

CLASSICAL SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY
Sociology 920:515:01
Paul McLean
Department of Sociology
Rutgers University
Fall 2019

Location and time: Davison Seminar room, Thursdays, 1:00-3:40

Office hours: Th9:30-11:00 (Davison 133), F1:30-2:30 (Livingston SC), and by appt

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This course provides a detailed examination of a handful of writings which have come to be seen as the most important works from the classical period of sociological theorizing about social organization, social processes, and personhood. To examine social organization is to see society not as an assemblage of individuals, but as a coherent (and/or emergent) entity with formal properties or organizing principles of its own. It is to understand the seeming turmoil of social life in an abstract and elegant, and one might even say 'reduced', way. To study social processes is to acknowledge that societies constantly change, but also to see that how they change may be shaped by governing logics or tendencies. To see the person as 'social' is to recognize the extent to which the human individual is constituted through social interaction and by positions occupied in a social structure.

Learning Goals

The learning goals of this course are fourfold. First, the course will provide you with a richer understanding of some of the most fundamental arguments and texts in sociology than you may have developed previously. To be conversant in the discipline of sociology requires an acquaintance with this material. Second, it should help you devise questions and a critical framework for your *own* analysis of the social world. These texts serve as prompts for thinking about the human condition in general (if such a thing exists), they helped to establish the principal agenda for sociological inquiry in the twentieth century, and the questions they pose and the arguments they offer continue to inform contemporary empirical research, whether directly or as foils for our own theorizing. Third, by reading materials of a previous century, we get a sense of what most concerned scholars of an earlier time and different historical place, which in turn will help us develop a sociology of social theory itself. Fourth, this course is meant to help you develop your ability to formulate a theoretical question and propose an empirical application of it in a succinct written format, through a set of short paper assignments.

In addition, the Graduate Program in the Department of Sociology has identified program-wide learning goals towards which your performance in this course will contribute. Those learning goals may be found at: <http://sociology.rutgers.edu/graduate/53-program-information/220-phd-learning-goals-and-assessment>.

Readings

The required books for the course are listed below. I have NOT ordered them through the University bookstore, figuring you will be able to find them easily online or will already own a copy. However, you MUST own copies of these readings to thrive in this course. Some additional readings I have placed on the course's **Canvas** site. You must come to class having done the reading and fully prepared to participate in a discussion of the material.

- 1) Robert C. Tucker, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd edition (Norton)
- 2) Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*, ed. Coser/Lukes (Simon & Schuster)
- 3) Emile Durkheim, *Suicide*, trans. Spaulding (S&S)
- 4) Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Fields (S&S)
- 5) Georg Simmel, *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, ed. Wolff (S&S)
- 6) Georg Simmel, *Conflict and the Web of Group Affiliations* (S&S)
- 7) Georg Simmel, *On Individuality and Social Forms*, ed. Levine (Chicago)
(recommended)
- 8) Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Kalberg (Oxford)
- 9) W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Dover)
- 10) G.H. Mead, *Mind, Self and Society from the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist* (Chicago)

Grading

Your grade in this course will be based on five elements: participation in class (20%), three short papers (20% each), and a final oral exam based on a set of discussion questions we will develop in advance (or perhaps a fourth paper option: 20%). I encourage you to prepare a succinct summary of the main arguments and issues for each class session. I will not grade these, but they will be important as you prepare for the final. The basic idea of the exam is for you to demonstrate that you are 'conversant' in the material presented in this class, without recourse to your notes or to the texts themselves.

The Department of Sociology encourages the free exchange of ideas in a safe, supportive, and productive classroom environment. To facilitate such an environment, students and faculty must act with mutual respect and common courtesy. Behavior that distracts students and faculty is NOT acceptable. Such behavior includes cell phone use, surfing the internet, checking email, text messaging, listening to music, reading newspapers, leaving and returning, leaving early without permission, and discourteous remarks. Courteous and lawful expression of disagreement with the ideas of the instructor or fellow students is of course permitted. If a student engages in disruptive behavior, then your instructor, in compliance with the University Code of Student Conduct, is entitled to direct that student to leave class for the remainder of the class period. Serious verbal assaults, harassment, or defamation of the instructor or other students can lead to university disciplinary proceedings.

Diversity Statement: The Sociology department strives to create an environment that supports and affirms diversity in all manifestations, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, social class, disability status, region/country of origin, and political orientation. We also celebrate diversity of theoretical and methodological perspectives among our faculty and students and seek to create an atmosphere of respect and mutual dialogue. We have zero tolerance for violations of these principles and have instituted clear and respectful procedures for responding to such grievances.

Disabilities Statement: In accordance with University policy on disabilities, if you have a documented disability and require accommodations to obtain equal access in this course, please contact me at the beginning of the semester or when given an assignment for which an accommodation is required. Students with disabilities must verify eligibility through the Office of Student Disability Services (<http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/>).

Academic Integrity Statement: Students are expected to comply with the University's policies on academic integrity, found at: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu>.

