

SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES I

Sociology 510

Fall 2018

Mondays 4:15-7:05pm, Social Science 117

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Office Hours: W 4:20-5:20pm, Th 2-4pm (sign-up at <https://wejoinin.com/sheets/exdpy>) or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is a graduate-level course on “classical” sociological theory. Traditionally, such courses cover Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Emile Durkheim, along with a revolving handful of other historical figures: classical political theorists like Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau; 19th-century Europeans like Alexis de Tocqueville and Georg Simmel; and American thinkers like George Herbert Mead and, more recently, W.E.B. DuBois.

This sociological canon was constructed after the fact: only half of these men would have called themselves sociologists, and early-20th-century American sociology did not evolve from their ideas, but was developing along a trajectory of its own, with only some points of contact. The canon came into being first through the efforts of Talcott Parsons, a towering figure in mid-20th-century American sociology, who elevated Durkheim and Weber to this position (his inclusion of Vilfredo Pareto and Alfred Marshall was less effective). Marx became central in the 1960s, as students demanded it. More recently, Aldon Morris’s project to reclaim W.E.B. DuBois as a founder of American sociology has made him a theory must-have.

The canon of Marx-Weber-Durkheim-etc. still has great value, but a lot is missing from the traditional theory syllabus: people of color (with the exception of DuBois), women, people not from the U.S. or Western Europe. The traditional syllabus also typically tells the story of social theory as an effort to understand “modernity”, which is accurate, but focuses more on European industrialization and less on the colonialism and racial hierarchy that went hand in hand with it.

This semester we will be trying something slightly experimental. In the past, I have taught a week of political theory, three each of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim, and one each of Simmel, DuBois, and Mead. I have pared this down to the bare bones: one week of political theory, two each on Marx, Weber, and Durkheim, and one on DuBois.

In between, we will be putting these theorists into a larger context: How were their ideas shaped by the imperial projects they participated in, resisted, or used as data? What does their work say to women and non-Europeans? Who is excluded from this canon, and what did they have to say? And how does the classical canon—both its contents, and its silences—matter for sociology in the present?

Rather than my simply assigning readings for these weeks in advance, we will collectively curate them. The semester is organized into several three-week chunks. After the first week, we will each identify a

reading that can help us think through these larger questions. These may be other writings from the same theorists (e.g. Marx on India), contemporary writings that confront them or provide alternatives (e.g. Mary Wollstonecraft on the rights of women), or secondary sources that historicize, contextualize or critique them. I will provide a few possibilities for you to consider, and you can select from those or use your own. (We will talk more in class about this process and what types of selections are appropriate.) In the second week of the cycle, we will each explain why we chose the reading we did, and what we think it adds to the conversation. With your input, I will select some of these readings (and some of my own) for the class as a whole to read in the third week. Then the cycle repeats.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

There are three main requirements for this class.

1) Class participation (20%)

A central requirement of the seminar is active and informed participation. While I will lecture for part of the class, we will also spend a significant amount of our time discussing the texts, so it is critical that everyone come prepared to engage with the readings and with one another. If a reading you selected chosen for the class as a whole to read, you will be responsible for introducing it briefly to the class. The primary thing I am looking for in terms of class participation is evidence that you have done the readings and are working to make sense of them, and that you verbally contribute in class to our collective project of sense-making (without dominating the conversation).

If you are unable to attend a class, please let me know in advance (with the obvious exception of emergencies).

2) Reflection memos (20%)

Each week after the first, you will write a reflection memo. These memos (typically 500-750 words long) should be written in paragraph form and submitted via Blackboard by **Sunday at 2pm**. Memos submitted after 2pm will receive half credit. Although the format is somewhat flexible, you may want to consider the following questions in your responses:

- 1) What do you think the main themes of this week's texts were?
- 2) What about the texts (if anything) did you find difficult to understand?
- 3) What questions or issues do you think are worth discussing further in class?

Some weeks, you will include your reading suggestion for the "context" weeks as part of your memo. Please make sure you have an electronic copy of your reading suggestion available to share during those weeks. Other times, I may suggest a question or two specific to the week's reading.

You may take one week off from the memos without penalty.

