

SOCIOLOGY 475: CLASSICAL SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY SPRING 2014

Lectures: Tues/Thurs 11:00am-12:15pm
Room: 114 Ingraham

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

The purpose of this course is to introduce and examine some of the foundational ideas and texts in sociological theory. Typically courses in classical sociological theory focus primarily or exclusively on the writings of a small handful of thinkers that have come to form the sociological canon; usually this means studying the original works of Karl Marx (1818-1883), Emile Durkheim (1858-1917), and Max Weber (1864-1920). In part this course does not deviate from tradition. It is worth noting however that a lot of courses calling themselves “sociological theory” courses should really be called “sociological theorist” courses. They are about the ideas of particular theorists and are organized accordingly around bodies of theoretical work rather than around the ideas as such, their logics and interconnections. Though we will read a good amount of the primary literature of classical thinkers, we focus also on the specific problems, questions, and theories they inspired. In addition to becoming acquainted with the work of specific thinkers, we will see how persistent theoretical issues in sociology are currently explained and reformulated. This means that we will read modern interpretations and clarifications of the original writings of classical thinkers as well as modern elaborations on classical problems and questions. My hope is that this approach will balance the investigation into the bodies of thought of particular thinkers with the examination of particular ideas and aspects of social theory.

A note on reading difficult social theory

Though we read a lot of secondary readings that are much easier on modern eyes we still read a fair share of difficult writings from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I have two general pieces of advice on reading difficult social theory, one pragmatic, and the other methodological.

- (1) It is often the case that students spend a considerable amount of time reading, even taking detailed notes, yet they find it very difficult to absorb the central ideas in a text. In these cases re-reading is not always terribly efficient. My suggestion is as follows: Instead of

delving into the reading immediately, familiarize yourself with the text first. Skim the conclusions and introduction, scan through the titles of the subsections, and try to get a sense of the subject matter. Once you start reading, if you already have a sense of what the piece is about, how it is organized, and what the main concepts are, you'll be able to identify whether or not particular passages are relevant or secondary. If you spend 15 minutes on this kind of exercise before reading you might have a relatively clear sense of what the piece is about and where the author is going. This way, you may find the reading less challenging and more productive. In addition to this, the secondary readings should provide a good entry point into the more difficult material.

- (2) Read generously. The easiest kind of criticism to make is a criticism of underlying assumptions. All theoretical work makes simplifying or seemingly unwarranted assumptions about the world. In my view this is a virtue rather than a defect in theory; assumptions and simplifications are often very useful in drawing out dynamics that are difficult to discover when we try to simultaneously incorporate multiple layers of social reality. This does not mean however that assumptions should never be criticized. But to be generous to a work of theory, and to get as much out of it as possible I suggest the following three steps to reading:
- i. *Think inside the box*: When first going through the ideas try to be as charitable as possible to the author. Instead of trying to find holes, try to see how the thinking fits together. Getting stuck on criticism too early can be a barrier to understanding the general approach and contribution of the piece;
 - ii. *Make internal criticisms*: Once you have an understanding of the approach and contribution, then you can focus on criticisms. But, not all criticisms are equal. Try to form criticisms of the argumentation *given* the assumptions. That is, the author proposes a way of thinking about a particular problem – *given* that mode of understanding the problem, do the conclusions follow?;
 - iii. *Make external criticisms*: The last step comes the most naturally: criticize the assumptions. Only after the first two steps should you pillory your author for the faulty underlying assumptions, for the indefensible mode of analysis, for the unmotivated categories employed, or for the incoherence of the conceptual apparatus. But even here, be cautious. Assumptions often are not claims about how the world actually works; instead they sometimes operate as useful heuristics that bring certain problems to light that are otherwise obscure.

REQUIREMENTS

Reading

All readings (except for the recommended ones) listed in the syllabus are mandatory, and they should be completed *before* class. In cases where readings are listed for the whole week, ie, for two classes together, it is best to have completed all of the readings before the first class. If that isn't possible you can read the first half of the readings for the first class and the second half for the second class.

