

# SOCI653: SEMINAR IN CLASSICAL SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

Fall 2017

Instructor: Matt Patterson

Wednesdays 11:30 AM to 2:15 PM

## Course Description

Sociologists agree on almost nothing, including what exactly we do for a living. However one thing we do happen to agree on is that no one should be able to call themselves a sociologist without some basic familiarity with the intellectual origins of the discipline and the theorists and theories that make up the “classical canon”. In a heterodox discipline, classical sociological theory is one of the only things that serves as a common body of knowledge among sociologists.

In this course we will explore the work of Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Georg Simmel and a few others. Many of the questions that these theorists were grappling with are still at the forefront of sociology today.

## Goals and Learning Outcomes

- Developing an in-depth understanding of the landmark classical sociological theories, their application to contemporary social issues, and the basic historical origins of the discipline.
- Learn how to theorize in sociology, including an understanding of how theory fits into empirical research.
- Ability to critically evaluate and synthesize existing sociological theory.
- Ability to write a theoretically-informed analytic paper with an original sociological thesis.
- Ability to grasp and critically evaluate challenging readings.

## Readings

In this class you will be expected to read passages from the original (although in most cases translated) writing of the classical theorists. Reading these texts is like eating your vegetables: difficult at first, but ultimately good for you. And just as university students eventually develop a new appreciation of healthy food when they're living away from home, you will soon be reading *The Communist Manifesto* or *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* as easily as if they had been written by Stephenie Meyer. To help you out, I've kept the amount of readings relatively short: about 50 pages per week, or the equivalent of two journal articles. The trade-off is that you will almost certainly have to read the passages multiple times. I'd recommend beginning with a quick first reading without taking any notes and pushing through sections that don't seem to make sense. The purpose of this first reading is just to get an overall sense of what the theorist is writing about. With that in mind, go back a second time for a more careful reading. Try to figure out how the theorist constructs the argument, distinguishing key passages from those that are of secondary importance.

### *Required Readings*

Most of the readings for this course will come from the reader *Classical Sociological Theory* (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition), edited by Craig Calhoun, Joseph Gerteis, James Moody, Steven Pfaff, and Indermohan Virk. This reader is available for purchase through the campus bookstore or through various online sources. The readings contained in Calhoun et al. all come from existing sources, so it is also possible to track down the individual readings themselves as an alternative to purchasing the book.

Additional readings are available online either through the links provided below, through the library website (in the case of articles printed in journals), or via D2L.

### *Supplementary Readings*

Because all of the required readings are primary sources, you may benefit from a broader overview provided by a secondary source. Below are a few of the most popular textbooks on classical sociological theory that may prove useful. There are also more specific books and articles that may help illuminate particular theorists and theories, so don't be afraid to ask me for recommendations throughout the term.

Zeitlin, Irving. 2000. *Ideology and the Development of Sociological Theory* (7<sup>th</sup> Edition). Prentice Hall.

Coser, Lewis. 2003. *Masters of Sociological Thought* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition). Waveland Printers.

Giddens, Anthony. 2015. *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory* (Revised Edition). Cambridge University Press.

Ritzer, George. 2010. *Classical Sociological Theory* (6<sup>th</sup> Edition). McGraw-Hill.

### **Contact**

I will be holding weekly office hours from 3-5pm on Wednesdays (in SS916), but I am also available by appointment. More specific inquiries can be made via e-mail: [matt.patterson@ucalgary.ca](mailto:matt.patterson@ucalgary.ca).

## Evaluation

| <u>Assignment</u>                                 | <u>% of Final Grade</u> |
|---|-------------------------|
| Class participation                               | 15%                     |
| Presentation of readings/leading class discussion | 20%                     |
| Position Paper (Due: November 1)                  | 25%                     |
| Final Paper (Due: December 13)                    | 40%                     |

### *Class Participation*

In seminars, unlike in lectures, the instructor plays a passive role. You are expected to come to class each week prepared not only to participate in a discussion of the readings, but also keep the discussion moving forward. 15% of your final grade will depend on you attending and participating in seminar discussions. Participation will be graded on a score of five and averaged across all 12 seminars. The table below outlines the scores.

