

**Professor: Dylan Riley**  
**Course: 101 Classical Social Theory**  
**Venue: Hearst Mining 390**  
**Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:30–11:00**  
**Semester: Spring 2020**  
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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 (x2): 20%  
Section participation: 20%  
Mid Term: 15%  
Analytic paper (x2): 20%  
Take Home Final Exam: 25%

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 from the way that they might ordinarily be used are: "alienation", "bureaucracy", "capitalism", "class", "rationality", and "solidarity". The ability to break with everyday usage and thereby to group phenomena in a new way in order to identify new relationships is one major of purpose of sociological theory, and quizzes are a useful way of assessing how successfully you are in doing this.

2 – Your section grade will be split into two parts: participation and analytic paper drafts.

### Participation

Half of the section grade depends on participation. 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.

### Analytic Paper Drafts

Your work on the analytic paper drafts constitutes the remaining half of your section grade. Each paper draft will be awarded a score from 1–5 depending on how seriously you have taken the assignment and followed the prompt.

3 - The mid-term will be similar in format to the quizzes 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 the final draft of the analytic papers. This final draft will incorporate feedback that you have received from your GSI. Successful papers will demonstrate a serious attempt to respond to the feedback, clear up ambiguous language, think about connections more deeply and so on.

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 April 28<sup>th</sup> and will be due on Monday, May 10<sup>th</sup>.

The readings are included in five books that you need to purchase for the class; in addition, there is one Marx and one Weber reading that will be posted on bcourses together with the newspaper articles for the analytic papers. The books and readings 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*).
- Karl Marx, *Wage Labor and Capital*. Translated by Harriet E. Lothrop, M.D. [Available on bcourses].
- 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*).
- Max, Weber *Economy and Society*. Edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich. [Available on bcourses]

## **Classical Social Theory**

January 21

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

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

January 23

"On the Jewish Question." 1994 [1843]. Pp. 1–26 in *SW*. What is the relationship between political emancipation and human emancipation?

January 28

"Alienated Labor." 1994 [1844]. Pp.58–79 in *SW*. What is alienated labor?

January 30

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

February 4

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

## **First Draft of First Analytic Paper Due**

February 6

Marx, Karl. 1994 [1848]. "The Communist Manifesto." Pp. 157–186 and [1859] "Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*." Pp. 209–213 in *SW*. What are the developmental tendencies of capitalism?

February 11

Marx, Karl. 1902 [1849]. *Wage Labor and Capital*. Pp. 19–60. What is wage labor? What is Capital?

February 13

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

February 18

Marx, Karl. 1994 [1867]. "Capital Volume One (selections)." Pp. 264–300 in *SW*. What is surplus value? What is primitive accumulation?

February 20

**First Analytic Paper Due**

**Quiz 1**

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

February 25

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?" In the Halls translation the pages are xxv–xxx; 1–67.

February 27

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?" In the Halls translation 68–72, 77–87; 149–175.

March 3

Durkheim, Émile. 1984 [1893]. "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? In the Halls translation 200–225 and 291–328.

March 5

Durkheim, Émile. 2001 [1912]. "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 10

Durkheim, Émile. 2001 [1912]. "Book III. Principal Ritual Conduct." Pp. 221–343 in *EFRL*. What is the connection between religion and society? Summary of Durkheim.

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

March 12

#### **Mid-Term**

March 17

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

March 19

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

March 31

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?

#### **First Draft of Second Analytic Paper Due**

April 2

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?

April 7

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 9

Weber, Max. 1978 [1920]. "Chapter II. Sociological Categories of Economic Action." Pp. 107–113, 161–166. What is capitalism and what are its "substantive" preconditions?

April 14

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

April 16

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

**Second Analytic Paper Due**

April 21

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

April 23

Weber, Max. 1976 [1920] "VII. Class, Status, Party." Pp. 180–195 in *FMW*. What is the connection between classes and status groups?

April 28

**Quiz 2**

April 30

**Course Review, Final Paper Prompt**

May 3–7

**Reading and Recitation Week. (Write your paper.)**

May 10

**Final Paper Due!**