ALSO: Bring the readings to class, we will be going through them, and you might need them for a quiz!!

Grading (In Brief)

Attendance/Participation	20%
Pop quizzes	25%
Midterm exam	25%
Final exam	30%

Final grades will be allocated as follows: 92-100=A; 88-91=AB; 82-87=B; 78-81=BC; 70-77=C; 60-69=D; Under 60=F.

Two in-class exams

There will be two exams during the semester – one on materials from the first half of the course, and a final on the second half. (See Course Schedule for dates.) They will be closed book and held in class (so, there is no exam during Finals Week for this course). The exams will assess whether you have done the readings, paid attention in class, and thought about the material seriously. They will consist of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. More information will be provided as we go along.

Pop quizzes

Nobody likes pop quizzes, but the goal here is motivate everyone to really do the readings. The quizzes will not be difficult; they are not intended to test how deeply you have thought through the text and absorbed the ideas. They are simply meant to assess *whether* you've done the readings assigned for that day. So, as long as you've done the relevant readings, and underlined, highlighted, or made notes on what seems to be relevant, you should be able to answer very basic questions about the text. Unless I specify otherwise, they will be open book. And they will take about 10 minutes at the beginning of any given class. But if you arrive late and miss the quiz you will receive a zero.

There will be eight quizzes scattered across the semester. As you can see, by not telling you when the quizzes will be there is a real incentive on your part to do all the readings. Everything in this class is geared to get everyone to sit down and read. Also, I will drop your lowest grade.

Last point: As above if readings are listed for one whole week (two classes), a pop quiz will focus either on the first half or the second half of the required reading depending on whether it falls on the first or second class.

Attendance/Participation

Attendance is required, and your grade for this part of the class depends on coming to class regularly, on time, and prepared to discuss the readings. Everyone is granted two free absences during the semester; any additional absence will be penalized. The only exceptions beyond this will be for serious family or medical emergencies.

Participation is always murky to assess, but you will be given a rough grade on the basis of your contributions to class discussions and level of engagement with the materials. It will be a rough three point scale: 3 gets you full points and means you participated actively, consistently asking and answering questions and stating opinions and concerns; 2 gets partial points and means you opened your mouth but didn't really convince me that you've done any serious reading; and 1, no points, means you showed up to snooze. I realize talking in class is not easy for everyone and if that is the case I actively encourage you to set up an appointment to talk to me about the materials.

What happens if you take one of your free absences and miss a pop quiz? This is why one of the quizzes can be dropped. What happens if your second freebie absence coincides with *another* pop quiz?? In this scenario if you want equivalency for the quiz you will have to write a "reading response" – a two page, double spaced response to the required reading for that class showing that you have completed and understood the reading. Again, outside of these two free absences, missing a quiz means getting a zero. Reading responses should be handed in **no later than one week** after the quiz that you missed. You can write no more than one reading response as a make-up for an absence during a quiz, or, yes, for a completely botched quiz. So there is some wiggle room around the quizzes: one can be dropped and one can be made-up.

Electronics

I do not allow the use of any electronic devices in class, which includes cell phones, laptops, ipads, and other devices. The World Wide Web is just too tempting. Any slides I use will be posted to the course website on Learn@UW, which should minimize the notes you'll need to take. Exceptions will be made for students who require a laptop for accessibility reasons or who see the laptop as essential to their work. Students in the latter group will need to see me in office hours and convince me that they require the device.