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| • Absent  | 0/5 |
| • In attendance, but no participation                           | 2/5 |
| • Speaks at least once  | 3/5 |
| • Speaks multiple times   | 4/5 |
| • Demonstrates strong command of readings and steers discussion | 5/5 |

It is important to note that participation does not require making some ground breaking, irrefutable argument in response to the readings. If you found parts of the readings unclear, feel free to bring this up with the class. The point of participation is not to show off what you already know, but to learn new things. Asking a good question is as valuable a contribution to class discussion as answering one.

### *Presentation*

Each student will be expected to choose one week in which they prepare a presentation on the readings and lead a group discussion. Presentations should last between 15 and 30 minutes and focus not on summary, but rather critical appraisal (i.e. what are the important insights and/or significant weaknesses of the readings) and synthesis (i.e. discussing how readings relate to each other). In addition to presenting a response, you should prepare two discussion questions to spur the discussion for the rest of the session.

### *Paper Assignments*

There are two paper assignments for this course. The first paper assignment will be a short position paper (maximum 5 pages) based on the theories and theorists discussed in the class so far. Position papers can take on many forms, but two of the most common types of position papers are (1) a critique of one or more of the theories, or (2) a comparative evaluation of two of the theories. This paper is due on Wednesday, November 1.

The second paper will be a longer theoretical essay with an original thesis statement (15-20 pages). Assignment expectations will be discussed in more detail during the term, but it is expected that you will meet with me to discuss possible essay topics well in advance of the due date (Wednesday, December 13). The open nature of this assignment is designed to allow you to engage with the theories in ways that are most relevant to your research interests.

### *Grading Scale*

|     |         |     |        |     |        |    |        |
|-----|---------|-----|--------|-----|--------|----|--------|
| A+  | 95-100% | B+  | 80-84% | C+  | 67-69% | D+ | 55-58% |
| A   | 90-94%  | B   | 75-79% | C   | 63-66% | D  | 50-54% |
| A - | 85-89%  | B - | 70-74% | C - | 59-62% | F  | < 50%  |

## SEMINAR SCHEDULE & READING LIST

### Week 1                      What is Theory and Why Study the Classics?                      September 13

*Discussion topics:* A discussion of the course outline, expectations, and a brief introduction to sociological theory generally and the “classical canon” more specifically.

### Week 2                      Pre-Sociological Foundations                      September 20

*Discussion topics:* This week we focus on the philosophical foundations of sociology, focusing specifically on the emergence of the idea of “society” as an object of scientific study. The philosophies we discuss will help contextualize the later work of the classical sociologists. In addition to the work of the philosophers contained in Calhoun et al., we will also discuss G. W. F. Hegel as a prelude into the work of Karl Marx.

*Readings:*

Calhoun et al.

- Part I: Precursors to Sociological Theory (introduction and readings)

### Week 3                      Karl Marx: Historical Materialism                      September 27

*Discussion topics:* This week we look at Marx’ “historical materialist” perspective, which was developed from and in opposition to the work of G. W. F. Hegel. Marx deployed this theory to understand the significance of his own historical period, particularly the development of industrial capitalism.

*Readings:*

Calhoun et al.

- Introduction to Part III
- Chapters 9, 10, 11, and 12.

Karl Marx, “Theses on Feuerbach.”

(<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/theses/index.htm>)

*Discussion topics:* In his later life, Marx turned increasingly from German philosophy to British political-economy, exploring the basic socio-economic structure of capitalism in his highly influential book *Capital*. This week we move from Marx the “humanist” to Marx the “economist”.

*Readings:*

Calhoun et al.

- Chapters 13 and 14.

