

Classical Sociological Theory
Soc 200
Wellesley College, Fall 2005

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office hours: PNE 329
Mon. 3-4; Tues. 10-12
& 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 Georg Simmel, Harriet Martineau, 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** **10 percent 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.

- 2. Attendance & participation** **5 percent of course grade**
Regular attendance will 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. Classes will involve a mixture of lecture and discussion, as well as occasional small-group learning exercises. In order to participate fully in discussions of primary texts, please bring your copy of the day's reading(s) to class with you.

3. Exams

There will be three exams for the course:

Exam 1	October 6	15 percent of course grade
Exam 2	November 3	15 percent of course grade
Final Exam	Exam week	25 percent of course grade

All exams will be cumulative.

- 4. 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 5 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 presentation of your applications in class on the days they are due. Every student must present at least one application to the class.

1st application paper due Oct. 3

Obviously, this paper will use a concept as employed by Marx.

2nd and 3rd application papers due Nov. 3

At least one must use a concept as employed by Weber.

The other may use either Marx or Weber, or may offer comparison of Marx & Weber.

4th and 5th application papers due Dec. 1

One must use either Simmel or Durkheim (alone or in comparison to any other theorist).

The other may use any theorist(s).

Please note: Late papers will not be accepted, except in circumstances of **extreme** emergency (e.g., major illness or death).

Course Policies

I will gladly make necessary accommodations for students with disabilities. Those needing accommodations are encouraged to work with either Jim Wice or Barbara Boger in 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.

As noted above, late papers and exams will not be accepted, except in cases of extreme emergency (such as hospitalization, death of a loved one). Minor illnesses, over-scheduling, and perfectionism do not constitute extreme emergencies. However, if you have had a major disruption in your life and need extra time, I am willing to work with you; in such cases, please make a request as early as possible. Similarly, except for special cases, I do not distinguish between "excused" and "unexcused" absences.

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 a * are available in the e-reserve conference

Date	Class Topic	Read, Think, and Explore	Apply & Write
Thursday 9/8	Introduction; What is Theory?		
Monday 9/12	Historical Backdrop: The Enlightenment & Response; Comte, Spencer	E&A – Chapter 1	
Thursday 9/15	Introduction to Karl Marx: biography & intellectual background; core concepts	E&A – pp 17-28	
Monday 9/19	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> ”	
Thursday 9/22	Marx: Marxist economics; Class, class consciousness, class conflict	Excerpts from <i>Capital</i> (E&A pp. 53-64) * “Wage Labor and Capital”	
Monday 9/26	Marx: Alienation & false consciousness	Excerpts from <i>Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</i> (E&A pp. 40-53)	
Thursday 9/29	Marx: Rise & fall of capitalism; communism	<i>Manifesto of the Communist Party</i> (E&A pp. 64-77)	
Monday 10/3	Extensions & applications of Marxist theory; Summary	* Wallerstein-“The Modern World-System as a Capitalist World-Economy”	1 concept application due
Thursday 10/6	Exam 1		Exam 1
Monday 10/10	fall break		
Thursday 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)	
Monday 10/17	Weber: The Protestant Ethic	Complete <i>The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism</i> (Chapters 4-5)	
Thursday 10/20	Weber: Class, Status, Party; Ethnicity, Caste, Nations	“Class, Status, Party” (E&A pp. 163-171) * “Ethnic Groups”	
Monday 10/24	Weber: Authority, charisma, routinization	“The Types of Legitimate Domination” (E&A pp. 174-180)	

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Thursday 10/27	Weber: Rationalization; bureaucracy; Science	“Bureaucracy” (E&A pp. 183-190) * “Science as a Vocation”	
Monday 10/31	Extensions & applications of Weberian theories	*George Ritzer-“The McDonaldization of Society” * Murray Milner, Jr. -“Celebrity Culture as a Status System”	2 concept applications due
Thursday 11/3	Exam 2		Exam 2
Monday 11/7	Georg Simmel: forms of interaction, social types	E&A pp. 241-251 “The Stranger” (E&A pp. 275-279) “Fashion” (E&A pp. 280-287)	
Thursday 11/10	Simmel: individuality, freedom, modern life	“The Metropolis and Mental Life” (E&A 288- 299) * Excerpts from <i>The Philosophy of Money</i> * “The Conflict in Modern Culture”	
Monday 11/14	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)	
Thursday 11/17	Durkheim: Suicide	Excerpts from <i>Suicide</i> (E&A pp. 105-121)	
Monday 11/21	Durkheim: Religion	<i>The Elementary Forms of Religious Life</i> Introduction: pp. 1-18 Book I, Chapter 1: pp. 33-44 Book II, Chapter 1: pp. 100-111 & 118-126 Book II, Chapter 2: pp. 127-140 Book II, Chapter 7: pp. 207-241	
Monday 11/28	Durkheim: Religion	<i>The Elementary Forms of Religious Life</i> Book III, chapter 1: pp. 303-329 Book III, chapter 2: pp. 330-354 Conclusion: pp. 418-448	
Thursday 12/1	Harriet Martineau Charlotte Perkins Gilman	E&A Chapter 5	
Monday 12/5	The woman-centered sociology of Marianne Weber	* Selections from Marianne Weber’s <i>Reflections on Women and Women’s Issues</i>	
Thursday 12/8	W.E.B. DuBois	Excerpts from <i>The Souls of Black Folke</i> (E&A pp. 322-339) Excerpts from “The Souls of White Folk” (E&A pp. 339-345)	
Monday 12/12	Theoretical applications; Summary & review		2 concept applications due