READINGS AND COURSE SCHEDULE (SUBJECT TO ADJUSTMENT)

Jan 21 -- Intro

- No readings

Jan 23 -- The Rise of Social theory; Elements of Theory (Total: 35 pages)

- Martin Hollis, *The Philosophy of Social Science: An Introduction*, Chapter 1, pp. 1-12; (12 pages)
- Robert Nisbet, *The Sociological Tradition*, "Ch.2 - The Two Revolutions", pp. 21-44 (23 pages)

- Recommended: Robert Heilbroner and William Milberg, *The Making of Economic Society*, “Ch.3 – The Emergence of Market Society”, pp. 32-46 (15 pages)

Jan 28 -- Smith (total pages: 65)

- Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, in Robert Heilbroner, *Teachings from the Worldly Philosophy*: p. 73-95; Bottom of 99-105 (30)
- Robert Heilbroner, “The Wonderful World of Adam Smith”, in *The Worldly Philosophers: The Lives, Times and Ideas of the Great Economic Thinkers*: p. 29-47 (19)
- Adam Gopnick, Market Man: What did Adam Smith Really Believe, *New Yorker*, Oct 2010, pp. 1-6 (6)
- Harry Braverman, "The Division of Labor", in *Labor and Monopoly Capital*, pp. 49-58 (10 pages)
- Recommended: Simon Clarke, “Classical Political Economy”, in *Marx, Marginalism and Modern Sociology*, pp 12-35 (Skip “The Physiocratic Theory of Society”, pp.18-21)

Jan 30 – Smith continued

- Continued from Jan 28

Feb 4 – Malthus and Ricardo (total pages: 34)

- Thomas Malthus and David Ricardo, in Robert Heilbroner, *Teachings from the Worldly Philosophy*: p. 107-118 (13 pages) (On Population and rent)
- David Ricardo, in Robert Heilbroner, *Teachings from the Worldly Philosophy*: p. 123-126 (4 pages) (On Machines)
- Robert Heilbroner, “The Gloomy Presentiments of Parson Malthus and David Ricardo”, in *The Worldly Philosophers: The Lives, Times and Ideas of the Great Economic Thinkers*: p. 49-65 (17)

Feb 6 -- Marx and the Manifesto (total pages: 25)

- Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, pp.469-491; 499-500 (25 pages), in Tucker, *The Marx-Engels Reader*
- Recommended: Eric Hobsbawm, "On the Communist Manifesto" pp.101-120 (20 pages) in Hobsbawm, *How to Change the World*

Feb 11 -- Marx and Exploitation (total pages: 75)

- Karl Marx, "Wage, Labour and Capital", in Tucker, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, pp. 203-210 (end of the section) (8 pages)
- Karl Marx, “Ch. VIII – Production of Surplus Value” and “Ch. IX – Value of Labour”, in *Value Price and Profit*", pp. 40-43 (4 pages)
- Karl Marx, “The Concept of Relative Surplus Value”, *Capital*, in Tucker, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, pp. 376-379 (end with the last full paragraph) (4 pages)
- Ben Fine and Alfredo Saad-Filho, “Capital and Exploitation”, in *Marx’s Capital*, pp. 31-46 (16 pages)
- Ernest Mandel, "Ch. 1 - The Theory of Value and Surplus Value" pp. 1-18 (18 pages) and "Ch. 2 - Capital and Competition", p.1-13 (13 pages) in *An Introduction to Marxist Economic Theory*

- Erik Olin Wright, *Class Counts*, Ch. 1 - Class Analysis, pp. 3-14 (12 pages)

Feb 13 -- Marx and Exploitation continued

- Continued from Feb 11

Feb 18 -- Marx and Historical Materialism (Total pages: 65)

- Marx, The Preface to the Critique of Political Economy, in Jon Elster (ed), *Karl Marx: A Reader*, 187-188 (2 pages)
- Leo Huberman, “Prayers, Fighters—and Workers”, *Man’s Worldly Goods*, pp.3-16
- Alex Callinicos, Ch. 5 – “History and the Class Struggle”, *The Revolutionary Ideas of Karl Marx*, pp. 81-103 (23)
- John Roemer, Ch. 8 – Historical Materialism, *Free to Lose*, pp. 108-119 (12)
- Peter Frase, Four Futures, *Jacobin*, Winter 2012, 27-34 (8)

Feb 20 -- Marx and Historical Materialism continued

- Continued from Feb 18

Feb 25 -- The State in Social Theory (total pages: 84)

