



**FAKULTA
HUMANITNÍCH STUDIÍ**
Univerzita Karlova

Fakulta humanitních studií UK, Program PRVOUK 19 - Interdisciplinární sociální vědy,
zve na přednášku z cyklu Historicko-sociologických konfrontací s názvem:

“Confrontations and Controversies in the Theory of Talcott Parsons”

Uta Gerhardt (University of Heidelberg)

Přednáška proběhne v angličtině **ve středu 2. 11. 2016 od 17.00**
v místnosti **č. 2080** v Jinonicích (U kříže 8, Praha 5).

Abstrakt:

The lecture looks at the three phases of the social thought of Talcott Parsons – the early work with *The Structure of Social Action* its culmination, the “middle phase” with *The Social System* and the AGIL-scheme, but also the late work concentrating on interaction media and the societal community. In all three phases, he was deeply involved in controversy with other social theorists in his time.

In the 1930s and into the 1940s, when social theory in America was dominated by Social Darwinism (“struggle for survival”, “survival of the fittest”), he introduced the sociology of Max Weber as the viable alternative. The controversy was mainly – but not solely – with then prominent Pitirim Sorokin.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the controversies he was involved in, concerned – for one – the “Frankfurt School”, mainly in regard of how value neutrality is essential for social science fitting the democratic modern industrial society, and also – second – C. Wright Mills when he charged that Mills’ image of society and social thought (“sociological imagination”) was antiquated as well as unrealistic.

The last controversy that he thought through, if in vain, concerned utilitarianism as in the economism of “exchange theory” but also modern economics in general, when the point was that the latter’s notion of social action was dangerously anti-political but also scientifically inadequate.

My lecture deals with how Parsons, from the 1930s to the 1970s, was deeply engaged in the various controversies as he defended his views vigorously and ardently – his main point was throughout that social science must take into account real society but should refrain from *weltanschauung*, as had been the maxim of his lifelong intellectual mentor, Max Weber.

Uta Gerhardt is a German sociologist and professor emeritus at the University of Heidelberg. She studied sociology, philosophy and history at the universities of Frankfurt am Main and Berlin. In 1969, she obtained a Ph.D. at the University of Konstanz. The focus of her work is on medical sociology, structural-functionalist role theory, and general sociological theory. She also wrote a major biography of Talcott Parsons.

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Kontakt:

Maggie Škabraha Dokupilová (FHS UK) maggie.skabrahamdokupilova@fhs.cuni.cz
Marek Skovajsa (FHS UK) marek.skovajsa@fhs.cuni.cz