

CLASSICAL SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

920:515 Fall'13

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Sociology Seminar Room
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“... it is desirable for us as modern intellectuals, and hence products of universities, to divest ourselves of hindsight which makes us take for granted the inevitability of this institution (Collins, R. 2000:640. *The Sociology of Philosophies*).”

You have all had exposure to the major texts, such as *The German Ideology*, *The Protestant Ethic and the Rise of Capitalism*, *The Division of Labor in Society* and *Suicide* that we will be discussing during the semester. We therefore are operating with the expectation that you will come away from this revisit of those texts with a deeper and broader understanding of them. There, however, is a more substantial type of revisiting that a course on classical theory might too readily take for granted. A formal seminar based upon the study of these classical texts consists also of 21st century citizens revisiting the social context and ideas of thinkers largely from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Those issues are relevant in pointing to the fact that an important undertaking of the semester is making use of our meetings as a way to help you survive as an early 21st century sociologist. Thus, while we are following through with the traditional intellectual conversations about the classics, there will also be room in the seminar for conversation about the relationship of classics in the discipline to your desire to become a professional sociologist.

The basic goal of this course, however, is to provide you with the ability to identify and make use of the concepts and theoretical perspectives of 19th and early 20th century “classical theorists” as the *Lingua Franca* of the discipline during this moment of increased specialization and fragmentation. Towards accomplishing that goal we will largely be operating from the dual perspectives of (1) focusing on the concepts and theories of the classical thinkers as they grappled with issues contemporary to their lives and (2) paying attention to how their ideas might be useful to us in analyzing issues of concern to you.

Related to those concerns we will have conversations about the following points, which will further our sense of sociology and the larger university as historical phenomena:

- The classics of sociology are socially constructed. We should not then expect to find a perfect overlap between the texts that are currently designated as classics and those that were in that category even a mere half century ago. By extension, there is no need to assume that our contemporary classics will continue to occupy that category 50 or even 25 years hence. Let me make this same point retrospectively by indicating that while Kant and Hegel were the authors of the classical texts that Marx, Weber, Durkheim and Simmel relied upon Kant and Hegel are no longer expected to be intellectual touch points for the vast majority of contemporary sociologists. Would it then be appropriate for us to assume that the ideas of Kant and Hegel are entirely absent from contemporary sociological thought?
- The modern university system, within which sociology became an academic field, arose during the late 17th –18th centuries in Germany. Its “modern” qualities were based on the fact that they were autonomous contexts for research and intellectual innovation freed from restrictions of State or Church. In addition, the modern university served to expand the pool of independent

intellectual workers by freeing individuals from reliance on aristocratic patrons or the need to be independently wealthy.

- We will pay attention to the types of social supports each author relied upon. This focus will serve to help you become aware of the fact that the development of intellectual ideas is necessarily associated with institutional supports. That fact is no less significant for your advancement in the profession.
- An additional transformation resulting from the independence of the modern university was the shift towards scientific specialists, which became manifested as disciplinary distinctions within universities. The separation of the social sciences from the natural sciences was the most significant change thereby advancing what we have come to know as the modern university.
- Given the impact of the Internet on education, allowing for the rise of global universities, we might well be in the midst of the first major transformation in university education since the revolution that gave rise to the modern university system during the late 17th–18th centuries in Germany.

I have structured the class to operate as a seminar. This means that during most of the sessions, in addition to my lecture, we will engage the texts for dialogue among us around the issues that I have outlined above and around those that you deem to be important.

Texts at the Douglass Campus Bookstore

Durkheim, E.	<i>Division of Labor in Society</i>
Durkheim, E.	<i>Elementary Forms of Religious Life</i>
Mead, G. H.	<i>Mind, Self and Society</i>
Simmel, G.	<i>Conflict and Web of Group Affiliations</i>
Weber, M.	<i>The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism</i>
Wolff, K. (ed.)	<i>Sociology of Georg Simmel</i>

Additional readings will be posted on SAKAI or can be accessed via the Internet

Expectations

Seminar participation	20pts
4 short essays during the course of the semester [14 pts each]	56pts
A 5 th essay: due 1 week after the last seminar meeting	24pts
	Total 100pts

It is departmental policy to strongly discourage you from taking an incomplete. Doing so could have negative consequences for your overall progress through the year.

WEEK ISept 5 Introduction

Structure of the course

Some problems in teaching classical theory to contemporary graduate students

Providing a useful model for making theoretical comparisons.

WEEK IISept 12 Contemporary thoughts about the role of the classics in the discipline

#Alexander, J. 1987. "The Centrality of the Classics." In Giddens, A. and J. Turner (eds.)

