



Classical Social Theory

SOAN 390 Spring 2017
T-Th 9:30-10:50

Why Study Social Theory?

This course is an introduction to classical social theory. It reviews the work of four major social thinkers who tried to understand late-19th and early 20th-century society. They are:

- **Karl Marx**
- **Emile Durkheim**
- **Max Weber**
- **W.E.B. Du Bois**

Each of these thinkers focused on a different aspect of 19th & early 20th century society and each developed a different set of conceptual tools for its analysis. Together, they laid the groundwork for present-day sociology. This course will explore why and how they did so. It will show how theory works in social science — by laying bare

the underlying patterns that structure social life. By the end of the course, you should be able to see the presuppositions on which social theories are based, understand how they are constructed, and appreciate the consequences of using one or another of them to analyze society.

Though we will learn to think through the classical theories by applying them to present-day problems, we cannot forget the socio-historical context in which they arose. Most classical social thought arose out of a white, male, European attempt to understand modernity and its discontents; Du Bois is the outlier, here: being Black made it impossible for him to ignore the American racial caste system.

To understand these four theorists, we will have to learn something about the social transformations of the 18th and 19th centuries, in both Europe and America.

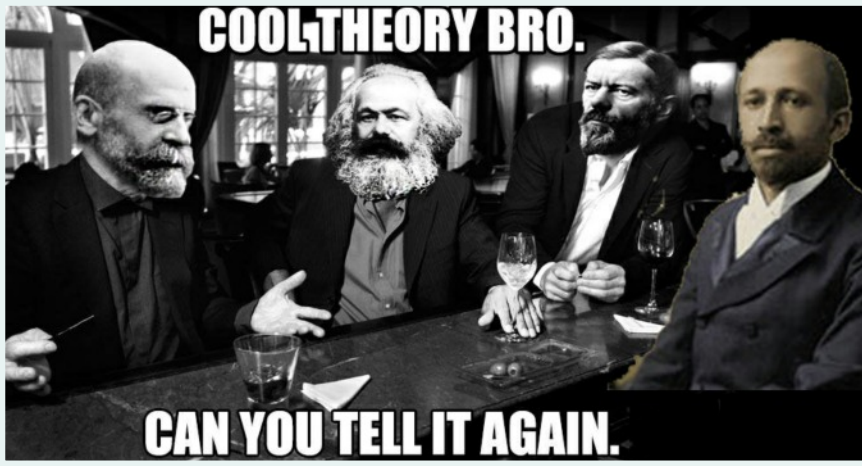
Yet, our interest is not antiquarian. The analytic systems developed by these four “founding fathers” of our disciplines still dominate our thought, whether or not we realize it. By understanding them, we can understand most of the social science that has followed.

Writing Across the Curriculum (WB)

This course uses writing as a teaching technique. You will write in class and out of class—perhaps 10,000 words in all. This writing will let you show me, as instructor, what you have learned, but it is much more than this. Writing helps you make personal sense out of the theoretical concepts and systems we are studying. Writing for this course is thus both an adjunct to the thinking process as well as a communication tool.

Course Objectives:

- To help you appreciate the role of theory in social science;
- To acquaint you with the classical paradigms in sociology and anthropology;
- To develop your ability to analyze difficult philosophical texts; and
- To improve your ability to write analytic prose.



Course Website

You are holding a paper syllabus, but this isn't actually the syllabus we'll use this semester. Instead, there is a course website at:

<http://soan390.coolsociology.net>

That's where you'll find the full list of readings, the course schedule, assignments, resources, classroom rules, and the grading system.

The paper syllabus introduces these topics. The online version, however, is the official version and which I keep up-to-date.