3) Two 8-10 page essays on one or two theorists (60%)

These are analytical essays based on the class readings. They may focus on one theorist, make comparisons across two, or engage with a theorist and a contextual reading. I will provide several possible themes (e.g. "Compare Marx and Weber's theories of history") a few weeks before the essays

are due, and you can select from among those options. The use of additional sources is optional. The essays should be submitted in paper (not electronic) form. They are due on:

Monday Oct. 22 (the political philosophers or Marx)

Monday Dec. 17 (your choice of theorists, but the content should not overlap with the first essay)

Grading. The grading is based 40% on class participation and the short memos, and 60% on the two longer essays. The essays will be formally graded (letter grade and comments), but the short memos will not be individually graded. However, when I return the first essay I will also give you a letter grade and brief comments on your participation and memos to that point, and feel free to ask how you are doing at any point.

A note on plagiarism. The university defines plagiarism as follows:

Presenting as one's own work the work of another person (for example, the words, ideas, information, data, evidence, organizing principles, or style of presentation of someone else)....

Examples of plagiarism include: failure to acknowledge the source(s) of even a few phrases, sentences, or paragraphs; failure to acknowledge a quotation or paraphrase of paragraph-length sections of a paper; failure to acknowledge the source(s) of a major idea or the source(s) for an ordering principle; failure to acknowledge the source (quoted, paraphrased, or summarized) of major sections or passages in the paper or project; the unacknowledged use of several major ideas or extensive reliance on another person's data, evidence, or critical method; submitting as one's own work, work borrowed, stolen, or purchased from someone else. (From http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/regulations.html):

Plagiarism is among the most serious of academic offenses. Any work you submit should be either completely your own, or should cite the source(s) on which it draws.

Plagiarism on memos or papers, including the paraphrasing of online sources, is 100% unacceptable. It will result in a failing grade for the assignment and quite possibly the course. It may threaten your graduate assistantship, if you have one. If you are unclear on what constitutes plagiarism, please complete this tutorial: <http://library.albany.edu/infolit/plagiarism1>, or ask.

BOOKS

The books we use in this class are available in the bookstore, but in my experience few students purchase them there. Please do *not* buy the Simmel and Mead that are in the bookstore, as they are no longer on the reading list. You can use your judgment about which of the books to buy. However, you will need to have a copy of the week's reading in class. While it is fine to use electronic versions, if that is what you are relying on you will need to have a device larger than a phone in class.

Some of the texts will be available on Blackboard.

Recommended

Tucker, Robert C., ed. 1978. *The Marx-Engels Reader*. Second edition. New York: W.W. Norton & Co.

Weber, Max. 1905. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. (Any edition.)

Durkheim, Emile. 1997. *The Division of Labor in Society*. New York: Free Press. (Other editions are fine.)

Durkheim, Emile. 1995. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, translated by Karen E. Fields. New York: Free Press. (Most editions are fine, but avoid the Oxford World's Classics edition, which is abridged.)

Supplementary

Collins, Randall. 1994. *Four Sociological Traditions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
[This is different from *Four Sociological Traditions: Selected Readings*—which is a reader edited by Collins—and the older *Three Sociological Traditions*.]

Giddens, Anthony. 1973. *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory: An Analysis of the Writings of Marx, Durkheim, and Max Weber*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Weber, Max. 1978. *Economy and Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Du Bois, W.E.B. 1973. *The Philadelphia Negro*. Millwood, NY: Kraus-Thomson Organization Limited.

Du Bois, W.E.B. 2009. *The Souls of Black Folk*. New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc.

READINGS

Monday 27 August

Introduction to the course

(We will read sections of each of these during our first class; you can finish them after class.)

Abend, Gabriel. 2008. "The Meaning of 'Theory'." *Sociological Theory* 26:173-199.

Connell, R. W. 1997. "Why Is Classical Theory Classical?" *American Journal of Sociology* 102:1511-1557.

[No class 3 September or 10 September—university holidays]

Monday 17 September

Political theory

Friend, Celeste. "Social Contract Theory." *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available at <http://www.iep.utm.edu/soc-cont/>. Read Introduction, Section 2 ("Modern Social Contract Theory"), and Section 4 ("Contemporary Critiques of Social Contract Theory").