Social Theory Today.##Connell, R.W. 1997. "Why is Classical Theory Classical?" *American Journal of**Sociology*. 102:6 (1511-1557)#/#Runciman, W. G. 2008. "Forgetting the founders" *The Sociological Review*, 56:3##Ossewaarde, M. 2009. "Forgetting the founders? – reply to Runciman." *The Sociological**Review*, 57:2**WEEK III**Sept 19 Early Marx: Social Systems shape ideas (Materialist, Structural)Tucker (ed.), *The Marx-Engels Reader*:www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/index.htm

"Alienation and Social Classes" (pp. 133-135)

"The German Ideology, Part I" (pp. 146-200)

WEEK IVSept 26 Marx: Critique of CapitalismTucker (ed.), *The Marx-Engels Reader*:www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/index.htm

Marx, K. Capital Volume I: (294-343)

Prefaces, Afterword, Part I ("Commodities") and Part II ("The Transformation of Money into Capital")

FIRST ESSAY DUE**WEEK V**Oct. 3

Durkheim

Developing the positivist tradition. Analyzing moral life in the material world

*Division of labor*Preface to the 2nd edition

Introduction: "the problem"

Book I: "The Function of the Division of Labor"

Chapter I: "The Method of determining this Function"

Chapter II: "Mechanical Solidarity"

Chapter III: "Solidarity arising from the Division of Labor: Organic"

Pp. 172-175 of "Organic Solidarity and Contractual Solidarity"

Book III: The Abnormal Forms (chapters I-III)

WEEK VIOct 10

Durkheim

Strengthening the positivist tradition (Sociological vs. Psychological explanations)

#*Suicide*: “The Social Element of Suicide,” 297-325#“What is a Social Fact,” from *Rules of Sociological Method***WEEK VII**Oct 17

Durkheim

The persistence of the elemental in the complex: in search of the basis of human mentality

\$*Elementary Forms of Religious Life*

Author’s Introduction (1-18);

Book 1: Chapter 1, part 3;

Chapter 4

Book 2: Chapters 1-4

Chapter 7, Parts I, II IV

Chapter 8, Parts II, V, VI

Book 3: Chapter 1

Chapter 4, Part III

Chapter 5

Conclusion: Parts I, III, IV

SECOND ESSAY DUE**WEEK VIII**Oct 24

Historical (ideas configure social systems)

\$*The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*

Part I: “The Problem,” (Chapters I-III)

Preliminary discussion of Final Project**WEEK IX**Oct. 31 Weber\$*The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*

Chapter IV “The Religious Foundations of Worldly Asceticism,” (pp. 95-128) and Chapter V

“Asceticism and the Spirit of Capitalism”

WEEK XNov 7

Weber’s Political Sociology and Methodological concerns

Economy and Society, vol. I

#“Social Action,” and “Types of Social Action,” Chapter 1, pp. 22-26

#“The Types of Legitimate Domination,” Chapter 3, pp. 212-254

Economy and Society, vol. II

“The Distribution of Power within the Political Community: Class, Status, Party”

Chapter 9, pp. 926-940

#“Ideal Types,” pp. 47-57 “Objectivity in Social Science and Social Policy”

THIRD ESSAY DUE

WEEK XINov 14

Simmel's Sociology

Wolff (ed.), *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*<https://Archive.org/details/sociologyofgeorg030082mbp>

Part One, "The Field of Sociology," Chapter I

Part Three, "Superordination and Subordination," Chapter I, "Introduction" (pp. 181-189)

"How is Society Possible?"

WEEK XIINov 21 Simmel

Sociological takes on modernity

Wolff (ed.) *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*: Part Five## (and) <https://Archive.org/details/sociologyofgeorg030082mbp>

"The Metropolis and Mental Life," Chapter IV, (pp. 409-424)

The Philosophy of Money

"Individual and Freedom," Chapter IV (283-356)

4th ESSAY DUE

Discussion of Final Project

WEEK XIII**Nov 26 Tuesday is Thursday classes**

Mead

\$ *Mind Self and Society*

"Wundt and the Concept of the Gesture" (pp. 42-51)

"Meaning" (pp. 75- 82)

"Mind and the Symbol" (pp. 117-125)

"Background of the Genesis of the Self" (pp. 144-178)

WEEK XIVDec 5

Closing thoughts on the classics in contemporary sociology

#/#/#Brubaker, R. 1985. "Rethinking Classical Theory: The Sociological Vision Of Pierre Bourdieu." *Theory and Society*, Vol. 14, No. 6 (Nov., 1985), Pp. 745-775

"The University of the Internet Age"

FINAL Essay DUE DEC. 16**Locations of Readings**

\$ Bookstore

Sakai

Rutgers Library: Electronic Journal

(Free Download)

Https:**WWW**