

Sociology 105A – Classical Sociological Theories

Summer 2015

Tue-Thu 1-4:30

Social Sciences 2

Room 075

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Course Description

With crises looming over our shoulders – economic meltdowns and crashes, racial discrimination, pink washing and gender inequalities, domestic and overseas institutional violence, technological divides and ever-growing privatization of public domains – it is advised to look back to a time when changes were as imminent and scholars were actively engaged in understanding them. Between the 16th and 19th centuries Western European societies were fundamentally transformed through political and economic upheavals as well as intellectual and popular debates regarding freedom, equality, well-being, social order and social change, and domination and resistance. These developments compelled thinkers to ask questions that shaped theoretical traditions and frameworks used to this day, amongst them: how did these thinkers understand this new social order? How did it effect questions on freedom, dignity and equality? What is capitalism, how did it rise to dominance and what was its effects? What is the individual and what is the extent of their abilities to impact this new society? How did they understand the relations between social groups, power structures, domination and subjugation? What is social inequality and how are we to approach it? How did they understand the relationship between economic orders and political systems?

Sociology was constituted at the intersection of the descent of European dominance and the rise of the US. This led to the fascinating consolidation of a new concept ‘society’, framing a new approach to the understanding of communal life in mass proportions. The new social arrangement was no longer under the gaze of ecclesiastical order, people were left to govern themselves and to assume all worldly responsibilities. A state that has been understood as the progress of “modernity” and has been used as a way to distinguish one’s culture from its past as well as from “others”. In light of these developments we will investigate the meaning of this structure of articulation. We will deconstruct the meaning of “others” and the Other and by extension the epitomizing of ‘the self’ as the individual. Tied to the notion of modernity is the role of imperialism in the making of sociology and in the shaping of the social sciences.

The course begins by reviewing both the actual social changes that shook and transformed European societies and major trends in theorizing that accompanied those changes. In this part of the course we will examine the works of Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim and Max Weber, the three theorists who, each in their own way, defined the intellectual terrain of modern sociology. We will also go over other theorists that offered alternative approaches to the same predicaments, both from Europe as well as from the turn of the century American sociology.

Through a close reading and analysis of the texts, this course introduces students to debates over the nature of society and to core ideas that helped define the discipline of sociology. My aim is to offer you the tools to be able to participate in the discourses framed by sociology as well as break beyond these boundaries to delve into your own interests with an emphasis on 'the social'. For this purpose we will be interacting with and through the texts to better understand the ways in which the theorists coped with their impending social problems to ask how can we better cope with ours. Sociology is often misunderstood as a strictly scholarly discipline that trains students for administrative positions, however the questions that are fundamental to sociology are also fundamental to the daily struggles we have as individuals. With an emphasis on the experiential aspects of social reality I hope to offer you the students an opportunity to delve into your own life experiences from a social lens to find unexpected answers that may help you with your daily struggles as well as motivate you to act in society.

Books (available at the Literary Guillotine and on reserve at McHenry Library: all other readings will be available on ecommons):

- Craig Calhoun, Joseph Gerteis, James Moody, Steven Pfaff, and Indermohan Virk, eds., *Classical Sociological Theory* (3ed.), Wiley-Blackwell, 2012. [CAL]
- Robert C. Tucker (ed.), *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2ed., W. W. Norton & Company, 1978. [MER]
- Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, (Translated by Talcott Parsons, Forward by R. H. Tawney) Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 2003 [1904-05/1958]. – [MW]

Please use the editions noted here, since I will often refer to pages from them. Please bring the day's reading(s) to lecture so you can follow along.

Course Format and Requirements:

Being a summer class this already difficult and intense class will be even more challenging. We don't have much time, but it is nevertheless my intention to encourage you to participate as much as possible, for this I will frequently ask questions and engage you in discussion. The best way to make the most of such an intense class is to commit fully to it – come to class having read the thought about the assigned texts, write questions ahead of time and make it a priority to engage them in class. There is no theory without practice, an active approach will ensure your learning. In such long sessions (though we will have to breaks during every lecture) there it is likely that you will be tempted to fall asleep, text friends, snapchat a sleeping friend and immediately share, tweet and like – DON'T! Please turn off all phones before class, and if you would like to use a computer you will have to ask for permission, use it exclusively for note taking and sit at the back of the class.

Grade Distribution

- **Attendance, participation and listening comprehension quizzes – 20%**
 - It's important to attend lectures for three reasons: (1) attending university means being influenced, receiving guidance when approaching new materials and approaches and having the opportunity to question and challenge it. (2) it maintains structure, a sense of where you are and where you are going. (3) it's summer, every lecture is a double lecture and the equivalent of a week of a regular quarter.
 - Attendance is mandatory – **no** unjustified absences will be accepted, missing a lecture without an official justification will result in a grade loss.
 - Participation – you are encouraged to participate actively during the lecture and its activities. Since this is summer session there is no TA sections, however by participating your grade will be higher.
 - At times I might give an impromptu quiz at the end of lecture. These are intended to test your comprehension of the main points of the lecture and the day's reading.
- **3 commentary/ reading responses – 30%**
 - These short responses include 2 short definitions and a short essay-like commentary that raises two ideas you're grappling with and two questions. The assignment will be posted on ecommons on Thursday after lecture and due the following Tuesday in lecture. The idea is to allow you to engage with the texts analytically. For example you might want to elaborate on the way in which the author lays out his argument, or maybe who he posits as an interlocutor and why; you could define a central term and explain how it is used; you may want to offer a critique of the text or portion of it; reflect on how the text and argument relate to a contemporary event or issue; or you may want to juxtapose the text with another text and show how they correspond and/or negate. Your questions should relate to your comments and express a disagreement, an area you feel uncertain about or would like to know more.
- **In-class integrative exercise – 15%**
 - This exercise will be at the end of the first section of the class (7.9), and will include a video that we will watch, group work and a personal hand in summarizing the day's work. *More on this as the quarter proceeds.*
- **Final - 35%**
 - The final will be an in-class exam that will include identification questions and short and long essays. It will be a cumulative exam. For the long essays you will be expected to engage with at least two theorists. I will provide a study guide.