Karl Marx, “Commodities” (Parts 1, 2, and 4)

(<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch01.htm>)

Karl Marx, “The General Formula for Capital”

(<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch04.htm>)

Karl Marx, “The Secret of Primitive Accumulation”

(<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch26.htm>)

*Discussion topics:* Durkheim explicitly dedicating himself to formalizing a distinct discipline called “sociology”. To do so, he sought to identify a particular set of phenomena called “social facts” that would provide a domain of study for this discipline. This week we look at Durkheim’s writings on the sociological method and his attempt to illustrate this method through the study of two social facts: solidarity and suicide.

*Readings:*

Calhoun et al.

- Introduction to Part IV
- Chapters 15, 16, and 18.

**Week 6                      Emile Durkheim: Religion and Classification                      October 18**

---

*Discussion topics:* In his later career, Durkheim became increasingly interested in the institution of religion. He argued that the origins of religious life provided a window into the origins of social life itself and collective forms of thought. This week we look into Durkheim's analysis of religion to better understand how he envisioned the relationship between the individual and the collective.

*Readings:*

Calhoun et al.  
- Chapter 17

Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss. 1963. *Primitive Classification*. London: Butler & Tanner Ltd.  
(Pp. 3-9, 81-88)

Emile Durkheim. 2005. "The Dualism of Human Nature and its Social Conditions." *Durkheimian Studies* 2: 35-45.

**Week 7                      Max Weber: Methodology and the Protestant Ethic                      October 25**

---

*Discussion topics:* It is often said that Weber developed his approach to sociology through a "debate with the ghost of Karl Marx." This "debate" helped Weber to produce his most famous work: *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. This week we examine selections from this book and some readings that highlight Weber's approach to sociology more generally.

*Readings:*

Calhoun et al.  
- Introduction to Part V  
- Chapters 19, 20, and 21.

**Week 8**                      **Max Weber: Rationality, Power, and Inequality**                      **November 1**

---

*Discussion topics:* Continuing to follow Weber's debate with the ghost of Marx, we examine the issues of power and inequality. These were issues that were central to Marx' work and to which Weber brought his own perspective. We also look at the concept of rationality, which Weber argued was a defining feature of modern life.

*Readings:*

Calhoun et al.

- Chapters 22, 23, and 24.

Max Weber (1946) "Science as a Vocation." In Gerth and Mills (eds) *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. New York: Oxford University Press. (Pp. 138-156)

**Week 9**                      **Georg Simmel: Formal Sociology**                      **November 1**

---

*Discussion topics:* Simmel is the most recent member of the classical canon and often hailed as the most original classical sociological thinker. This week we look at Simmel's concept of society and his unique approach to sociology, which he called "formal sociology".

*Readings:*

Calhoun et al.

- Introduction to Part VI

Georg Simmel. 1971. "How is Society Possible?" In Donald N. Levine (ed.) *Georg Simmel on Individuality and Social Forms*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Pp. 6-22)

Georg Simmel. 1950. "Sociability" In Kurt H. Wolff (ed.) *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press. (Pp. 40-44)

Calhoun et al.

- Chapter 27, and 28.



*Discussion topics:* As with the other thinkers, Simmel was deeply concerned with understanding the most salient features of the modern, industrialized world. This week we look at how Simmel applied his own approach to grappling with the way modern society has changed the human experience.

*Readings:*

Calhoun et al.  
- Chapter 26

Georg Simmel. 1950. "The Metropolis and Mental Life." In Kurt H. Wolf (ed.) *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press. (Pp. 409–424)

Georg Simmel. 1900. "A Chapter in the Philosophy of Value." *American Journal of Sociology* 5(5): 577-603.

Georg Simmel. 1957. "Fashion." *American Journal of Sociology* 62(6): 541-558.

*Discussion topics:* Perhaps more than any of the other thinkers discussed to this point, Simmel was concerned with how people a sense of "self". This week we pick up on the complex concept of "the self" with readings from several more influential thinkers of the classical era.

