
Hunter College: Soc 221

Classical Sociological Theory

Course Description

This course is centered on the works of five theorists (Marx, Durkheim, Weber, Du Bois, and Freud) whose works are essential if one is to understand contemporary sociology. We will read the key texts associated with these theorists with the intent of finding key underlying themes and conflicts that are in many cases the foundation for sociological questioning more generally. This course will explore the classical texts as those founding a discipline that has certain ways of thinking about the world. You will become fluent with these classical theories and vocabularies. As such, you will be able to extend their thoughts beyond their works to apply them to contemporary sociological issues and social representations. This course will proceed by lectures, film, class discussion, group work, and your own reflective writing through blogs, essay exams and exploratory writing assignments.

Learning Outcomes

The following learning outcomes will guide the course:

1. Fluency in the classical sociology theory, including an understanding of the vocabulary, and theories of Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Du Bois and Freud
2. An understanding of the sociological debates about structure/agency, individual vs. society, the transition to 'modernity' and the ability to show how these theorists addressed those debates (compare and contrast their theories)
3. An enhanced reading ability by developing reading skills in doing close readings of difficult texts and learning how 'expert readers' read
4. The ability to trace Marx's influence on the work of Weber, Durkheim, and Du Bois and to articulate their response to Marx
5. The ability to articulate the sociological relevance of Freud through understanding his theory of the social production of individuals and the social nature of individual psychology and subjectivity
6. The development of critical thinking skills through being able to express, through writing but also participation and discussion, how classical theory applies to modern day issues
7. The ability to understand the nature of academic disciplines in terms of the kinds of questions a discipline traditionally poses
8. A collaborative online writing portfolio, which will show the development of your familiarity with, and ideas about these theorists through a semester-long series of essays, reflections, and blog entries

Instructor: Christina Nadler
E-Mail: cnadler@gc.cuny.edu
Office: TBA
Office Hours: By Appointment

Materials

The books will be ordered at Shakespeare and Co. on Lexington. Books are the **Penguin Publishers** version, with the exception of Freud, which is the **Basic Book** version. If you use other one have to get right page number. Be mindful of the different translation if you were to buy another edition.

Books:

- Marx, Capital Volume One
- Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism
- Du Bois, The Souls of Black Folk
- Freud, Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality

Online:

- [Marx, Communist Manifesto](#)
- [Durkheim, Division of Labor](#)
- [classicaltheory.wordpress.com](#)

Dates to Know

February 24th

Exam One: Marx (12% of grade)

March 6th

Exam Two: Durkheim (12% of grade)

March 23rd

Exam Three: Weber (12% of grade)

April 24th

Exam Four: Du Bois (12% of grade)

May 8th

Exam Five: Freud (12% of grade)

May 15th

Writing Portfolio (15% of grade)

Throughout

Participation (10% of grade) and
Writing Assignments (15% of grade)

Assessment and Requirements

The learning outcomes will be assessed through the following requirements:

Class Participation (10%): This part of your grade will be based on how often you participate in class. This includes asking questions; you should always feel comfortable asking questions in this class. The lowest grade for class participation will be given for poor attendance *or* for total lack of participation. If you come to every class, but never participate do not expect a good participation grade. The highest will be given for attending regularly and participating to advance class discussion and for showing your fluency in the course material. Examples of contributions that advance the class discussion: answering a question posed by the instructor or another classmate, posing thoughtful questions, stating disagreement with the author/other students/instructor and backing that position up with a solid argument. To participate in a thoughtful manner, you must support your opinions with textual references and/or describe relevant experiences and be open to critique and/or disagreement. In addition, please critique or disagree with others in a respectful way; belittling comments directed to any person will not be tolerated. You should also be prepared to have something to say if called on by the instructor. To fully participate in a class where the texts are instrumental to the class discussion and content, you must **bring the readings to class**. An additional way to earn credit toward your participation grade is to look up words in the text you did not know and share the definitions with the class. Participation is a critical part of your assessment in achieving the learning outcomes because you will have to literally speak to the issues being learned. Use of the **class blog** may supplement your participation grade, but will not be a substitute. You can find the blog at classicaltheory.wordpress.com. To use it, you will comment on posts already there, or you can email to ask me to create a new post. The blog will have posts for discussions, to get notes if you missed a class, to post notes to share with classmates and more. (This portion of your grade addresses Learning Outcomes 1,2,4-7 with emphasis on practicing 1, 6 and 7)

Exams (60%): You will also have **five cumulative essay exams** throughout the semester. They will each focus mainly on the topics/theorists/issues/vocabulary we have just covered but questions will ask you to use prior knowledge from previous exams and sometimes to compare/contrast/comment on issues already covered. You will be expected to revise your exams and post them on your blog. The quality of writing is important to your grade. As the semester progresses grading will become stricter and points will be deducted for wrong answers, as well as insufficient and poorly written answers. This is why you are asked to revise and post your exam answers on the blog, so that you and other students may learn how to write better essays. The questions will be distributed in advance, but the test will not be open book nor will you be permitted to have notes out. (This portion of your grade addresses Learning Outcomes 1-8 with a content-based focus on 2,4, and 5).