Schedule of Classes

Week 1 (9/5) Introduction: The Task of Theorizing

Readings: 1) John Levi Martin, *Thinking Through Theory* (Norton, 2015), selections [Canvas]
2) Richard Swedberg, *The Art of Social Theory* (Princeton, 2014), pp. 1-8, 14-28, 80-97, 160-1, 195-7 [Canvas]

Week 2 (9/12) Pre-Sociological Social Theory: Adam Smith on the Natural Foundations of the Social Order

Readings: 1) Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (Chicago), pp. 7-20, 358-65; 62-79, 88-97, 275-8; 477 [Canvas]
2) Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (Liberty), pp. 9-26, 43-5, 50-7, 61-4, 77-8 (par. 10 only), 179-87 [Canvas]

Week 3 (9/19) (Mostly) the Early Marx

Note: All Marx readings are taken from *The Marx-Engels Reader* with appropriate pages listed

- Readings:
- 1) Marx, excerpts from *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, pp. 67, 70-81, 93-105
 - 2) Marx, "The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof," pp. 319-28
 - 3) Marx, excerpts from *The German Ideology*, pp. 148-75

Week 4 (9/26) (Heading More Towards) the Mature Marx

- Readings:
- 1) Marx, "Wage Labor and Capital," 203-19
 - 2) Marx, "Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*," p. 3-6
 - 3) Marx, parts of *Capital*, pp. 302-8, 329-61, 376-88, 397-415, 419-31 [much of this is a longer treatment of what he wrote in "Wage Labour and Capital"]
 - 4) Marx and Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," pp. 469-91
 - 5) Marx, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte," pp. 594-617

FIRST PAPERS DUE MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 30 AT 9:00pm ON CANVAS

Week 5 (10/3) Durkheim on the Division of Labor

- Readings: Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*, pp. xxv-xxx, 1-7; Book I, chs. 1-3, 5, 7; Book II, chs. 2, 3; Book III, chs. 1-2; pp. xxxi-lvii

Week 6 (10/10) Durkheim on Suicide and Empirical Method

- Readings:
- 1) Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method*, pp. 50-72 [Canvas]
 - 2) Durkheim, *Suicide*, pp. 152-89, 197-216, 241-276, 297-325

Week 7 (10/17) Durkheim on Religion and the Interpretive Method

- Readings: Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, pp. 1-18, 33-44, 99-133, 141-9, 207-8, 216-41, 265-72, 303-29, 348-54, 392-417, 433-48

SECOND PAPERS DUE MONDAY, OCTOBER 21 AT 9:00pm ON CANVAS

Week 8 (10/24) Weber on the Types of Motivation and the Types of Legitimate Domination

- Readings:
- 1) Weber, *Economy and Society*, ch. 1, pp. 4-30 only [Canvas]
 - 2) Weber, *Economy and Society*, ch. 3 “The Types of Legitimate Domination,” pp. 212-31, 241-54 [Canvas]

Week 9 (10/31) Weber on the Protestant Ethic

- Readings:
- 1) Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, chs. 1, 2, 4, 5
 - 2) Weber, “Prefatory Remarks to Collected Essays in the Sociology of Religion,” pp. 233-50 in the Kalberg edition (published as the “Introduction” to PESC in some earlier editions)

Week 10 (11/7) Weber on Status, Social Science Methodology, and Politics

- Readings:
- 1) Weber, “Class, Status, Party,” from *Economy and Society*, pp. 926-39 [the same reading can be found in a different translation in Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills, *From Max Weber*, pp. 180-195] [Canvas]
 - 2) Weber, “‘Objectivity’ in Social Science and Social Policy,” in *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, pp. 72-84 [Canvas]
 - 3) Weber, “Politics as a Vocation,” selection (pp. 352-69 in *Weber: Political Writings*, ed. Lassman and Speirs, Cambridge University Press) [Canvas]

Week 11 (11/14) Simmel I: Basic Principles and the Idea of Forms

- Readings:
- 1) Simmel, “The Problem of Sociology,” in Levine, ed., pp. 23-35 [Canvas]
 - 2) Simmel, “The Stranger,” in Wolff, ed., pp. 402-8 (also in Levine, pp. 143-9)
 - 3) Simmel, “Fashion,” in Levine, ed., pp. 294-308 [Canvas]
 - 4) Simmel, “The Metropolis and Mental Life,” in Wolff, pp. 409-24 (also found in Levine, pp. 324-39)
 - 5) Simmel, “Sociability,” in Wolff, ed., pp. 40-57
 - 6) Simmel, “Faithfulness and Gratitude,” in Wolff, ed., pp. 379-87

Week 12(11/21) The Structuralist Simmel

- Readings:
- 1) Simmel, excerpts from Part Two, “Quantitative Aspects of the Group,” in Wolff, ed., pp. 87, 90-98, 109-17, 122-36, 145-69
 - 2) Simmel, “The Web of Group Affiliations,” in *Conflict and the Web of Group Affiliations*
 - 3) Simmel, “Conflict,” in *Conflict and the Web of Group Affiliations*, chs. 1 and 4, plus pp. 57-64

THIRD PAPERS DUE MONDAY, NOVEMBER 25 AT 9:00pm ON CANVAS

NO CLASS THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 28; THANKSGIVING

Week 13 (12/5) Freud

- Readings:
- 1) Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, sections 2, 3, 5, 7, 8 [in two chunks on Canvas]

Week 14 (12/12) Cooley, Dubois, Mead

- Readings:
- 1) Charles Horton Cooley, selections from *On Self and Social Organization*, ed. H.-J. Schubert, pp. 93-6, 161-73, 215-25, 230-1, 234-40 [Canvas]
 - 2) W.E.B. Dubois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, read the first three chapters and skim thereafter
 - 3) George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self and Society from the Standpoint of a Behaviorist*, pp. 42-51, 117-25, 135-78, 200-4(?), 209-13(?), 222-6

**FINAL ORAL EXAMS TO BE SCHEDULED ON
MONDAY AND TUESDAY, DECEMBER 16-17**