Full-text versions of all of the following can be found in various places online (including at <http://oll.libertyfund.org>):

Hobbes, *Leviathan*

- Ch. 6 (Of the Interior Beginnings of Voluntary Motions)
- Ch. 13 (Of the Natural Condition of Mankind)
- Ch. 14 (Of the First and Second Natural Laws)
- Ch. 17 (Of the Causes, Generation, and Definition of a Common-Wealth)
- Ch. 18 (Of the Rights of Sovereigns by Institution)

Locke, *Two Treatises on Government*, second treatise (also called *Second Treatise of Civil Government*)

- Ch. 2 (Of the State of Nature)
- Ch. 4 (Of Slavery)
- Ch. 5 (Of Property)
- Ch. 7 (Of Political or Civil Society)
- Ch. 8 (Of the Beginning of Political Societies)—Sects. 95-99 only
- Ch. 9 (Of the Ends of Political Society and Government)

Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality* (also called the *Second Discourse*, or *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Mankind*)

Read whole thing (you can skip the Dedication and Preface)

Rousseau, *The Social Contract*

- Book 1, Chs. 1-9
- Book 2, Chs. 1-5
- Book 4, Chs. 1-2

Monday 24 September **Political theory in context**

Class-selected readings

Monday 1 October **Marx and Engels: Alienation and historical materialism**

Tucker (ed.), *Marx-Engels Reader*

- Pp. 66 and 70-105 (Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*)
- Pp. 146 and 148-200 (Marx, *The German Ideology*)
- Pp. 734-759 (Engels, *Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*)

Supplementary:

- Collins, Preface and pp. 47-81
- Giddens, Introduction and Chs. 1-2

Monday 8 October **Marx: Class and the relations of production**

Tucker (ed.), *Marx-Engels Reader*

- Pp. 203-217 (Marx, *Wage Labour and Capital*)
- Pp. 294 and 302-384, 404-411, 417-419, 422-428 (Marx, *Capital*, Volume One)

Supplementary:

- Giddens, Chs. 3-4

Monday 15 October **Marx in context**

Class-selected readings

Monday 22 October **Weber: *The Protestant Ethic***

Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (no need to read the extra essays included in some editions)

Supplementary:

Collins, pp. 81-92

Giddens, Ch. 9

*****Paper 1 is due in class on Monday Oct. 22*****

Monday 29 October **Weber: Politics, economics, and bureaucracy**

Weber, *Economy and Society*

Pp. 4-38 (Ch. 1, Basic Sociological Terms)

Pp. 212-231 (Ch. 3, The Types of Legitimate Domination, sections 1-7)

Pp. 241-254 (Ch. 3, The Types of Legitimate Domination, sections 10-21a)

Pp. 302-307 (Ch. 4, Status Groups and Classes)

Pp. 926-939 (Ch. 9, Political Communities, section 6)

Pp. 956-1003 (Ch. 11, Bureaucracy)

Supplementary:

Giddens, second part of Ch. 11 (from p. 154) and Ch. 12

Monday 5 November **Weber in context**

Class-selected readings

Monday 12 November **Durkheim: *Division of Labor***

Durkheim, *Division of Labor in Society*

Introduction

Book 1, Chs. 1-3 and 5-6

Book 2, Chs. 1 (first two pages only), 2, 5

Book 3, Ch. 1

Conclusion

Supplementary

Collins, pp. 181-193 and 211-214

Giddens, Ch. 5

Monday 19 November **Durkheim: *Elementary Forms***

Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*

Introduction
Book 1: Ch. 1 (introduction and parts 3-4) and 4
Book 2: Chs. 1-4, 6-7
Book 3: Chs. 1, 5
Conclusion

Supplementary
Giddens, Ch. 8

Monday 26 November **Durkheim in context**

Class-selected readings

Monday 3 December **Du Bois: Race**

Morris, Aldon D. 2007. "Sociology of Race and W. E. B. DuBois: The Path Not Taken." Pp. 503-534 in *Sociology in America: A History*, edited by Craig Calhoun. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro*
Chs. 1-2, 5, 12, 16, 18

Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*
Chs. 1-3

Lewis, David Levering, ed. 1995. *W.E.B. Du Bois: A Reader*. New York: Henry Holt and Company.

"The Conservation of Races"

"The Color Line Belts the World"

"China and Africa"

"Economics"

"Woman Suffrage"

"The Damnation of Women"

"Marxism and the Negro Problem"

"The Black Worker"

"The African Roots of the War"

"The Disfranchised Colonies"

Monday 10 December **DuBois in context**

Class-selected readings

*****Paper 2 is due on Monday Dec. 17*****