

**Professor: Dylan Riley**  
**Course: 101 Classical Social Theory**  
**Venue: Hearst Mining 390**  
**Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:30–11:00**  
**Semester: Spring 2019**  
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This course introduces the classic works of social theory. By "classical social theory" I mean an explanation of the origins, internal dynamic, and fate of modern society. Marx, Durkheim and Weber reacting to industrialization and the rise of the nation-state all held modern societies to be sharply different from pre-modern ones. They further asked, "What were the causes and consequences of this distinctiveness"? In answering this question, each thinker developed a set of concepts that have proven to be of enduring relevance in grappling intellectually with our present circumstances. These concepts divide into four main clusters: a set of descriptions of key elements of the condition of living in modern society, a set of concepts useful for understanding the role of ideas in modern society, a set of concepts useful for explaining historical change, and a set of concepts useful for analyzing modern systems of stratification. In this class you will learn to understand, contrast, and evaluate these different concepts and their relationship to the broader theoretical visions in which they are embedded.

Your grade is based on five pieces of work.

Quiz (multiple choice and short answer x2): 20%  
Section participation including paper drafts: 20%  
Mid Term: 15%  
Final Paper: 25%  
Take Home Final Exam: 20%

1 - The quizzes are meant to assess your understanding of basic concepts. Sociology,

like other sciences, rests on a conceptual language that needs to be mastered in order to be useful. Often this involves the specification of terms that are relatively common in "lay" or everyday language but have a specific meaning in sociology. Indeed the relationship between lay language and sociological language is itself a major topic of sociological theory and research. Some example of terms that you will be learning to use in a different way in this class are, "alienation", "solidarity", "bureaucracy", and "rationality". The ability to break with everyday usage and thereby to group phenomena in a new way is one major of purpose of sociological theory and quizzes are a useful way of assessing how successfully you are doing this.

2 - Section participation is an essential part of your work in the course. You need to attend each section and be prepared to *actively* participate in the work that goes on there. This mainly means careful reading of the assigned material. Each of three major figures we will study together has generated oceans of commentary both in print and on the Internet. Your task however is to deal directly with the texts you have been assigned: not to do web or library research on the theorists themselves. This is because there is no substitute for reading what these men wrote. Only when you actually engage with their work directly will you, grasp not only their ideas, but, just as important, their style of thought. The three drafts of your research paper (about which more below) will also form part of your section grade.

3 - The mid-term will be similar in format to the quiz, but will include some slightly longer essay questions as well. Attendance in lecture and section, and reading the assigned material will be the best preparation for this exercise.

4 - The fourth piece of your grade is based on an independent research project. For this exercise you will need to identify a topic, collect five newspaper or journal articles about it, and analyze the topic through a Marxian, Durkheimian and Weberian lens. You will develop this piece of work in close consultation with your GSI. This exercise will allow you to use the tools you have acquired in the course to come to an understanding of the world around you. Your paper will be turned-in in three drafts in addition to the final draft, due on May 13th. Each draft of your paper will be graded, and will form a portion of your section grade.

5 - The fifth piece of your grade is based on a take home final exam. This exam will require you to write three tightly structured comparative essays of about 750 words each. The exam will ask you to compare and contrast specific arguments from specific passages of the readings. It will be passed out at the course review on May 7th, and will be due together with your final paper on May 13th.

The readings are included in six books that you need to purchase for the class. The books are:

Emile Durkheim *The Division of Labor in Society*. Translated by W.D. Halls.  
(Hereafter referred to as *DOL*).

Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religions Life*. Translated by

Carol Cosman. (Hereafter referred to as *EFRL*).  
Karl Marx, *Selected Writings*. Edited by Lawrence H. Simon. (Hereafter referred to as *SW*).  
Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Translated by Stephen Kalberg. (Hereafter referred to as *PE*).  
Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. Edited by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills. (Hereafter referred to as *FMW*).

## **Classical Social Theory**

January 22

What is classical social theory? Why should one study it?

### **Karl Marx (1818-1883): Historical Materialism**

January 24

"On the Jewish Question." Pp. 1–26 in *SW*. What is the relationship between political emancipation and human emancipation?

January 29

"Alienated Labor." Pp.58–79 in *SW*. What is alienated labor?

January 31

Marx, Karl. 1994 [1845]. "Theses on Feuerbach." Pp. 98–101 in *SW*. What is the connection between theory and practice?

