

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
Department of Sociology
Sociology 331.01
Classical Sociological Theory
Fall 2011

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Office hours: Tuesday, Thursday, 1-1:45, or by appointment
Course hours: Tuesday, Thursday, 2-3:15
Sociology Department web page: <http://www.soci.ucalgary.ca>

Course objectives:

The course surveys major sociological theorists from pre-sociology (the Enlightenment) through the 1950s. The emphasis is threefold.

First, we will read theorists as participants in a developing conversation, looking for who listens to whom, and also who does not get listened to. What are the continuities of concerns as this conversation develops; what issues drop out and which ones change form? How unified is the enterprise of social theory from Comte to Parsons?

Second, to study social theory is to study modernity as a particular historical formation that includes the distinctive forms of self-reflection known as sociology and social theory. We will think about how each theorist seeks to understand what Max Weber called the “fate of our times”, which leads to two other questions: how are the times of the theorist *not* the early 21st century, but also, how does the theorist provide a model for ways of asking questions about the fate of living in the early 21st century?

Third, we will consider the multiple meanings of the dense word *theory*. How is *theory* a form of argument that is: informed but not necessarily proven by empirical observations; not an experiment, but still a test of a world view. How is a theoretical argument more than an opinion, but less than a proof? How does a theoretical argument seek to *compel* its readers?

Skills to be developed or enhanced:

- Reading skills: Students will read primary sources that were written for readers who shared different assumptions about the social world and who expected different forms of argument.
- Writing skills: Assignments will require careful prose exposition of ideas. Knowing the material will be equated with being able to express it clearly in essay form.
- Sociological imagination: Many people imagine the social world: journalists, philosophers, historians, novelists & filmmakers, bureaucrats, and so forth. The course presents writings that seek to exemplify the distinct form of imagination

known as sociology. By the end of the course students still may not be able to define this imagination, but they should have an enhanced capacity to recognize it. Students should also have an enhanced capability to use theory to interpret empirical research.

- Historical and conceptual knowledge: Students will learn what a variety of major thinkers had to say, and they will learn about the period in which it was said. They will also learn to engage *ideas*, and what *forms of argument* are appropriate to the expression of ideas.

Required Texts:

- Craig Calhoun et al., editors. *Classical Sociological Theory*, 2nd edition. Wiley-Blackwell.
- George Ritzer, editor. *The Blackwell Companion to Major Classical Social Theorists* (Wiley-Blackwell).

Course Requirements:

Final grades will be: 2/3 (66%) based on the preparation of a *theory lesson book*, described below; 1/3 (33%) based on a final essay.

Due Dates:

- checks on theory lesson books: October 11 and November 15; these will receive provisional grades--that is, final grades will be based on revised version submitted at the end of the course.
- Final version of the theory lesson book will be due the last day of class, Thursday, December 8.
- Final essay will be due Monday, December 12; papers can be slid under the instructor's door, SS 916; *include a mailing envelope large enough for both the final essay and the theory lesson book*, if you want these returned. Depending on the season, protect work in an envelope, but no covers on papers, please.

Missed examinations: N/A, as there are no examinations in this course. Late work will have one grade/day deducted (e.g., C+ to C). See University policy for acceptable excuses for lateness.

Theory lesson book:

For each theorist studied in the course (N=15, considering the critical theorists as a single group), students will write 1-3 pages of analytic notes, following the prescribed format, below. The completed book should be 25-30 pp., not to exceed 30 pp.

The format includes the following sections:

1. key concepts, including definitional quotations (with citations to assigned-reading page numbers);
2. most significant and most memorable quotations (cited), with a brief statement why;

3. what does the theorist presuppose: what ideas about humans, groups, or societies are crucial to the theory but never specifically argued for, simply presupposed?
4. the core problems the theorist addresses, phrased as questions; these include two sorts of issues: (a) issues significant for the development of sociology as a discipline; (b) problems of modernity;
5. how the theorist grasps the “fate of the times”; in point form, but written in complete sentences, (a) how the theorist’s problems are least relevant to the early 21st century and (b) how they are most relevant;
6. also in point form, a summary of the theorist’s most significant lessons, both for sociology & social theory, and for you, imagining how to live your life.

A template example, using the theorist Norbert Elias, will be posted on the course Blackboard site.

Note: *All quotations and citations* (and the notes should be full of both) must be from assigned readings and lecture notes (cited by date). Read whatever is useful in understanding the material, but for the written assignments, non-assigned sources are not to be included.

The final essay should compare two theorists, exploring their divergence and/or complementarity on a single issue. The topic should develop from doing the theory lesson book, and the essay should be an extension of that assignment. See *Format* and *Writing Advice*, below.

Final essay format: The final essay should each be about 1,250 words and absolutely no longer than 1,500 words. Spelling, syntax, and the organization of ideas will count in the grade. Careful editing is crucial.

All written work should be typed or printed, double-spaced, in 12-point font, with pages numbered and stapled together. The student’s name and ID# should appear in the upper corner of the first page. Please do not put papers in covers.

Grades and Return of term work: Papers will *not* be returned through the Sociology Department Office, nor will grades be posted by the instructor (due to FOIP rules). Students who want their papers returned by mail should attach a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Other papers will be available for pick-up during the instructor’s Winter Term office hours (TBA). Please do not telephone the departmental office asking for your grade.

Keep a copy: As in every course, my friendly advice is to keep a printed copy of all work you submit. At some point you should have printed at least one draft to edit on paper; keep that too. Students who might want a letter of recommendation should keep copies of their written term work (again, good advice in all courses).

