

Classical Sociological Theory
Soc 200
Wellesley College, Fall 2009

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office hours: PNE 329
Mon 2-4; Tues 3-4
& by appointment

Course Description

This course provides an introduction to the thought of several key figures in the founding of sociology as a discipline. We will survey the works of several thinkers who were concerned with understanding the massive changes in social structure and life in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Considerable time and attention will be paid to the writings of Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Emile Durkheim, whose works have shaped and influenced most of sociological literature. Many contemporary social science writings often assume a familiarity with the writings and ideas of this “triumvirate” of thinkers. In addition, the course will include the works of Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Marianne Weber, and W.E.B. DuBois, as well as discussion of the role of a classical theoretical canon in the discipline.

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Understand the origins of sociology in the social upheavals and transformations that characterized the emergence of modern, western society.
- Gain familiarity with different types of sociological theory and styles of theoretical thought.
- Gain familiarity with the major founders of sociological thought through reading their original writings.
- Understand major sociological concepts that have shaped the formation of the discipline.
- Understand the contemporary relevance of classical theoretical concepts and apply these concepts in order to analyze contemporary events and issues.
- Critically compare different theories about the fundamental nature of society and the processes of social change.
- Evaluate the role of the classical canon in the discipline of sociology.

Required Texts

The following texts are available at Wellesley College Bookstore and on reserve at Knapp:

Sociological Theory in the Classical Era: Text and Readings, by Laura Desfor Edles and Scott Appelrouth. 2005, Pine Forge.
The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, by Max Weber. 2001, Routledge.
The Elementary Forms of Religious Life, by Emile Durkheim. 1995, Free Press.

Additional required readings will be available in the E-reserve section of the course conference.

Course Requirements & Evaluation

1. Class preparation, attendance, & participation 15% of course grade

Your preparation for class is crucial to your active learning in the course. In order to prepare for class you will need to carefully and thoughtfully read required readings *before* the class for which they are listed. Some of the readings for this course are quite dense; however the reading load for the course is manageable *if you don't get behind*. For some of the readings, reading guides or questions will be available on the course conference. In order to provide an incentive for you to engage thoughtfully with the readings and stay on schedule there will occasionally be **reading comprehension quizzes** at the beginning of class. Reading comprehension quizzes will not be announced and there will be no make-up quizzes for those who miss a quiz because of absence or tardiness.

Regular attendance will also be considered in assigning this portion of the grade. More than 1 absence will affect your grade. More than 4 absences will result in no credit for this portion of your grade. I do not ordinarily distinguish between "excused" and "unexcused" absences (see course policies below).

Classes will involve a mixture of lecture and discussion, as well as occasional small-group learning exercises. Your active participation in discussions and in-class exercises is expected. In order to participate fully in discussions of primary texts, please bring your copy of the day's reading(s) to class with you.

2. Exams

There will be three exams for the course:

Exam 1	15% of course grade
Exam 2	15% of course grade
Final Exam	25% of course grade

All exams will be cumulative.

3. Concept application papers 30 percent of course grade

Throughout the semester, pay attention to media items about contemporary events or social issues that can either be illuminated by or illustrate well some concept employed by classical sociological thinkers. You will write 3 short papers offering such applications of concepts. For each paper, you should concisely define the concept and summarize the theorist's use of the concept, making reference to the primary writings in which it is used. The paper should provide a brief statement of what contemporary issue/event you will analyze and why it is theoretically important and go on to explain either how the concept is useful in understanding the contemporary item or why the item is a particularly helpful illustration of the theoretical idea. As the semester progresses, you may use these papers to illustrate how two different theorists might offer different explanations of the same contemporary event or issue. If you wish, you may choose to use some issue of particular interest to you for all of the papers, offering different theoretical concepts that illuminate different aspects of the issue or offer competing explanations of the issue. Strive to be both thorough and concise: maximum length of each paper is 1000 words. Be prepared to offer a brief (<10 minutes) presentation of your applications in class on the days they are due. Each student will present at least once to the class.

Please note: Late papers will be penalized one letter grade per day.

Course Policies

I will gladly make necessary accommodations for students with disabilities. Those needing accommodations are encouraged to work with the staff of the Pforzheimer Learning and Teaching Center in Clapp Library to make appropriate arrangements.

I strongly encourage students to schedule an appointment to meet with me individually in my office at least once during the first half of the semester. This can be either during my office hours or at some other agreed-upon time. If at any point in the semester you are experiencing difficulty with the course material or requirements, please make an appointment to see me. I cannot help you if you do not communicate with me.

Please come to class on time. The class will begin at 1:30. Students who arrive after a quiz begins may take the quiz, but will not be given extra time. Students who arrive after quizzes or the attendance sheet are collected will be marked as absent.