February 5

Marx, Karl. 1994 [1845]. "The German Ideology." Pp. 103–156 in *SW*. What is the general mechanism of historical development?

February 7

Marx, Karl. 1994 [1848]. "The Communist Manifesto." Pp. 157–186 and "Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*." Pp. 209–213 in *SW*. What are the developmental tendencies of capitalism?

February 12

Marx, Karl. 1994. [1867]. "Capital Volume One (selections)." Pp. 214–264 in *SW*. Why are commodities exchangeable?

February 14

Marx, Karl. 1994. [1867]. "Capital Volume One (selections)." Pp. 264–294 in *SW*. What is surplus value?

### **Quiz 1**

February 19

Marx, Karl. 1994. [1867]. "Capital Volume One (selections)." Pp. 294–300 in *SW*.

What is primitive accumulation?

### **First Draft of Final Paper**

### **Émile Durkheim (1885-1917): Differentiation and Solidarity**

February 26

Durkheim, Émile. 1984 [1893]. "Preface to the First Edition", "Introduction", "The Method of Determining this Function", and "Chapter II. Mechanical Solidarity, or Solidarity by Similarities" Pp. 3–7, Pp. 33–87. in *DOL*. What is Durkheim's puzzle? What is "mechanical solidarity?"

February 28

Durkheim, Émile. 1984 [1893]. "Chapter III. Solidarity Arising from the Division of Labor, or Organic Solidarity." Pp. 88–91, 96–103, 158–180 in *DOL*. What is "organic solidarity?"

March 5

Durkheim, Émile. "Chapter II. The Causes" Pp. 201–222 and 277–308 in *DOL*. What are the causes of the division of labor and what are its abnormal forms?

March 7

Durkheim, Émile. "Introduction: The Subject of Study Sociology of Religion and Theories of Knowledge" and "Preliminary Questions" Pp. 3–83 in *EFRL*. What is Durkheim's question and method of answering it?

March 12

Durkheim, Émile. "Book III. Principal Ritual Conduct." Pp. 221–343 in *EFRL*. New York: Free Press. What is the connection between religion and society? Summary of Durkheim.

### **Second Draft of Final Paper**

March 14

### **Mid-Term**

### **Max Weber (1864-1920): Rationalization and Charisma**

March 19

Weber, Max. 1976 [1921]. "Science as a Vocation." Pp. 129–156 in *FMW*. What is science?

March 21

Weber, Max. 1976 [1921]. "Politics as a Vocation." Pp. 77–128 in *FMW*. What is politics?

April 2

### **Research Break**

April 4

**Research Break**

April 9

Weber, Max. 2011 [1905]. Weber, Max. 2011 [1905]. "Part I: The Problem." and "Part I Chapter II: The 'Spirit' of Capitalism." Pp. 67–98 in *PE*. What is Weber's question?

April 11

Weber, Max. 2011 [1905]. "Part I Chapter III: Luther's Conception of the Calling." and "Part II Chapter IV: The Religious Foundations of This-Worldly Asceticism." Pp. 99–138 in *PE* What is the paradoxical connection between Calvinism and the Spirit of Capitalism?

**Final Rough Draft of Final Paper**

April 16

Weber, Max 1976 [1905]. "Part II Chapter V: Asceticism and the Spirit of Capitalism." Pp. 158–179 in *PE*. What happens to the Spirit of Capitalism in capitalist society?

April 18

Weber, Max. 1978. "Chapter II. Sociological Categories of Economic Action." Pp. 107–113, 161–166. What is capitalism and what are its "substantive" preconditions?

April 23

Weber, Max. 1976 [1920]. "VIII. Bureaucracy." Pp. 196–204 in *FMW*. What is bureaucracy ?

April 25

Weber, Max. 1976 [1920]. "VIII. Bureaucracy." Pp. 204–244 in *FMW*. How does bureaucracy develop?

April 30

Weber, Max. 1976 [1920]. "Prefatory Remarks to Collected Essays in the Sociology of Religion." Pp. 233–250 in *PE*. What is rationalization?

May 2

Weber, Max. 1976 [19??]. "VII. Class, Status, Party." Pp. 180–195 in *FMW*. What is the connection between classes and status groups?

**Quiz 2**

May 7

**Course Review**

May 13

**Final Paper and Take Home Final Exam Due 4pm**