish versions available).

In preparation, students should read: Chapter 1 (Stigma & social identity).

Course Literature:

Goffman, E. (1986): Encounters – Two Studies in the Sociology of Interaction. Macmillan Publishing Company, New York.

Goffman, E. (1990): The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life. Penguin Books, London, England.

Goffman, E. (1990): Stigma. Penguin Books, London, England.

Goffman, E. (2008): Interaction Ritual – Essays in Face-to-Face Behaviour. AldineTransaction, New Brunswick (USA & London).