- VI Lenin, The State and Revolution, Princeton Readings, 10 pages.
- Ralph Miliband, Lenin’s The State and Revolution, 11 pages
- David McLennan, "The State", in *Marxism after Marx*, pp. 106-110 (5 pages)
- Fred Block, The Ruling Class Does Not Rule, in *The Political Economy: Readings in the Politics and Economics of American Public Policy* edited by Joel Rogers and Thomas Ferguson, pp. 32-46 (15 pages)
- Erik Olin Wright, Class and Politics, in *Interrogating Inequality*, pp. 88-101 (14 pages)
- Recommended: Adam Przeworski, "Material Interests, Class Compromise, and the State", in *Capitalism and Social Democracy*, pp. 171-177 (7 pages)
- Recommended: Martin Gilens, “Under the Influence,” Boston Review, 7/1/2012

Feb 27 -- The State in Social Theory

- Continued from Feb 25

Mar 4 – Marxism and Collective Action (Total pages: 43 pages)

- Claus Offe and Helmut Weisenthal, “Two Logics of Collective Action: Theoretical Notes on Social Class and Organizational Form”, in Maurice Zeitlin (ed), *Political Power and Social Theory*, pp.67-116 (43 pages).

Mar 6 -- Durkheim: Analysis of Socialism (Total pages: 30)

- Emile Durkheim, "Ch.7 - Analysis of Socialist Doctrines", in *Emile Durkheim: Selected Writings*, ed Anthony Giddens, pp. 155-172 (18 pages)
- Raymond Aron, "VI - Socialism", in *Main Currents in Sociological Thought: Durkheim, Pareto, Weber*, pp. 70-81(12)
- Recommended: Gouldner, "Introduction", in *Socialism and Saint-Simon*, by Emile Durkheim, edited by Alvin Gouldner, pp. viii-xxiii (16)

Mar 11 -- Review

Mar 13 -- Midterm Exam

Mar 18 -- Spring Recess

Mar 20 -- Spring Recess

Mar 25 -- Social theory and socialism 1 (50 pages)

- Albert Einstein (1949), "Why Socialism?", in *Monthly Review* (4 pages)
- GA Cohen – "The Camping Trip" (3-11) and "Is the ideal feasible" (53-79) 36 pages, in *Why not socialism?*
- Seth Ackerman – "The Red and the Black", *Jacobin*, (37-46) 10 pages

Mar 27 -- Social theory and socialism 2 (37 pages)

- Erich Fromm (1963) "The Psychology of Basic Income", *The Nation*, (439-442) 4 pages
- Ernest Mandel (1986) "In Defense of Planning", *New Left Review*, (5-37) 33 pages

Apr 1 -- Durkheim: Method and Suicide (Total pages: 35)

- Emile Durkheim, "Sociology and Social Facts" and "Suicide and Modernity" in Charles Lemert's *Social Theory*, pp. 61-68 (8) [In reader, pp. 522-529]
- Ian Craib, "Durkheim: The Discovery of Social Facts", in *Classical Social Theory*, pp. 25-33 (9) [In reader, pp. 530-534]
- Frank Parkin, "Ch. 1 – Sociology as Science", in *Emile Durkheim*, pp. 8-25 (18)

Apr 3 -- Durkheim and Moral Education (Total pages: 60)

- Emile Durkheim, *Moral Education*, pp. 1-14 pages [In reader, pp 564-578]
- Steven Lukes, "The Theory and Practice of Education", in *Emile Durkheim: His Life and Work*, pp. 109-119 (11 pages) [In reader, pp. 628-638]
- Samuel Bowles and Herb Gintis, Beyond the Educational Frontier, in *Schooling in Capitalist America*, pp. 3-17 (14 pages) [In reader, pp 639-646]
- Steven Pinker, The Moral Instinct, New York Times, pp. 1-14
- Amia Srinivasan, In the Long Cool Hour, Review of Philip Kitcher's "The Ethical Project", *London Review of Books*, pp. 1-7

Apr 8 -- Durkheim and Moral Education continued

- Continued from Apr 1

Apr 10 -- Althusser and Ideology (total: 34 pages)

