

Department of Sociology
Emory University
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Location/time TBD

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Sociology 457: Development of Sociological Theory

Overview

Classical sociological theory is by some accounts an attempt to come to grips with deep and drastic changes across mostly western societies in the 19th and early 20th centuries. It is an attempt to come to grips with *modernity*, in which new forms of power, new ways of belonging, and new structures of social organization introduced profound changes into everyday life and traditional institutions such as the church.

The problem is, few sociologists “do” theory now like they did it back in the day. So why require it of every undergraduate sociology major? Why examine the intellectual answers to the social problems of another era? The theorists we examine in this course remain relevant and continue to be taught because they created enduring traditions of thinking about the modern world. These traditions are still practiced, in all of the social sciences. Moreover, these ways of thinking about profound social change are apt now as more and more we realize the potency of globalization to change our own world.

The aim of this course is to demonstrate the usefulness of theorizing about profound social change by examining a previous wave of such thinking, while at the same time tracing how the classical sociology of the modern era still matters substantively for the contemporary global era. We are witnessing new forms of power, new ways of belonging, and new structures of social organization changing everyday life and our “modern” institutions. The traditions the classical theorists inspired are now answering to these global changes.

Structure

This course will consist of one introductory section and six similarly structured substantive sections.

Introduction – The introductory section will orient you to sociological and theoretical thinking by looking at an ongoing and timely controversy over the fate of the world after the end of the cold war. Is our war in Iraq and terror around the world indicative of a clash of civilizations between “the west and the rest?” How does an idea such as the “clash of civilizations” become embedded in the minds of scholars, the polity, the media, and the public? And why is it important to understand the impact of this idea on contemporary world society?

The next six sections will deal in depth with a particular theorist, the contexts of their work and the work itself, an in depth collaborative workshop on a theme relevant to our own era, and an application using popular media:

Context and texts – For each theorist, we will first examine the societal and national contexts in which they lived and about which they were writing, and then turn to the difficult work of examining a selection of their classic texts and ideas.

Workshop – To change the pace and provide space for more in-depth discussion, we will look more deeply at a particular enduring aspect of their work in a workshop setting where we can collectively think through complex ideas. The intent of the workshop is to demonstrate the ongoing relevance of each theorist in a globalizing world.

Application – Each section will end with a contemporary illustration of each theorist drawn from popular culture, about which you will then be asked to write an essay in which you apply your new found theoretical insights (Note: we are combining the Smith and Marx essay applications into one section).

The course schedule may be adjusted and items added or removed as needed. Course policies may change as I see necessary. My weekly office hours may adjust as the semester moves on. The best way to reach me is via email or walk in during my office hours. Appointments made for office hours will have priority.

Reading and Understanding Classical Sociological Theory

Classical sociological theory is not easy. It requires significant amounts of reading that can best be characterized as difficult and dense. Writing styles of the 19th and early 20th centuries are not easy to decipher. I recommend being very disciplined about keeping up with the reading and doing so in advance of covering the material in class. Keep up with the contextual readings as well, as these will help you distill this difficult material into the key ideas that remain relevant today. Also avail yourself of the many online resources on sociological theory. There is no trick or one best solution to reading and understanding theory. Find out early on in the course what works for you – this may mean spending extra time at the beginning experimenting with what works. Finally, come talk to me and use me as a resource during office hours.

Required Texts and Online Readings

- Bellah, Robert (ed.). *Emile Durkheim on Morality and Society*
- Levine, Donald (ed.). *Georg Simmel on Individuality and Social Forms*
- Tucker, Robert (ed.). *The Marx-Engles Reader*
- DuBois, W.E.B. *The Souls of Black Folks*
- Weber, Max. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*
- Robert Heilbroner (ed.), *The Essential Adam Smith*
- Reserve readings (electronic versions available via Woodruff reserves) and website readings

I will be posting various introductory readings for each theorist, drawing from a variety of different resources. However, I will draw particularly from Laura Desfor Edles and Scott Appelrouth, *Sociological Theory in the Classical Era*. These readings will be listed on the syllabus as *Introduction to X, EA* where “X” is our theorist of the day. All of these readings will be on ^{Reserve}.

Requirements

Three exams – (40% each of final grade) Two non-cumulative exams will consist of in class short-answer and/or take-home essay questions. These will be midterm-style exams. The third exam will be a semi-cumulative final taken during our scheduled final period.

