

Sociology 406 - 1: Classical Theory in Sociological Analysis

Autumn quarter, 2012

Professor: Wendy Griswold; 1810 Chicago Ave, 2nd floor; w-griswold@northwestern.edu,
Office hours: Thursdays 11 – 12:30 by appointment (e-mail me first and let me know what you would like to discuss; we can set up a different time if necessary)

Class meeting: Tuesdays 2:00 to 4:30 in Parkes 222

This seminar, which is required for and restricted to first-year Sociology students, introduces some of the essential sociological writings of Karl Marx, Max Weber, Emile Durkheim, and Georg Simmel. These four men wrote what are generally considered to be the foundational texts of sociological theory, and their thinking continues to guide contemporary research. We will be focusing on how these social theorists conceptualized modernity and whether the analytic tools they developed at the beginning of the twentieth century are useful for addressing the issues and social configurations of the twenty-first.

Course requirements:

- two short papers;
- one longer paper written by a team;
- being part of a team leading the day's discussion at least twice;
- active, knowledgeable, prepared participation in seminar discussions.

Short papers: Students will identify a problem or question that interests them. For **two** of the four theorists covered, students will write a short paper (4-5 pages) on what hypothesis that person's theory would generate regarding their problem and how they could go about testing this hypothesis. These papers will be due by 5:00 on the **Thursday after the second class** on that theorist (dates indicated below). Plan accordingly; there should be no late papers. You should put a hard copy in my mailbox and also e-mail me the pdf.

Longer, team paper: For a final paper, which everyone will write, students will be viewing a documentary film. Working in teams of two or three people, students will write a paper applying the sociological theories studied previously to the materials covered in this film. This paper will be a bit longer than the previous ones, but should not go much over 8 pages.

Discussion leadership: Working in teams of two or three, students will identify a set of discussion questions on the readings for each week. They will distribute these questions to seminar members in advance via Blackboard. Each day, after a short introductory lecture, the student team will lead the discussion of these questions.

Participation: Every seminar member will actively engage in every discussion. Preparation is a must; you will need to be on top of the readings, and to have some informed responses to the questions that the student discussion leaders have circulated.

Books (available at Norris and on reserve at library; you probably want to own these as you build your sociological library)

Emile Durkheim 1858 - 1917

(1) *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*; translated by John A. Spaulding and George Simpson; edited, with an introduction, by George Simpson. New York: Free Press, (1951) 1997. ISBN: 978-0684836324

(2) *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*; Mark S. Cladis, editor, Carol Cosman, translator. New York: Oxford University Press USA, 2008. Abridged. ISBN: 978-0199540129

Karl Marx 1818 - 1883

The Marx-Engels Reader; edited by Robert C. Tucker. 2d ed. New York: Norton, 1978. ISBN: 978-0393090406

Georg Simmel 1858 - 1918

On Individuality and Social Forms; edited and introduction by Donald Levine. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971. ISBN: 978-0226757766

Max Weber 1864 - 1920

(1) *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*; trans. by Talcott Parsons; introd. by Anthony Giddens. London & New York: Routledge, 2001. ISBN: 978-0415254069

(2) *Economy and Society*, ed. by Guenther Roth & Claus Wittich. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978. ISBN: 978-0520035003.

Note: Students are to complete all readings and prepare the discussion questions before the class for that week.

Week 1 (September 25) Durkheim I

Durkheim, *Suicide*

Introduction (41 – 53).

Book One (skim this)

Book Two, chapters 1 - 5 (143 – 276).

Book Three, chapters 1 – 2 (295 – 360).

Week 2 (October 2) Durkheim II

Durkheim *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*

Introduction

Book One, chapter 1 (section III).

Book Two, chapters 1 - 3; 6 - 7; 8 (sections IV - VI).

Book Three, chapters 1 - 2; 5 (section IV).

Conclusion (all)

Papers on Durkheim due Thursday October 4

Week 3 (October 9) Marx I

Marx, *The Marx-Engels Reader*

"Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy," 3-6.

"The German Ideology: Part I, 146 - 200.

Marx, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," 469 - 500.

Week 4 (October 16) Marx II

The Marx-Engels Reader

- “Alienation and Social Classes,” 133-35.
- “Wage, Labor and Capital,” 203-217
- “The Coming Upheaval,” 218-19
- “Capitalism, Alienation, and Communism,,” 292-293.
- “Commodities and Money, 302-61.
- “The Secret of Primitive Accumulation,” 431-38.

Papers on Marx due Thursday October 18

Week 5 (October 23) Weber I

Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*

All, including Author’s Introduction

Week 6 (October 30) Weber II

Weber, *Economy and Society*

- “Basic Terms,” 3-62
- “Class, Status and Power,” 926-940
- “Types of Legitimate Domination,” 212-271

Papers on Weber due Thursday, November 1

Week 7 (November 6) Simmel I

Simmel, *Individuality and Social Forms*

- “How Is Society Possible?” 6-22
- “The Problem of Sociology,” 23-35
- “The Stranger,” 143-149

Photocopy: "Types of Social Relationships by Degrees of Reciprocal Knowledge of Their Participants"

Week 8 (November 13) Simmel II

Simmel, *Individuality and Social Forms*

- “Sociability,” 127-140
- “The Metropolis and Mental Life,” 324-339.
- "The Conflict in Modern Culture," 375-393.

Papers on Simmel due Thursday November 15

Week 9 (November 20) Case study: *Belfast, Maine*, a documentary film (streaming starts Nov. 30)

Week 10 (November 27) Group presentations

Papers on *Belfast, Maine* due Thursday November 29