Reading List:

Books:

- Wesley Longhofer & Daniel Winchester (eds): [Social Theory Re-Wired](#), 2nd edition (Routledge, 2016). *This volume contains many of our source readings, especially by Marx & Durkheim*
- Emile Durkheim: [Suicide: A Study in Sociology](#)
- Max Weber: [The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism](#)
- W.E.B. Du Bois: [The Souls of Black Folk](#)

the course website contains detailed advice about which editions to buy and how to find them inexpensively

Articles and Book Chapters:

The course also website contains a list of articles and book chapters that we will read for this course. Many of these are available on the Internet (the [course website](#) provides links) and some are in journals, to which the University subscribes. The rest are on [Reserve at the Armacost Library](#). Here are a few of the library reserve articles:

- George Ritzer: "McDonaldization"
- Beth Rubin: "Shifts in the Social Contract"
- Raymond Aron: "The Sociologists and the Revolution of 1848"
- Manuel Vásquez: "Grappling with the Legacy of Modernity"
- David Wagner: "Donald Duck: An Interview"
- Whitney Pope: "Explanatory Structure in Suicide"
- Mary Douglas: "Preface" to [Implicit Meanings](#)
- Ephraim Fischhoff: "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism: The History of a Controversy"
- Max Weber: "Formal Qualities of Modern Law"
- Max Weber: "Bureaucracy"
- Richard Sennett: "Bureaucracy"
- W.E.B. Du Bois: "Souls of White Folk"

Our Weekly Pattern

Class meets twice a week. I shall begin most Tuesdays with a lecture, providing an overview of the week's topic. We will then discuss specific passages in that week's readings. Thursdays will continue this discussion of passages, ideally moving to discussions of the deeper significance of the material we have covered.

Before Tuesday's class, you should:

- Read the secondary readings—labeled "A" on the reading list.
- Read the primary readings—labeled "B" on the reading list.
- Write an outline of the argument in a specified number of the "B" readings. Note any steps in the argument that you do not understand.
- Prepare two questions about the readings that will help everyone learn.
- Read as much of the recommended reading—labeled "C"—as you can.

On Tuesday:

- Write your two questions on the board before class starts. Turn in your questions and your outlines at the end of class. (You may modify them before leaving the room, if you wish.)

Between the Tuesday and Thursday sessions:

- Reread one of "B" readings, then prepare a 250-word typed summary of it. Turn in that summary on Moodle at least 15 minutes before class starts.
- Prepare two more questions that arose while you were writing this summary — ones that you think will deepen our Thursday discussion.

On Thursday:

- Write your two questions on the board before class starts, and turn them in at the end.
- If you have turned in your summary on time, you may revise it without penalty by 6pm Thursday evening. Turn in the revision on Moodle.

About the Instructor



Jim Spickard has taught sociology at Redlands since 1989, focusing on social theory, research design, and social stratification. His latest book explores non-Western approaches to the sociology of religion.

Office: Larsen 232
Hours: MW 3-4:30pm
T-Th 11-12
and by appointment

jim_spickard@redlands.edu

Course Assignments

Reading Outlines and Summaries

Each week, you will write an Outline of each of that week's "B" readings (due Tuesdays) and a 250-word Summary of ONE of those readings (due Thursdays)

The Outlines should show how the author has structured his argument. The Summaries should capture the essence of the reading, focusing on the bones of its argument. This requires both clarity and depth. You cannot afford to mistake what an author is saying, nor can you afford to express it in confusing way.

Group Presentations

Early in the semester, the class will be divided into between 3 and 6 teams, depending on class size. Each team will be randomly assigned to Marx, Durkheim, or Weber. The team will apply that theorist's work to a current social issue and will present its analysis to the class in a creative way. Nearly any macro-level issue will do.

Two Papers

You will each write two long papers, showing that you can apply the thought of our four social theorists to a present-day social issue.

For the first paper: imagine that Karl Marx and Emile Durkheim are sitting in the Plaza Café discussing some current social issue. Write a paper which recreates their conversation. In it, show what each of these theorists would say about the problem, and what each would recommend to solve it. Also show what each fails to see about the problem.

For the second paper: imagine that you are Max Weber, who has been asked to give a speech on the same issue. Write a paper recreating that speech, giving his analysis of this social issue, along with his specific recommendations. Write two pages at the end, in which W.E.B. Du Bois comments on Weber's speech.

Final Exam

This will be an in-class essay exam—one that asks you to synthesize your reading over the entire semester. I shall also ask you to compare the theorists that we have studied, showing the differences and similarities of their approaches.

There are extensive details about these assignments at the course website.