5 Writing Assignments – (30% of final grade). This is a writing intensive course. As such, you will be asked to submit **5** required written assignments. Your best scores on three of the five essays will count toward your final grade, but you must submit all five assignments to pass this course, and you must average at least a C across all FIVE assignments. All assignments must be turned in at the beginning of class on the day they are due. Details about the assignments will be given at least a week prior to their due date. Some assignments will require longer page counts than others, but I will give you more advanced notice for these.

The goal of these assignments is for you to demonstrate your understanding of our theorists, critically apply your understanding to a contemporary issue or situation, and thus to demonstrate the ongoing relevance of classical sociological theory.

Final ReWriting Assignment – (10% of final grade). Part of being a good writer is revising and rewriting your work. You will revise and rewrite the essay for which you scored your lowest grade. Your grade for this rewriting project will depend on the quality of improvement over your previous draft, based on your attention to my suggestions on writing style, clarity, and the accuracy of your representation of our subjects. Your grade on this rewrite will also change the original essay

I realize that the final regular essay on DuBois is due late in the semester and will give you less time to focus on the rewrite. I suggest that you make sure that the DuBois essay is not your lowest grade.

Participation, preparation, improvement, surprise quizzes – (10% of final grade). You are expected to do the readings, respond to questions, participate actively in discussion, carry out any class-related assignments and research, and take quizzes as necessary. Attendance is expected and roll will be taken.

If you have a valid reason (serious illness, tragedy in your family, etc.) for absence, a late assignment, or altering exam dates, you will need to confer with me regarding POSSIBLE restitution. I do not guarantee that I will allow such restitution.

Additional Stuff

Respect in the classroom – At times we will be engaging in discussions on topics that may be controversial, including issues such as religion and race. I expect that these discussions will be conducted by all participants (including the instructor) with respect for differing opinions. Further, such discussion is to be based on critical arguments rather than *ad hominem*.

Writing Center – In addition to the help I can provide with writing, please avail yourself of the University Writing Center. See their website at www.writingcenter.emory.edu.

Sociology Subject Guide – The folks at the library have a very dandy subject guide for doing research in sociology. Check it out at the really long and ugly web address <http://web.library.emory.edu/subjects/socsci/sociol/sociology.htm>.

Academic Honesty – I need to know that what comes to me under your name represents your own thoughts. If you are not already familiar with what constitutes academic dishonesty and the penalties for it, please consult the Emory Honor Code (www.emory.edu/COLLEGE/students/honor.html). The crucial points are:

- It is fine to incorporate other people’s words and ideas into your own writing, but you must acknowledge their source with a formal reference and complete citation.
- Ideally, you are continually making connections between what is taught in different courses. If you want to use writing created in one course for another, however, you must ask permission and work out the details with your instructor.

Remember: Your personal integrity is more valuable than your grade on any individual assignment, and all work in this course is implicitly governed by the Emory Honor Code.

College Policies – for further info on Emory College academic policies, please see pages 386-405 of the Emory College Course Catalog.

Accommodating Disabilities – If you have or acquire any sort of disability that may require accommodation, I urge you to discuss it with me right away. If you want to find out what services are available on campus, contact the Office of Disability Services, 110 Administration Building, (404) 727-6016.

Schedule and Readings (subject to revision)

Part I: Why Study Theory? A case study in the relevance of ideas

- Why study classical sociological theory?
Introduction to course, syllabus.
Ideas in history.
- **The Clash of Civilizations?**
Sam Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations” ^{Reserve.}
- **Critiques of and Alternatives to the Clash thesis**
Casanova, José. "Civil Society and Religion: Retrospective Reflections on Catholicism and Prospective Reflections on Islam." ^{Reserve.}
Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris, "The True Clash of Civilizations" ^{Reserve.}
- **The Clash thesis in Popular/Media Narratives**

Clips from Fox News, the Colbert Report
The Cartoon Crisis

- **Introduction to classical sociological theory**
Collins, “The Rise of the Social Sciences” ^{Reserve.}

Part II: Adam Smith

- **Moral Sentiments**
Introduction to Smith, EA ^{Reserve.}
The Essential Adam Smith, 1-10, 65-77, 100-23, 145-7

Optional explanatory readings on Smith:
Collins, “The Rational/Utilitarian Tradition” ^{Reserve.}
- **The Wealth of Nations**
The Essential Adam Smith, 159-72, 194-208, 248-67, 269-90
- **Theory Workshop**
Do the butcher and the baker have fellow feeling?

Part III: Karl Marx

- **Early Marx: Ideology and Philosophy**
Introduction to Marx, EA ^{Reserve.}
Tucker, *Marx-Engels Reader*. Introduction, “Marx on the History of His Opinions” (3-6), “On the Jewish Question” (26-52), “Theses on Feuerbach” (143-145), “German Ideology: Part I” (146-65 and 172-175 and 190-193).

