

Syllabus – SOCI 350A 001

Sociological Theories – Classical and Contemporary Approaches Spring 2014

Class: Tuesday, Thursday, 12:30-2 PM
Leonard S. Klinck Building, Room 460

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Course description

This course will provide a brief background in the core classical theorists in sociology and then, for the remainder of the term, will focus on engaging with sociological themes and theorists from the 21st century. This course aims to familiarize students with some of the key theorists and debates in sociology. At the same time, the theorists represented in this course are not by any means exhaustive. Instead, the focus is on providing a foundation in some of the classical theorists and then a selective representation of work that engages with questions of culture, power and social order from both macro and micro perspectives. The contemporary works also demonstrate how the classical theorists influence contemporary sociological theory both by providing a foundation for thought or a basis for divergence and contestation.

The course objectives are to familiarize students with key conversations within sociology. The course also aims to encourage students to think conceptually and improve their writing skills. Finally, through this course, students will identify the basic assumptions and concepts of the theories and apply them to current social processes and events. This focus will be encouraged throughout the year in student group work and then through a final essay.

Course Policies and Evaluation

Students are expected to come to class having read the assigned articles and prepared to participate in discussions. The class will be organized so that along with lectures, students are given ample opportunity to discuss the material with each other. The Tuesday class will be focused on a lecture component while the Thursday class is focused on discussion and engagement in small groups with the material

from the readings and lecture. The small groups will be formed at the beginning of the year and will stay the same throughout the term. Regular attendance is expected in both the lecture and discussion classes and attendance is noted in the discussion classes. If you are unable to attend the lectures for any reason it is up to you to get notes from a fellow class member. As you will get to know your group members quite well, the small groups are a good resource for this. The course is based around original texts, which can be quite challenging, so I recommend that you read the weekly readings twice, once before the lecture and once after.

Grading formula

Class and discussion participation 15%

Midterm 25%

Final 35%

Paper 25%

Class and discussion participation: This mark will be based on attendance in the discussion classes as well as your participation in both the lecture and discussion classes. Your participation in class discussions demonstrates to me that you have read the readings and you are taking an active role in your learning.

To encourage you to engage with the reading material, students will be asked to produce their own questions around the readings, as well as discuss questions provided by the instructor. At the end of each discussion class students will be asked to hand in their group notes and individual questions.

Midterm and final exam: The exams will consist predominately of short answer questions that assess whether you have understood the core themes of the theories covered throughout the course.

Paper: This 6-8 page paper is meant to both help improve your writing skills and to encourage you to think about how some of the theories covered in the course help illuminate current social processes in different ways. You will be asked to describe a social trend or current event, and take three theorists (one of which will be classical) and explain how they might view this issue using their concepts and drawing from the theorists first hand. You should then pick one theory and argue why it best helps to illuminate the issue. You can take news events or social issues you have been studying in other classes and relate the weekly readings to these issues in your memos. There are two deadlines for your papers, one is on March 31st where you will do a peer review session, and the final paper is due on April 7th. A portion of your paper mark will be dedicated to your participation in the peer review session.

Course Schedule

Week 1 (Jan. 6th and 8th) Intro to Social Theory; Marx

Karl Marx. - "The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts" From, *The Marx Reader*
Pp.60-71.

Connect Course Reserves.

Week 2 (Jan. 13th and 15th) Marx

Marx and Engels - "The German Ideology" From, *The Marx Reader* -Pp. 94-111

Connect Course Reserves

Karl Marx - 1859. "Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy"
<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1859/critique-pol-economy/preface.htm>

Karl Marx - 1847. "Wage Labour and Capital"

Read pages: 11-13; 16; 21-32

http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Marx_Wage_Labour_and_Capital.pdf

Week 3 (January 20st and 22rd) Durkheim

Emile Durkheim "What is a Social Fact" From, *The Rules of Sociological Methods*.
Pp.1-13

Connect Course Reserves.

Emile Durkheim - *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*.- Pp.8-18,33-39,220 -
225,429-433

Connect Course Reserves.

Week 4 (Jan 27th and 29th) Weber

Max Weber - "Types of Legitimate Domination"; "Class, Status and Party" from,
Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology

Week 5 (Feb 3rd and 5th) Parsons

T. Parsons and E. Shils - 1952. "Action and Its Orientation." From, *Toward a General Theory of Action*. Pp53-56.

Talcott Parsons 1961. "An Outline of the Social System." From, *Theories of Society*.

Week 6 (Feb 10th and 12th) Review / midterm

Feb 10th Review

Feb 12th Midterm

Week 7 Feb 16th-20th Reading Break

Week 8 (Feb. 24th and 26th) Exchange and Rational Choice Theory

George C. Homans – 1958. “Social Behavior and Exchange” *American Journal of Sociology*. **Read pages 598-606**

<http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/stable/2772990>

James Coleman -1988. “Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital.” *American Journal of Sociology*.

<http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/stable/2780243>

Week 9 (March 3th and 5th) Symbolic Interactionism

Herbert Blumer -1969. “Society as Symbolic Interaction” *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method*.

Connect Course Reserves

Gary Fine – 1979. “Small Groups and Culture Creation: The Idioculture of Little League Baseball Teams.” *American Sociological Review*.

<http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/stable/2094525>

Week 10 (March 10th and 12th) Feminist Theory (Standpoint)

Dorothy Smith - 2005. “Women’s Standpoint: Embodied knowing versus the ruling relations.” *Institutional Ethnography: A Sociology for People*. Pp7-26.

Connect Course Reserves.

Patricia Collins – 1986. “Learning from the Outsider within: The sociological significance of black feminist thought.” *Social Problems*.

<http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/stable/800672>

Week 11 (March 17th and 19th) Bourdieu

Pierre Bourdieu - “Social Space and Symbolic Space.”; “Structures, Habitus, Practices.” From, *Contemporary Sociological Theory* -Pp. 267-288.

Course reserve in Connect.

Week 12 (March 24th and 26th) Habermas

Jurgen Habermas -“Civil Society and the political public sphere” *From, Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*

Jurgen Habermas- “The tasks of a critical theory of society” (*From the Theory of Communicative Action, Volume Two: Lifeworld and System: A critique of functionalist reason.*)

Week 13 March (31st and 2nd) Institutional Analysis

March 31st Paper peer review

April 2nd – Institutional Analysis

P. Dimaggio and W. Powell- “The Iron Cage Revisited.”

From, *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*. Pp. 63-80

Connect Course Reserves

Week 14 (April 7th and 9th) Institutions and Exam Review

April 7th Paper due, Institutional Analysis

April 9th Exam review