

Sociology 2040 _ Classical Sociological Theory

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This course has two goals. The first one is to provide the students a solid foundation on the key ideas and theories of classical sociological theorists. The second goal is to develop the skills of the students to think theoretically and to apply theory to concrete problems. We will achieve these goals by reading and discussing in depth the works of classical sociologists. In reading them we will aim on the one hand to understand their understanding of society, the social order and social change, the key concepts they use and the main theoretical propositions they put forward. In addition we will discuss the assumptions and logic of their theoretical constructions and how their ideas theoretical ideas can be applied to new problems.

All sociologists would agree that Marx, Weber, and Durkheim are the founding fathers of the discipline and that their work constitute the core of classical sociological theory. We will spend the bulk of the course reading and discussing their writings. In their work they aimed to explain the world in which they lived, which was the world of the emergence and consolidation of industrial capitalism for some, or modernity for others. Yet they were not the only ones that were doing so and there are several other candidates to join them as part of the canon of classical sociology.

I have chosen to include the work of three other theorists in this course. The first one is W.E.B. DuBois. I include him because he was the first to theorize a central aspect of modernity that was not addressed by the other three: race and racialization. DuBois' work puts race at the center of the constitution of modern society and for that he deserves to be considered part of the canon of classical sociology. The other two theorists that I include are George Herbert Mead and Alfred Schutz. Both of them theorize about the constitution of the self and their work is the foundation for much of the work in microsociology. Since the rest of the theorists we look at are mostly macrotheorists (although some of the work of DuBois and to a lesser extent Weber has microsociological elements) the work of these theorists will provide a view to the sociological analysis of the emergence of the self and the social construction of our everyday world. .

We will engage the work of these theorists by posing the following questions to the readings:

1. What are the key questions that guide their work?
2. What is their understanding of how society is constituted?

3. What is their understanding of the maintenance of social order and of the causes of social change?
4. What are the key concepts they use?
5. What is the relevance of these works for understanding of the present?

These questions will allow us to learn about the ideas of each of these theorists, to compare them, and also to understand the logic of their theory building.

At the beginning of each class I will make a brief presentation on the theorists and/or some important questions related to the weekly readings. A student should follow with a short presentation and questions for discussion. The bulk of the class will be based on class discussion. Students should come prepared, having read the readings and being ready to discuss them.

Requirements:

- **Class participation:** Students should attend all classes (unless they have valid and documented reasons not to do so) and they should come to class prepared to discuss the readings.
- **Weekly thought paper:** Students should prepare a 1 page thought paper on some issue that has caught their attention in the readings. The thought papers should be shared with the rest of the class no later than midnight the day before class, so all students can read all the thought papers. The purpose of these papers is to prepare the students for class discussions. They are required but not graded.
- **Class leading:** Each class a student will lead the class (this implies making a brief presentation on the readings and preparing questions for class discussion).
- **Short paper:** A short paper (5-7 pages) on a theorist of your choice.
- **Long paper:** A longer paper (10-14 pages) comparing the work of two other theorists (excluding the one you wrote your short paper on!).

Both papers should be turned in as Word email attachments using a double space, 1 inch margins format, and Times New Roman 12 font. The short paper is due a week after we finish discussing the theorist of your choice. The long paper is due on Monday, December 7.

Grade:

- Class participation (includes participation in class discussions, weekly thought papers and class leading): 40%
- Short paper: 20%
- Long paper: 40%

Readings:

DuBois, W.E.B. See attached list of readings at the end of the syllabus.

Durkheim, Emile. *The Division of Labor in Society*.
Durkheim, Emile. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*
Giddens, Anthony. *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory*
Mead, George Herbert. *On Social Psychology*.
Schutz, Alfred. *The Phenomenology of the Social World*
Tucker, Robert C. *The Marx-Engels Reader*.
Weber, Max. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.
Weber, Max. *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*

All the books are available at the bookstore and they are also on reserve. Some of the DuBois readings can be accessed through the electronic reserves of the undergraduate theory course and others can be accessed at the web sites listed in the page attached at the end of this syllabus.

Course outline:

Week 1 (September 14): Marx

Marx-Engels reader: Pages 3-6, 66-126, 136-203
Giddens, Part 1

Week 2 (September 21): Marx

Readings: Marx-Engels reader: Pages 221-465

Week 3 (September 28): Marx

Marx-Engels reader: Pages 469-500, 586-677

Week 4 (October 5): Weber

The Protestant Ethic
Sections on China and India from "From Max Weber."
Giddens, chapters 9 and 12

Week 5 (October 12): Weber's economic sociology

The Theory of Social and Economic Organization: 3-267
Giddens, chapters 10 and 11

Week 6 (October 19): Weber

The Theory of Social and Economic Organization: Part III

Week 7 (October 26): Durkheim

The Division of Labor in Society
Giddens, chapters 5,6,7

Week 8 (November 2): Durkheim

The Elementary Forms of Religious Life
Giddens, chapter 8

Week 9 (November 9): DuBois

See list of readings by DuBois at the end of this syllabus

Week 10 (November 16): Mead

Introduction by Anselm Strauss

Chapters 2, 6, 7, 8 10

Week 11 (November 30): Schutz

Schutz, Book

Week 12 (December 7): Summarizing session: Classical theory, contemporary society,
and everyday sociology

Giddens, Part 4 and postscript

List of DuBois Readings

The Conservation of Races. Available at: www.webdubois.org/dbConsrvOfRaces.html

Evolution of the Race Problem. Available at:
www.webdubois.org/dbConsrvOfRaces.html

The African Roots of War. Available at: www.webdubois.org/dbConsrvOfRaces.html

My Evolving Program of Negro Freedom. Available at:
www.webdubois.org/dbConsrvOfRaces.html

Of our Spiritual Strivings. Available at:
etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/DubSoul.html

Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others. Available at:
etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/DubSoul.html

The Souls of White Folk. Available at:
etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/DubDark.html

The Damnation of Women. Available at:
etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/DubDark.html

The Talented Tenth. Available at: http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Talented_Tenth

The Color Line Belts the World. Available at Soc. 1010 course site

A Negro Nation Within the Nation. Available at Soc. 1010 course site.

Black Reconstruction. Chapters 1 through 4 and chapter 9. Available at Soc. 1010 course site.