Optional explanatory readings on Marx:
Giddens, *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory*, Part 1 ^{Reserve.}
Collins, “The Conflict Tradition” ^{Reserve.}
- **The Critique of Capitalism / Incipient Globalism**
Tucker, “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844” (70-105) “Capital Vol. 1” (351- 361 and 407-415 and 436-38) “Capital Vol. 3” (439-442), “Manifesto to the Communist Party” (437-500).

Start reading Tucker, “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte” (594-617)
- **Theory Workshop**
Models of human behavior in Smith and Marx
Tucker, “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte” (594-617)
Thomas Frank, excerpts from *What’s the Matter with Kansas?* ^{Reserve.}

- **“What’s the matter with Kansas?”**
Thomas Frank, excerpts from *What’s the Matter with Kansas?* ^{Reserve.}

Part IV: Emile Durkheim

- **Social Facts and the Division of Labor**
Introduction to Durkheim, EA ^{Reserve.}
Bellah, *Emile Durkheim: On Morality and Society*. Chapters 7, 8, and 9.
EA, “Rules of sociological method” ^{Reserve.}

Optional explanatory readings on Durkheim:
Giddens, *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory*, Part 2 ^{Reserve.}
Collins, “The Durkheimian Tradition” ^{Reserve.}

- **Morality and Solidarity**
Bellah, Chapters 11 and 12
Begin reading Bellah, Ch 4

Smith/Marx assignment due

- **Theory Workshop**
The cult of the individual
Bellah, “Individualism and the Intellectuals.” Ch. 4
- **Solidarity Now!**
Clips from *The Village*

Part V: Max Weber

- **Legitimacy, Power, & Rationalization**
Introduction to Weber, EA ^{Reserve.}
Gerth and Mills, *From Max Weber*, “Class, Status, Party” (180-196), “Bureaucracy” (196 – 240), “The Sociology of Charismatic Authority” (245-252). ^{Reserve.}

Optional explanatory readings on Weber
Giddens, *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory*, Part 3 ^{Reserve.}
Collins, “Max Weber and the multidimensional theory of stratification” ^{Reserve.}
Gerth and Mills, Introduction ^{Reserve.}

- **The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism**
Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism*
Begin reading excerpts Weber, “Religious Rejections of the World and their Directions” Reserves

Durkheim assignment due

- **Theory Workshop**
Have We Seen the End of Secularization?
 Excerpts of Weber, “Religious Rejections of the World and their Directions” ^{Reserve.}
 Lechner, “The Case Against Secularization: A Rebuttal.” ^{Reserve.}
 Warner, R. Steven. “Work in Progress Toward a New Paradigm for the
 Sociological Study of Religion in the U.S.” ^{Reserve.}
- **The Iron Cage?**
 Clips from *Brazil*

Part VI: Georg Simmel

- **Social Forms**
Introduction to Simmel, EA ^{Reserve.}
 Levine, *Georg Simmel On Individuality and Social Forms*, “Conflict” (71-83)
 “Fashion.” (294-311), “The Stranger” (143-149).

 Optional explanatory readings on Simmel:
 Levine, Introduction ^{Reserve.}
- **Modern Society and the Individual**
 Levine, “Group Expansion and the Development of Individuality” (251-293);
 “The Metropolis and Mental Life” (324); “Money in Modern Culture” ^{Reserve.}

Weber assignment due
- **Theory Workshop**
 Subjective and Objective Culture, or, “Culture keeps gettin’ bigger and bigger.”
 Levine, “The Conflict in Modern Culture” (375-394)
- **The Wider Circle of Friends**
 Clips from *Singles*

Part VII: W.E.B DuBois

- **The Color Line, Double Consciousness, and the Veil**
Introduction to DuBois, EA ^{Reserve.}
 DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*
 EA, “The Philadelphia Negro” ^{Reserve.}

 Optional explanatory readings on DuBois:
 Lewis, David Levering, *W. E. B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race, 1868-1919*, ch.
 1, 8, 11, 13. ^{Reserve.}

- **Intellectual Transition and the Concept of Race**
Dubois, *Dusk of Dawn*, Chapters 1, 5 ^{Reserve.}

Simmel assignment due

- **Theory Workshop**
Who am I? “I’m colorblind – I don’t see race. Are you Black or White? ‘Cuz I don’t see race.”
EA, “The Souls of White Folk” ^{Reserve.}

- **Race in our world and others**
Clips from *The Brother from Another Planet*

- *DuBois assignment due*

- *Final*

- *ReWrite project due*