- Louis Althusser, in Lemert, *Social Theory*, pp. 246-248 (3 pages) [In reader, pp. 648-650]
- Terry Eagleton, "What is ideology?", in *Ideology: An Introduction*, pp.1-31 (31 pages)

[In reader, pp 653-683]

- Recommended: Terry Eagleton, "From Lukacs to Gramsci?", in *Ideology: An Introduction*, pp.112-123 (12 pages)
- Recommended: Erik Olin Wright, "Class Consciousness", in *Class Counts*, pp.193-204 (12 pages)
- Recommended: Jon Elster, "The Marxist Critique of Ideology", in *An Introduction to Karl Marx*, pp. 168-184 (17)

Apr 15 -- Weber: Method and Bureaucracy (total: 33 pages)

- Max Weber, Objectivity in Social Science, in Calhoun, *Classical Sociological Theory*, pp. 211-217 (7 pages)
- Max Weber, Basic Sociological Terms, in Calhoun, *Classical Sociological Theory*, pp. 218-227 (10 pages)
- Max Weber, "The Bureaucratic Machine", pp.83-87 (5 pages) in Lemert, *Social Theory*.
- Kieran Allen, "Ch. 5 – Methodology" in Max Weber: A Critical Introduction, pp.68-78 (middle of page) (11 pages)
- Recommended: Geoffrey Hawthorn, "Anti-Magician", in *London Review of Books*, 31(16), 2009, pp.1-6 (6 pages)

Apr 17 -- Weber: Protestantism and Capitalism (Total: 32 pages)

- Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, in Calhoun, *Classical Sociological Theory*, pp. 228-246 (18 pages)

Apr 22 -- Weber: Protestantism and Capitalism 2 (35 pages)

- Kieran Allen, "Ch. 3 – The Spirit of Capitalism" pp.32-46 and "Ch. 4 – Why didn't Asia Develop", (47-67) in Max Weber: A Critical Introduction

Apr 24 -- Veblen: Conspicuous Consumption, (Total pages: 46)

- Thorstein Veblen, *Theory of the Leisure Class*, Ch.3, pp. 28-48 (20) and Ch. 4. 49-69 (20)
- Adam Gopnick, "Display Cases", April and May, 1999, *New Yorker*, 176-184 (6 pages)
- Pierre Bourdieu, "Distinction, selection", in Emirbayer in *Emile Durkheim, Sociologist of Modernity*, pp. 50-54 (4)
- Jon Elster, "Snobs" in *London Review of Books*, 3(20), Nov 1981, pp.10-12 (3)

Apr 29 -- Feminist Social Theory: Beauvoir, Brenner & Hartmann (Total pages: 35)

- Beauvoir, "Woman as Other" in Charles Lemert's *Social Theory*, pp. 337-339 (2)
- Johanna Brenner, "Rethinking Women's Oppression", *New Left Review*, March-April 1984, selections.
- Heidi Hartmann, "The Unhappy Marriage of Feminism and Marxism", in Jaggar and Rothenberg, *Feminist Frameworks*, pp. 172-189 (18)
- Recommended: Catherine MacKinnon, "Feminism, Marxism, Method, and the State", *Signs*, Spring 1982, pp. 515-544 (29)
- Recommended: Erik Olin Wright, "In Defense of Genderlessness" in *Arguing about*

Justice: Essays for Philippe Van Parijs, 403-413.

May 1 – Du Bois and Social Theory (Total pages: 40)

- Du Bois, W.E.B., Black Reconstruction in America (New York: Atheneum, 1977 [1935]). Selections
- Du Bois, W.E.B., The Souls of Black Folk (New York: Penguin, 1989 [1903]). Selections.
- Recommended: Barbara J. Fields. 1990. “Slavery, Race and Ideology in the United States of America.” *New Left Review*.
- Recommended: Satnam Virdee. 2008. *Racism*. Cambridge: Polity Press, Selections.
- Recommended: Aldon Morris, 2014. The Scholar Denied, selections.

May 6 – Review

May 8 -- Final Exam