Writing Assignments (15%): There will be a number of **low stakes or informal exploratory writing assignments**. These assignments are to help process the readings and the content of the lectures. Some of them will be in class and some of them will be on the blog. They will include assignments such as writing summaries of course lectures with your comments and questions, narratives of your history of thought throughout the course (theory journal), responses to films, discussion of readings from other classes that pertain to sociological theory, linking course content to personal experiences, explaining and developing your reading process through reflection, and translating the classical text into contemporary language. (This portion of your grade addresses Learning Outcomes 1-8 with a direct emphasis on 1,3, 6, and 8).

Collaborative Writing Portfolio (15%): In addition to the class blog, each group will have its own blog where you will have a **collaborative online writing portfolio** (the class will be divided into eight groups of five by random order). **Each student will have to create her/his own wordpress.com account** to access the blog. Your blog will include text/videos/images created by your group as well as other resources you find online. It will also include your exam answers, writing assignment and discussions and comments. Your group will share an aspect of the blog with the class on the last day in the form of a short presentation. Many of the works on the blog will have been graded throughout the semester, but the grade for the portfolio will be given on the cumulative final project. (This portion of your grade addresses Learning Outcomes 1-8 with but directly fulfills 8).

Course Grading

A = 92.5+ A- = 90-92.4 B+ = 87.5-89.9 B = 82.5-87.4 B- = 80-82.4 C+ = 77.5-79.9 C = 70-77.4 C- = 60-69.9 F = 0-59.9

Course Policies

Attendance and Lateness: I will take daily attendance. Two late marks will add up to one absence. **Be on time to class. After 3 absences (or combination with lateness), excused or unexcused, your final grade will be lowered by ten points** and will continue to be lowered for every additional absence. There are many pedagogical reasons for this policy, and hopefully by the end of the semester you will appreciate the classroom environment it helped to garner.

Missed Exams and Late Assignments: Late assignments will not be accepted. If you miss class or you are late, you will not be able to make up missed in class assignments or group work. The only way you may make up an exam is if you notify me in advance **and** bring in documentation of an emergency.

Cell Phones: Please do not use your phone in class. If there is a reason that throughout the semester that you must check your phone in class (i.e. child or elder care) you should let me know in the beginning of the semester.

Grade Changes: I will not change grades once the semester is over. If you are having trouble with an assignment please talk to me **before** the due date. Talk to me before the end of the semester or before the midterm if you feel you are not doing as well as you would like. Use the grading rubric to monitor your own progress so your grade is not a surprise.

Extra Credit: There will be **no extra credit**. You can earn a good grade through doing the work throughout the semester. No single part of your grade is enough to ruin your entire grade. Instead of asking me for extra credit, ask me for help before you miss an assignment, or take an exam—**or form a study group so you can improve for the next assignment or exam!**

Email: Put the name of the course somewhere in the **subject line**. If you do not get a response from me you cannot assume I got your email.

Plagiarism: Don't do it. You will fail the class, and may be suspended by the college. Plagiarism, simply defined, is using someone else's work as your own. Sometimes it is hard to tell what constitutes plagiarism in this technological era when information is so readily available online. You still need to cite all information you find on the internet and refer to in your work. If you are not sure what constitutes a source or what constitutes plagiarism then *ask for help or advice*. *Tip:* Better safe than plagiarized (or: when in doubt, cite!). Below is an excerpt of CUNY Policy.

“Any deliberate borrowing of the ideas, terms, statements or knowledge of others without clear and specific acknowledgment of the source is plagiarism. It is, in fact, intellectual theft. Serious students, scholars and teachers agree that they cannot tolerate plagiarism. It is not, of course, plagiarism to borrow the ideas, terms, statements or knowledge of others if the source is clearly and specifically acknowledged. Any conscientious student will, from time to time, consult critical material and may wish to include some of the insights, terms or statements encountered. When this happens, the source must be given full credit. This means listing the source in a footnote and/or appended bibliography and footnoting all quotations or close paraphrasing, including the page number of the passage in the source. Plagiarism will result in disciplinary proceedings.” A more detailed explanation of plagiarism and the accepted procedures for acknowledging sources is available on the library website.

Learning Styles and Disabilities: All students have learning needs and learn differently. I would like to accommodate as many learning needs as possible. If my teaching style is not jiving with your learning style, regardless of your dis/ability status, let me know. I would be happy to try a new style of teaching that might better suit students' needs. Please let me know if you are registered with the CSDS, as well.

Course Schedule

Readings should be completed by the date they are listed so that we can discuss them in class. Additional readings may be assigned. Schedule subject to change.

