

PUBLIC LECTURE EVALUATION

Masaryk University

Faculty	Faculty of Social Studies
Procedure field	Sociology
Applicant	Doc. Bernadette N. Jaworsky
Lecture date	6. 4. 2023
Lecture topic	<i>Cultural sociology of conspiracy theories</i>
Persons present (number) (see the attached list of attendees)
Designated evaluators (board members)	prof. PhDr. Ladislav Rabušic, CSc. prof. PhDr. Tomáš Katrňák, Ph.D. Univ.-Prof. Dr. Anna Pospěch Durnová, Ph.D. Prof. Anna Lund – online Prof. PhDr. Ing. Ondřej Císař, Ph.D. – online

Evaluation text

In her lecture entitled *Cultural Sociology of conspiracy theories*, Doc. Jaworsky dealt with the issue of conspiracy theories from the cultural sociology perspective. She chose the Covid-19 pandemic in the context of the USA as a case study. Through relevant footage from American television, Jaworsky argued that sociological analysis needs to go beyond identifying individual factors making people believe in conspiracy theories and argued for a distinguished focus on the cultural performance of these theories through representation, meaning, scripts, and, most importantly, narratives. Through her analysis, Jaworsky showed that there were two basic types of the narrative around the Covid-19 pandemic: the mainstream narrative versus the alternative narrative that claimed that the virus is likely part of a premeditated plan (tragedy) and any vaccine will end in disaster on a global scale (apocalypse) - this narrative Jaworsky called *plandemic*.

Drawing on relevant empirical material (film footage, recordings of relevant American television programs/audio + video, newspaper articles, and books), she analyzed the case through the Strong program of cultural sociology methods, anchored in the tradition of interpretive social research. Specifically, she based her analysis *on the concept of Social Performance* developed by Alexander and the *Social Drama* by Isaac Reed. Through these concepts, she was able to demonstrate how the “plandemic” can be conceived as a “performance” involving actors using specific “scripts” through that they mobilize symbols and cultural representations and develop specific storylines in order to produce a particular effect on the audience; here the citizen that should/should not believe in the plandemic narrative. The analytic scheme allowed her to identify specific performances that make the plandemic narrative appear “truthful” and to manifest the crafting of these performances through meanings.

The commission is pleased to note that Nadya Jaworsky demonstrated a deep knowledge of her field and the ability to integrate her research findings into the existing scientific knowledge of cultural sociology and interpretive sociology more broadly. The presentation was well structured and used appropriate and precise terminology. She was able to explain complex concepts clearly. Jaworsky demonstrated the ability to think critically and present arguments with a high degree of persuasiveness. The lecture was supplemented with appropriate examples, illustrations, and empirical materials to support the coherence of the presentation. The presentation of her "reading" the problem was clear and lucid. Her conclusions drawn were logically derived from the analysis presented. The committee evaluates this aspect of the lecture very positively.

From a didactic point of view, Nadya Jaworsky also demonstrated her ability to put her lecture to concrete use and show its relevance to real-world problems. She delivered the lecture with clear and understandable diction, a good pace, and good speech. Again, the commission notes with pleasure that Jaworsky presented an inspiring and motivating presentation that appealed to the audience and made them actively participate in the discussion.

Overall, the lecture aroused great interest from the audience, reflected in a lively and rich discussion. The questions asked by the audience centered on the global significance of conspiracy theories and the versatility of Jaworsky's concepts. Jaworsky stressed the analytical potency of her concepts and their applicability to different countries and topical contexts. The conversation also revolved around the heuristic value of the cultural pragmatics' analytical schema, particularly the "awakening narrative," which emphasizes the importance of individual agency and post-material values. Jaworsky also provided insightful explanations on certain analysis items, such as "cultural representation" and "background representation," and underscored the value of cultural sociology in understanding public debates and social phenomena. Her comprehensive knowledge of the empirical field, competing perspectives, and cultural sociology approach was strikingly evident. Overall, the discussion was an engaging and informative exchange of ideas.

Conclusion

The lecture delivered by Bernadette N. Jaworsky, entitled *Cultural sociology of conspiracy theories* and delivered as part of the professor appointment procedure, **demonstrated** sufficient scholarly qualifications and pedagogical capabilities expected of applicants participating in a professor appointment procedure in the field of sociology.

Date: April 6th, 2023

prof. PhDr. Ladislav Rabušic, CSc.

prof. PhDr. Tomáš Katrňák, Ph.D.

Univ.-Prof. Dr. Anna Pospěch Durnová, Ph.D.