Lecture schedule and readings:

September 13, 15 – Course introduction; the idea of modernity. Reading: chapters on Comte and Martineau in the *Blackwell Companion* (BCCT).

September 20, 22 – Spencer in BCCT; Marx in BCCT

September 27, 29 – Marx & Engels section in *Classical Sociology Theory* (CST)

October 4, 6 – Durkheim, chapter in BCCT and section in CST

October 11, 13 – Durkheim con't; Simmel in BCCT and CST

- theory lesson book check, Oct 11; hand in pages to date for feedback, 8-10 pp.; grades will be given only as feedback to indicate student progress; the final lesson book will be graded as a whole.

October 18, 20 – Weber in BCCT and CST

October 25, 27 – Weber con't; Schutz in BCCT

November 1, 3 – Mead in BCCT and CST

November 8, 10 (Reading Day, no lecture) – Freud in CST

November 15, 17 – lecture on Elias; read DuBois in BCCT and CST, Gilman in BCCT

- Nov 15, theory lesson book check, complete through Freud; about 18 pp.

November 22, 24 – critical theory: chapters 26-30 in CST

November 29, December 1 – Parsons in BCCT and CST

December 6, 8 -- Merton in BCCT; theory lesson books due on Thursday, final lecture

Writing advice, especially for final essay.

- Almost any idea is a potentially good paper; it all depends on how you write it. Many of sociology's greatest works have been on topics that most people would have regarded as marginal or uninteresting. The imagination in "sociological imagination" is the ability to demonstrate the importance of aspects of social life that had seemed uninteresting in their marginality.
- The opening paragraph should do two tasks: engage the reader (make him/her want to continue reading) and tell the reader what the essay will accomplish or contribute.

- A friend told me that academic papers should be structured like detective stories. A murder mystery begins with the discovery of a corpse; the reader knows that what follows will progressively solve who did it.
- Any essay should open by “discovering the body”; that is, discovering whatever is consequentially troublesome and requires some kind of solution.
- The most difficult part of writing may be learning to read what you have written as if you were someone else, remembering that this someone else does not know what you mean to express—and that you have to make this person care about what you’re trying to say. Writing requires G.H. Mead’s idea of taking the role of the other.
- Writing begins in revision. The first draft is an opening offer; then you get to work.
- As you edit, concentrate on continuity: does each sentence and each paragraph lead into the next, or does the reader have to ask why you are suddenly talking about this? Writing requires meeting a reader’s expectations, but without becoming predictable and thus boring. Each paragraph should do what the reader expects, but do it in a way that is unexpected.
- The old rule of “one idea, one paragraph” remains a reliable guide. In general, the first sentence states the idea of the paragraph. The next one or two (or three if necessary) sentences expand and refine this idea. The final sentence is a transition to the next paragraph. It puts the idea back in the context of the whole argument by suggesting what needs to be said next (maybe not explicitly, but enough for the reader to think “Of course!” at the start of the next paragraph).
- Never write, “in my opinion.” If what you are saying needs this qualification (i.e., disclaimer), you should do more research until you can present it as more than your own opinion. The point of sociology is to present arguments that are compelling because they are more than the “opinion” of the writer—that’s science.
- A conclusion should be more than a summary. The conclusion should notch up the importance of the argument, giving the reader perhaps the best reason why the essay matters. In a truly fine conclusion, the reader will realize that s/he could not have understood this final reason without having read the essay. The reader will feel surprised, yet the conclusion will make perfect sense.
 - A film critic once wrote that audiences will forgive anything during the movie’s first 30 minutes, but nothing in the last 30 seconds.

Mandatory Information

Emergency evacuations:

In the case of fire or other emergency evacuation of this classroom/lab, please proceed to the assembly point by [*check link to find assembly point for your building*] --

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/node/75>

Deferrals:

If at all possible you must provide advance notice to the instructor if you are unable to take a test or pass in an assignment or essay 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 physical or emotional problem rather than after recovery. Deferrals will be allowed in the following circumstances: illness, domestic affliction or religious conviction. Travel arrangements and misreading of the syllabus 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 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:

http://ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/APP%20FOR%20DF%20EXAM_0.pdf

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 <http://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/defTW.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).

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 Departmental 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: Plagiarism, cheating and other academic misconduct are regarded as serious academic offences. Students are advised to consult the University Calendar which presents a Statement of Intellectual Honesty and definitions and penalties associated with cheating, plagiarism, and other academic misconduct.

The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) legislation disallows the practice of having students retrieve assignments from a public place, e.g., outside an instructor's office or the Department main office. Written assignments must be returned to students individually, during class, or during the instructor's office hours; if a student is unable to pick up her/his assignment s/he may provide the instructor with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to be used for the return of the assignment.

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: Students with a disability, who require academic accommodation, need to register with the Disability Resource Centre (MC 295, phone 220-8237). Academic accommodation letters need to be provided to course instructors no later than fourteen (14) days after the first day of class. It is a student's responsibility to register with the Disability Resource Centre and to request academic accommodation, if required.

Handing in papers outside of class, return of final papers, and release of final grades:

1. When students are unable to submit papers in class, they should make arrangements to hand in their papers directly to the instructor or teaching assistant. Papers will not be accepted in the main Sociology Department office.
2. Final papers will not be returned through the main Sociology Department office. The Freedom of Information and Privacy (FOIP) legislation disallows the practice of having students retrieve assignments from a public place (i.e. outside an instructor's office, the department office etc.) Students who want their final papers returned by mail must attach a stamped, self-addressed envelope with the paper. Otherwise final papers will be available for pick-up only during the instructor's office hours at the end of this term or at the beginning of the next term.
3. Final grades are not posted by the Sociology Department. They are available only online.