

Seminar

University of Bremen
Winter 2025/2026

The Ordinal Society (08-29-GTh-4)

Wednesdays 14:00–16:00

FVG M2010

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Office hours flexible by appointment via *email*

Description

This seminar builds on the lecture Theory of Society (08-29-GTh). It deepens central concepts and arguments through the joint discussion of the latest applications and further developments of social theory within the framework of a concrete social problem area – the effects of digital technologies on social orders, individuals, and social inequalities. At the center of the seminar is Marion Fourcade and Kieran Healy's monograph *The Ordinal Society*.

Course Requirements

Information on examinations and requirements will be announced in the lecture.

Course Materials

The course materials can be found on Stud.IP in the course Ordinal Society.

Sessions and Core Texts

Session 1: Introduction and Organization

October 15, 2025

Session 2: The Society of Algorithms

October 22, 2025

Required Reading:

Burrell, J. und M. Fourcade, 2021. The Society of Algorithms. *Annual Review of Sociology* 47, 213–237.

Additional Material:

Watch one of the following two documentaries:

In German: 'Algorithmen: Die unberechenbare Gefahr' (ARTE):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vGlwJlUqZnU>

In English: 'Algorithms: The Secret Rules of Modern Living' (BBC)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k2AqGongii0>

Session 3: The Sociology of Citizenship

October 29, 2025

Required Reading:

Marshall, T. H., 1965 [1949]: *Citizenship and Social Class*, S. 71–134 in: T.H. Marshall, *Class, Citizenship, and Social Development. Essays by T.H. Marshall*, Anchor Books (especially: 'The Early Impact of Citizenship', S. 91–105).

Session 4: Rankings, Ratings and the Credit Card

November 5, 2025

Required Reading:

Rona-Tas, A., 2017. The Off-Label Use of Consumer Credit Ratings. *Historical Social Research* 42, 1, 52–76.

Additional Material:

Watch the documentary 'The Secret History of the Credit Card' (2004):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2mHsTKvAuZc>

Session 5: Enter the Ordinal Society

November 19, 2025

Required Reading:

Fourcade, M. und K. Healy, 2024. *The Ordinal Society*. Harvard University Press, Introduction.

Session 6: The Box of Delights

November 26, 2025

Required Reading:

Fourcade, M. und K. Healy, 2024. *The Ordinal Society*. Harvard University Press, Ch. 1, pp. 33–66.

Session 7: The Data Imperative

December 3, 2025

Required Reading:

Fourcade, M. und K. Healy, 2024. *The Ordinal Society*. Harvard University Press, ch. 2, pp. 67–99.

Session 8: Classification Situations

December 10, 2025

Required Reading:

Fourcade, M. und K. Healy, 2024. *The Ordinal Society*. Harvard University Press, ch. 3, pp. 100–131.

Session 9: The Great Unbundling

December 17, 2025

Required Reading:

Fourcade, M. und K. Healy, 2024. *The Ordinal Society*. Harvard University Press, ch. 4, pp. 132–161.

Winter Break: December 22, 2025–January 2, 2026

Session 10: Layered Financialization

January 7, 2026

Required Reading:

Fourcade, M. und K. Healy, 2024. *The Ordinal Society*. Harvard University Press, ch. 5, pp. 162–186.

Session 11: The Road to Selfdom

January 14, 2026

Required Reading:

Fourcade, M. und K. Healy, 2024. *The Ordinal Society*. Harvard University Press, ch. 6, pp. 187–227.

Session 12: Ordinal Citizenship

January 21, 2026

Required Reading:

Fourcade, M. und K. Healy, 2024. *The Ordinal Society*. Harvard University Press, ch. 7, pp. 228–258.

Session 13: The Rightness of Being Ranked

January 28, 2026

Required Reading:

Fourcade, M. und K. Healy, 2024. *The Ordinal Society*. Harvard University Press, ch. 8, pp. 259–286.