Please Note: I consider any act of academic misconduct, such as cheating on the exams or plagiarizing from the Web in your papers, a serious violation of the University's norms of conduct. Students who plagiarize or cheat on exams receive an F in the course and are reported to their College Provost for further sanctions.

Summer Session Students with Disabilities

"If you qualify for classroom accommodations because of a disability, please submit your Accommodation Authorization Letter from the Disability Resource Center (**DRC**) to me as soon

as possible, preferably within the first week of the Summer Session. Contact **DRC** by phone at [831-459-2089](tel:831-459-2089) or by email at drc@ucsc.edu for more information."

Modified Supplemental Instruction:

Modified Supplemental Instruction is intended to supplement course lectures. It gives students the opportunity to learn together in small groups led by Student Learning Assistants. This is a wonderful opportunity to receive some guidance and clarity from a fellow student who has been taken the class in the past and was successful at it. These sessions are available on a first come first served basis. Students who attend at least 3 different MSI sessions will receive points towards their attendance grade.

Class format:

In general each lecture is made up of two lectures. The first lecture will run straight for 1-1.5hrs, after which there will be a 15min break. The second lecture will run for 1-1.25hrs with a 5min break in the middle. At the end of the second lecture there will be another short break after which we will reconvene for activities, questions or something else.

Schedule of Classes:

Week1

Tue. June 23

- Lecture #1 – introduction

Reading: R. W. Connell, "Why is Classical Theory Classical?" *American Journal of Sociology (AJS)*, Vol. 102, No. 6 (May 1997), pp. 1151-1157. (Sent by email; ecommons)

- Lecture #2 – Early Karl Marx - Approaching society, the condition of the modern subject and history

Reading: *For a Ruthless Criticism of Everything Existing* p.12-15 in MER
Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts p.70-93 in MER

Thu. June 25

- Lecture #1 – Early Karl Marx – Revolutionary programs

Reading: *Thesis on Feuerbach* p.143-145 in MER

The German Ideology p. 148-155; 172-174 in MER

- Lecture #2 – Early Karl Marx – Revolutionary program cont'

Reading: *Manifesto of the Communist Party* p. 469-500 in MER

Week2

Tue. June 30

- Lecture #1 – Later Marx – Critique of Capitalism
Reading: *Capital* p. 302-3312, 319-329, 329-361, 384-417 in MER
- Lecture #2 – Marx wrap-up and Review session

Thu. July 2

- Lecture #1 – Max Weber – Introduction to key concepts
Reading: *The Distribution of Power within the Political Community* in CAL pp. 310-319
The Types of Legitimate Domination in CAL pp. 320-328
- Lecture #2 – Max Weber - The genesis of capitalism – Conjunctural analysis
Reading: start *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*
Author's introduction; Ch 1-3; Ch 5

Week3

Tue. July 7

- Lecture #1 – Max Weber – the rise of the spirit of capitalism – Conjunctural analysis
Reading: finish *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*
Author's introduction; Ch 1-3; Ch 5
- Lecture #2 – Max Weber Wrap Up and discussion

Thu. July 9

- ** An hour of this meeting might be used for tying loose ends or begin a new topic – tba.
- In-class integrative exercise

Week4

Tue. July 14

- Lecture #1 – Émile Durkheim – Method and Society
Reading: *The Rules of the Sociological Method* [1895] and *The Division of Labor in Society* [1897] in CAL pp. 201-242
- Lecture #2 – Émile Durkheim – Collectivity, Modernity and Anomie
Reading: *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* [1912] and *Suicide* [1897] in CAL pp. 243-262

Thu. July 16

- Lecture #1 – Precursors of Society – Smith, Kant and Hegel

Reading: Adam Smith *The Wealth of Nations* in CAL pp. 55-66; Emanuel Kant

What is Enlightenment? in CAL pp. 50-55; G.W.F. Hegel

Bondage (the Master-Slave Dialectics) *ecommons*

Lecture #2 –

- Lecture #2 – Karl Polanyi – Other theories of transition

Readings: *The Great Transformation*, pp. 33-76 *ecommons*

Week5

Tue July 21

- Lecture #1 – Society, Encounters, History

Readings: Georg Simmel *How is Society Possible* [1910] *ecommons*, Walter

Benjamin *On the Concept of History* [1940] *ecommons*

- Lecture #2 – Self, Society, Difference and Intersections

Readings: Jane Addams *Democracy and Social Ethics* [1902/1907], The Long

Road of Women's Memory [1916] *ecommons*

Thu. July 23

- Final