Week 1

Friday January 27th

Topic: Course Overview

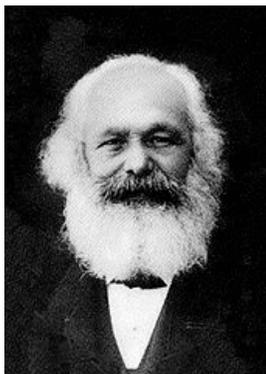
Week 2

Tuesday January 31st

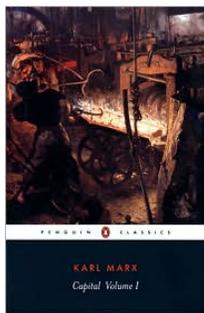
Topic: Marx and Capitalism
Reading: Communist Manifesto

Friday February 3rd

Topic: Marx and Capitalism
Reading: Communist Manifesto



Week 3



Tuesday February 7th

Topic: Marx and Capitalism
Reading: Communist Manifesto and
Capital Volume 1
(Chapter 1/The Commodity)

Friday February 10th

Topic: Marx and Capitalism
Reading: Capital Volume 1
(Chapter 1/The Commodity)

Week 4

Tuesday February 14th

Topic: Marx and Capitalism
Reading: Capital Volume 1
(Chapter 1/The Commodity)

Film: Harlan County USA

Workshop: Wordpress.com Demonstration

***Last Day to Drop a Class Without a W is February 16th**

Friday February 17th

Topic: Capitalism in Action
Film: Harlan County USA



Week 5

Tuesday February 21st

No Class
(Monday Schedule)

Friday February 24th

Topic: First Exam

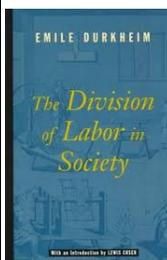
Week 6

Tuesday February 28th

Topic: Solidarity and Modernity
Reading: Durkheim - Division of
Labor (Handout)

Friday March 2nd

Topic: Solidarity and Modernity
Reading: Durkheim - Division of
Labor (Handout)



Week 7

Tuesday March 6th

Topic: Second Exam

Friday March 9th

Topic: Weber and the Transition to Modernity
Reading: The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of
Capitalism (Chapter 1, Part 1)

Week 8



Tuesday March 13th

Topic: Weber and the Transition to
Modernity
Reading: The Protestant Ethic and
the Spirit of Capitalism
(Chapter 1, Part 2)

Friday March 16th

Topic: Weber and the Transition to
Modernity
Reading: The Protestant Ethic and
the Spirit of Capitalism
(Part 2)

Week 9

Tuesday March 20th

Topic: Weber and the Transition to
Modernity
Reading: The Protestant Ethic and the
Spirit of Capitalism (Part 3)

Friday March 23rd

Topic: Third Exam





Week 10

Tuesday March 27th
Topic: American Classical Theory
Film: Crash

Friday March 30th
Topic: American Classical Theory
Film: Crash

Week 11

Tuesday April 3rd
Topic: American Classical Theory
Reading: Du Bois The Souls of Black Folk (Chapter 1)



Friday April 6th
No Class (Spring Break)

Week 12

Tuesday April 10th
No Class (Spring Break)

Friday April 13th
No Class (Spring Break)

Week 13



Tuesday April 17th
Topic: American Classical Theory
Reading: Du Bois The Souls of Black Folk (Chapter 2)

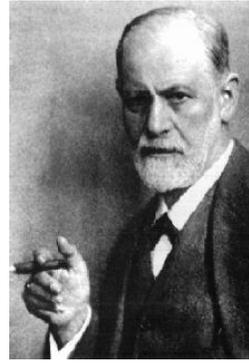
Last Day to Withdraw with a W is April 19th

Friday April 20th
Topic: American Classical Theory
Reading: Du Bois The Souls of Black Folk (Chapter 3)

Week 14

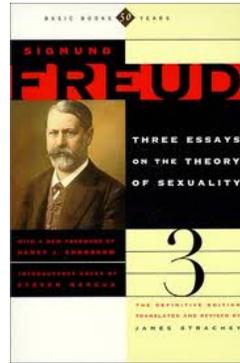
Tuesday April 24th
Topic: Test Four

Friday April 27th
Topic: The Unconscious, Sexuality and Society
Reading: Freud Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality (Essay 1)



Week 15

Tuesday May 1st
Topic: The Unconscious, Sexuality and Society
Reading: Freud Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality (Essay 2)



Friday May 4th
Topic: The Unconscious, Sexuality and Society

Reading: Freud Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality (Essay 3)

Week 16

Friday May 11th
Topic: The Unconscious, Sexuality and Society
Film: Ma Vie En Rose



Tuesday May 8th
Topic: Test Five

Week 17

Tuesday May 15th
Topic: Presentations