

SOCI 438-The Production of Self, Society and Knowledge in the Post(?) COVID19 Age 1

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Course Description:

Are we still living in the COVID-19 age, or have we passed it? Whatever response would be given to this question, nobody could deny the long-lasting impacts that the COVID-19 age imposed on our life. This seminar course will focus on the long-lasting influences that COVID-19 lifestyle brought to our individual and social life and our knowledge about them. In some respects, the COVID-19 age may seem like a new phenomenon. Outside of wartimes, history can barely remember any episodes during which the entire world would undergo such rapid, forceful lifestyle changes. However, this era can also be perceived as a radical strengthening of tendencies that have already gradually begun to prevail in our lives.

One of these tendencies with increased public legitimacy during the time of the global pandemic is the dominance of cyberspace over personal and social life. In the recent decade, social media and virtual connectivity have gradually overtaken in-person human relationships and COVID-19 has accelerated this trend. Yet, even after the pandemic, social institutions and human relations never entirely returned to their pre-COVID19 modes. Online classes, home office workspaces, and even virtual interpersonal gatherings and communications have remained as an ___ if not the most desirable ___ option for all forms of social interactions. As a sociologist, one may ask how has this massive transition from actual to virtual life affected people's relationships with their "self" (e.g., self-image, mental wellness), "significant others" (family members, friends), State, institutions and the larger society or community at large. The same sociologist may wonder why people ask if the people who reluctantly begin the quarantine period are the same people (character-wise) who reluctantly and cautiously end the quarantine. Has COVID time changed the mechanism of production and reproduction of self and its social, political and biopolitical relations? And if so, how?

Also, long-lasting quarantine made virtual space and social media the primary way of communication with the outside world for many people. Knowledge production activities cannot be called an exception in this trend. The domination of long-distance communications changed the medium, procedures and consequently, contents of knowledge production mediums. These mediums may range from social and political news agencies to research and educational institutions and universities. In this course, we will address the influences of COVID-19 age on our knowledge production systems. For example, one may wonder if the university is the same before and after Covid 19. Or if the course syllabus, universities' and professors' expectations from students and students' expectations from the courses and university are the same as pre-pandemic time? Does it indicate any projected changes in the long-term function of the

¹ This online outline is only intended to give an overall sense of the course. Detailed course outlines will be made available for all registered students on the first day of class. Only those outlines are to be considered official.

university in society? How about the news? Is there any major shift in our reliable news sources before and after the pandemic? How about collective political decisions and actions? Are the procedures through which we make our major political decisions and even actions the same as pre-COVID time or not?

Sociology teaches us that we may discover more sophisticated and multilayered aspects of social reality if we begin to observe our seemingly personal (individual) experiences from a collective critical lens. C. Wright Mills (1916-1962) conceptualizes this notion as "Sociological Imagination" and describes it as the promise of sociology. This seminar aims at providing a collective platform to share our sociological insights and to reflect on our individual experiences of the post(?) COVID-19 age from a collective and critical perspective.

Course Materials:

All reading materials (journal papers, book chapters, videos and online sources) will be accessible via Bright Space.

Mode of Delivery:

The course will be taught in person and in seminar format. Each session will be a combination of the instructor's short lecture, students' presentations and class discussions. Students' active participations will be a vital aspect of the course. Students are expected to share their reflections on reading materials and their personal experiences/insights regarding the session's related agenda.