This course offers an introduction to the construction of social theories through a survey and critical analysis of the foundational texts in sociology. We will explore the following questions: (1) What are the main themes and arguments developed in classical sociological theory? (2) How do they relate to the social and intellectual context in which these texts were produced? (3) How have these theories and methods been used in recent sociological research? (4) How can they help us formulate explanations of social phenomena?

This seminar is required of first-year graduate students in sociology. It is also open to graduate students in other fields, as well as to senior-year sociology majors, upon permission of the instructor.

Requirements

(1) One page (no more) reaction paper based on weekly readings (excluding course intro and conclusion). These papers are required every week starting on September 5 and have to be posted on the course website by midnight on Monday. The format is completely open ended. However you should use clear and concise language to summarize, probe or challenge the readings. You are also strongly encouraged to take this as an opportunity to write a pointed memo about a particular question that interests you. In doing so, you are welcome to compare this author’s arguments with those provided by other theorists (e.g.: how do Durkheim and Simmel conceptualize the nature of the social bond?). You are entitled to miss three reaction papers in the course of the semester, for a total of 9 reaction papers. (each paper will be marked as $\checkmark \cdot$, $\checkmark$, or $\checkmark \cdot$)

(2) One final essay (15-20 double-spaced pages) This essay will address an interesting empirical question of your choice and contrast at least three possible theoretical explanations for it, using the perspectives developed in this class. You should work on this paper throughout the semester and are encouraged to check the topic with me.
(3) Participation in class discussions is essential, but so is courtesy vis-à-vis other students and a helpful attitude toward facilitating the collective conversation. Please be mindful that everyone should get an opportunity to participate.

Course website
A course website has been set up in bCourse (Classical Sociological Theory). I encourage you to use the website to communicate with me and with your classmates.

Readings
The following books are required and have been ordered from the Cal student store. They have also been placed on graduate reserve in Moffitt library. Additional readings are available from electronic reserves on the course website, under “resources”.


Not required, but useful background readings:
August 29. The Historical Emergence of Sociology, the Status of Sociological Theory.


Recommended:
On the history of sociology:

On the place and meaning of “theory” within sociology:


Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, pp3-6
Theses on Feuerbach, pp. 143-145
The German Ideology, pp. 146-200
Recommended


September 12. Karl Marx II. Classes and Class Struggle.

Manifesto of the Communist Party, pp. 473-483
18th Brumaire of Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, pp. 594-617


Recommended:

For modern critiques and restatements of Marxist class analysis, see in particular:


Wage Labor and Capital, pp. 203-217
Capital, Vol. I., pp. 302-308 (commodities), 319-329 (fetishism of commodities), 329-336 (general formula of capital); 419-431 (general law of capitalist accumulation); primitive accumulation (431-434).

Recommended


  “Politics as a Vocation” pp. 77-128
  “Science as a Vocation” pp. 129-156.

**Recommended**


**October 3. Max Weber II. Power.**


  “The Sociology of Charismatic Authority” pp. 245-252
  “Class, Status and Party” pp. 180-195
  “Bureaucracy” pp. 196-244

**Recommended**

**October 10. Max Weber III. Religion.**

Pp1-36 (the problem / the spirit of capitalism); 67-87 (the idea of the calling in ascetic protestantism); 105-122 (asceticism and the capitalist spirit); 203-219 (churches and sects in North America)

**Recommended**

**October 17. Emile Durkheim I. Biography and Method. Social Facts and Social Morphology.**

  “Preface to the Second Edition”
  Chapter 1 “What is a Social Fact?”
  Chapter 2 “Rules Relative to the Observation of Social Facts.”

“Social Morphology.” Pp. 241-242

“Forms of Social Solidarity.” Pp. 123–140
“The Division of Labour and Social Differentiation.” Pp. 141–154

Recommended


**October 24. Emile Durkheim II. Knowledge, Religion and Ritual.**


“The Problem.” Pp3-10
“Zuni, Sioux.” Pp42-45

Recommended


**October 31. Marcel Mauss. The Total Social Fact.**


**Recommended**

**November 7. Sigmund Freud and Norbert Elias. Psychogenesis and Sociogenesis.**


**Recommended**

**November 14. Cooley, Mead, DuBois.**


**Recommended**

**November 21. Georg Simmel. A Sociology of Forms.**

Pp. ix-lxv (introduction by D. Levine), 6-32 (“how is society possible?”, “the problem of sociology”), 143-149 (“the stranger”), 251-339 (“group expansion and the development of individuality”, “metropolis”, “fashion”).

“On the Isolated Individual and the Dyad” (and if you have time: “the Triad”).

**Recommended**

**November 28. Wrap-up and conclusion.**

**December 5. Theory potlatch (RRR)**

December 8: Final paper due (please provide a hard copy, even if you email the paper)