*Readings:*

Calhoun et al.  
- Chapter 25, 29, 30, 31 and 35.

*Discussion topics:* This week we reflect back on the role of the classical canon in contemporary sociology. Students are encouraged to discuss why the classics are or are not relevant to their own areas of research.

*Readings:* None.

## Other Important Information

### *Handing in Papers, Assignments*

1. The main Sociology Department office does not deal with any course-related matters. Please speak directly to your instructor.
2. **Protection of Privacy:** The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIPP) legislation does not allow students to retrieve any course material from public places. Anything that requires handing back will be returned directly during class or office hours. If students are unable to pick up their assignments from the instructor, they provide the instructor with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to be used for the return of the assignment.
3. Final grades are not posted by the Sociology Department. They are only available online.

### *Deferrals*

When possible, please provide advance notice if you are unable to write a test or complete/turn-in assignments on time. All requests for deferral of a course component due to health reasons must be accompanied by written documentation as outlined in the University Calendar and should be obtained while the student has the health issue rather than after recovery. Deferrals will be allowed in the following circumstances: illness, domestic affliction or religious conviction. Travel arrangements, misreading the syllabus, and scheduling conflicts with other classes or employment are not valid reasons for requesting a deferral. Deferrals will not be granted if it is determined that just cause is not shown by the student.

If you have missed a test for a legitimate reason, the instructor can require you to write a “make up” test as close in time to the original test as possible or can choose to transfer the percentage weight to another course component. If the instructor schedules a “make up” test for you, its date and location will be at the convenience of the Department of Sociology.

*Deferred Term Work Form:* Deferral of term work past the end of a term also requires a form to be filled out. It's available at

[https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/deferred\\_termwork15\\_0.pdf](https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/deferred_termwork15_0.pdf)

Once an extension date has been agreed between instructor and student, the form should be taken to the Faculty of Arts Program Information Centre (SS 110) for approval by an Associate Dean (Students).

*Deferred Final Exam Form:* Please note that requests to defer a Registrar scheduled final exam are dealt with through the Registrar's Office. Further information about deadlines, and where paperwork should be taken, is available on the form, which can be found at:

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/student-forms>

### *Ethics Research*

Students are advised that any research with human subjects – including any interviewing (even with friends and family), opinion polling, or unobtrusive observation – must have the approval of the Faculty Ethics Committee. In completing course requirements, students must not undertake any human subjects research without discussing their plans with the instructor, to determine if ethics approval is required.

### *Academic Misconduct*

Please refer to the website listed below for information on University of Calgary policies on Plagiarism/Cheating/Other Academic Misconduct:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k-5.html>

### *Student Representation*

The 2017-18 Students' Union VP Academic is Tina Miller ([suyvaca@ucalgary.ca](mailto:suypaca@ucalgary.ca)).

For more information, and to contact other elected officials with the Student's Union, please visit this link: <https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/>

You may also wish to contact the Student Ombudsperson for help with a variety of University-related matters: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ombuds/contact>

### *Emergency Evacuations*

In the case of fire or other emergency evacuation of this classroom, please proceed to the assembly point at **Social Science - Food Court**. Please check these assembly point locations for all of your classes at: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>

### *Safewalk*

The University of Calgary provides a “safe walk” service to any location on Campus, including the LRT, parking lots, bus zones, and campus housing. For Campus Security/Safewalk call 220-5333. Campus Security can also be contacted from any of the “Help” phones located around Campus.

### *Academic Accommodation*

The student accommodation policy can be found at: [ucalgary.ca/access/accommodations/policy](http://ucalgary.ca/access/accommodations/policy). Students needing an Accommodation because of a Disability or medical condition should communicate this need to Student Accessibility Services in accordance with the Procedure for Accommodations for Students with Disabilities [ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy](http://ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy). Students needing an Accommodation based on a Protected Ground other than Disability, should communicate this need, preferably in writing, to the course instructor.