See penalty policy for late papers above. Late papers and exams will only be accepted without penalty in cases of emergency (such as hospitalization, death of a loved one). Minor illnesses, over-scheduling, and perfectionism do not constitute emergencies.

Ordinarily, I do not distinguish between “excused” and “unexcused” absences. However, in light of concerns about the H1N1 virus this flu season, I ask that you use good common sense in following the recommendations made by Health Services regarding flu and flu-like symptoms. Should you need to self-isolate due to the flu, please let me know so that I can make accommodations. If you should experience any major life disruptions during the semester, please let me know what you need as early as possible so that I may work with you to help you be successful in this course.

Academic honesty is expected of all students in accordance with the Wellesley Honor Code. Suspected honor violations relating to course work in this class will be reported to the General Judiciary.

Course Schedule*

*May be subject to revision. Changes will be announced and posted on the course conference.

E & A = Edles & Appelrouth: *Sociological Theory in the Classical Era*
Readings marked with * are available in the e-reserve conference

Date	Class Topic	Read, Think, and Explore	Apply & Write
Tuesday 9/8	Introduction; What is Theory?		
Friday 9/11	Historical Backdrop: The Enlightenment & Response; Comte, Spencer	E&A – Chapter 1	
Tuesday 9/15	Introduction to Karl Marx: biography & intellectual background; core concepts	E&A – pp 17-28	
Friday 9/18	Marx: Historical materialism, labor, forces & relations of production	* “Theses on Feuerbach” <i>The German Ideology: Part I</i> (E&A pp. 29-39) * “Preface to <i>A Critique of Political Economy</i> ”	
Tuesday 9/22	Marx: Marxist economics; Class, class consciousness, class conflict	Excerpts from <i>Capital</i> (E&A pp. 53-64) * “Wage Labor and Capital”	
Friday 9/25	Marx: Alienation & false consciousness	Excerpts from <i>Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</i> (E&A pp. 40-53)	
Tuesday 9/29	Marx: Rise & fall of capitalism; communism	* “The So-Called Primitive Accumulation” <i>Manifesto of the Communist Party</i> (E&A pp. 64-77)	
Friday 10/2	Summary & review of Marx; Public speaking workshop		
Tuesday 10/6	Extensions & applications of Marxist theory—student presentations		concept application paper due
Friday 10/9	Exam 1		Exam 1
Tuesday 10/13	Introduction to Max Weber: biography; method; social action; rationalization	E&A pp. 135-147 Begin reading <i>The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism</i> (Author’s introduction; chapters 1-3)	
Friday 10/16	Weber: The Protestant Ethic	Complete <i>The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism</i> (Chapters 4-5)	
Tuesday 10/20	Weber: Class, Status, Party; Ethnicity, Caste, Nations	“Class, Status, Party” (E&A pp. 161-171) * “Ethnic Groups”	
Friday 10/23	Weber: Authority, charisma, routinization	“The Types of Legitimate Domination” (E&A pp. 174-180)	
Tuesday 10/27	Weber: Rationalization; bureaucracy; Science	“Bureaucracy” (E&A pp. 183-190) * “Science as a Vocation”	
Friday 10/30	Extensions & applications of Weberian theories—student presentations		Concept application paper due
Tuesday 11/3	Tanner Conference—No class		
Friday 11/6	Exam 2		Exam 2
Tuesday 11/10	Intro. to Emile Durkheim; solidarity; Division of Labor	E&A pp 79-88 Excerpts from <i>The Division of Labor in Society</i> (E&A pp. 88-96)	
Friday 11/13	Durkheim: Suicide	Excerpts from <i>Suicide</i> (E&A pp. 105-121)	
Tuesday 11/17	Durkheim: Religion	<i>The Elementary Forms of Religious Life</i> Introduction: pp. 1-18	

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Rutherford
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		Book I, Chapter 1: pp. 33-44 Book II, Chapter 7: pp. 207-241	
Friday 11/20	Durkheim: Society	<i>The Elementary Forms of Religious Life</i> Book III, chapter 1: pp. 303-329 Book III, chapter 2: pp. 350-353 Conclusion: pp. 418-433	
Tuesday 11/24	Charlotte Perkins Gilman Marianne Weber	E&A Chapter 5 (pp. 193-240) * Selections from Marianne Weber's <i>Reflections on Women and Women's Issues</i>	
Friday 11/27	Happy Thanksgiving		
Tuesday 1/1	W.E.B. DuBois	E&A pp. 302-313 Selections from <i>The Souls of Black Folk</i> (E&A pp. 322-339) Selections from "The Souls of White Folk" (E&A pp. 339-345)	
Friday 1/4	Theoretical applications— Student Presentations		Concept application paper due
Tuesday 1/8	Summary & review		
	Final exam period	Exam schedule TBA	