Course Schedule

Week	Topic
J10,12	What is Social Theory?
J17,19	Sociology and the Long 19 th -Century
J24,26	Marx: Historical Vision
J31,F2	Marx: Critique of Capitalism
F7,9	Marx: Critique of Alienation
F14,16	Durkheim: Social Evolution
F21,23	Durkheim: Society as a Moral Community
Spring Break	
M7,9	Durkheim: Consciousness & Society
M14,16	Weber: Growth of Rationality
M21,23	Weber: Instrumental Rationality
M28,30	Weber: Modern Society
A4,6	Du Bois: Double Consciousness
A11,13	Classical Sociology & Contemporary Society
Finals Week	

Accommodations

If you have a documented learning (or other) issue, and you need a reasonable accommodation so you can learn effectively, please talk to me at the beginning of the semester. In almost every case, we can design something that will work.



Help & Resources

If you are feeling lost or overwhelmed...

1. Make an appointment with me

You are welcome to email me, or make an appointment to meet, ideally during my office hours. Many questions and issues can be easily resolved this way.

2. Use online resources

On the website, I've posted a series of guides to our assignments, links to useful information, and information about books you can read. Check it out!

3. Get to know the Reference Desk

Our library staff is eager to help guide your research and to orient you to our library's paper and online resources.

4. Use the Writing Center

The Writing Center is a free resource at any stage of the writing process, from getting started to revising drafts to polishing a final essay. You can make an appointment online at <https://redlands.mywconline.com/>

5. Visit the Academic Success Center

In some cases, students benefit from tutoring or one-on-one intervention. The Academic Success Center offers (free) tutoring in many subjects, and can also help you with general study, note-taking, or textbook reading strategies. They are located in Student Development Center the lower floor of the Armacost Library.

For More Information:

Visit the Course Website at:
<http://soan390.coolsociology.net>

Sociology and the Long 19th Century

European sociology arose as a response to the massive social changes of "the long 19th century". The term comes from British historian E.J. Hobsbawm, who described it in three famous books: *The Age of Revolution* (1789–1848), *The Age of Capital* (1848–1875) and *The Age of Empire* (1875–1914). During that century, Europe's political, economic, and social landscape were transformed. Saint-Simon, Comte, de Tocqueville, Marx, Maine, Tönnies, Spencer, Durkheim, Michels, Pareto, Weber, and Simmel, among others, attempted to comprehend these changes. In the process, they created sociology as an intellectual discipline.

The situation in the United States was different. Here there was also massive industrialization, but the main socio-economic transformations were the end of slavery, the settling of the American West, and massive European migration. Among the early American sociologists—Sumner, Ward, Small, Gilman, Addams, Park, and Du Bois—only Du Bois crafted a truly original social theory, one that focused simultaneously on the subjective experience of racial discrimination and on its objective institutional structures. Along with Gilman, he is the intellectual progenitor of American sociology's current focus on identity.

Expectations, Grades, and Other Matters

Regarding plagiarism: The short version is: **Do your own work.** You may borrow ideas from others, so long as you cite them properly and then extend or evaluate their analysis. You cannot clip and past text from the Internet into your papers and pass it off as your own. You cannot turn in a paper that someone else has written. Plagiarized work or exam cheating will automatically get a zero on the assignment and may cause you to fail the class. The University has an Academic Honesty Policy, which you can find in the latest **University Catalog**.

Technology Use in Class: Research has demonstrated convincingly that students who try to take notes electronically learn much less than do those who take notes by hand. Therefore, unless you have a documented accommodation, **do not use laptops, tablets, phones, etc. for note-taking.** *Bring a paper notebook, have it on the desk in front of you, and use it.* You may bring your other equipment, but leave it in your book bag under the table. *Exception: a tablet, if you pur-*

chased an electronic textbook. Unless you are a parent who needs to be available to small children, turn off your cell phone.

Grading Standards: I am a relatively tough grader, because I think undergraduates can do excellent work; we just seldom ask. I'm asking. Here are my standards:

- A. You did everything I could possibly ask of you, and you did it extremely well. You worked very hard, learned a great deal, and showed conspicuous intelligence. The quality of your work was outstanding.
- B. You did all the work, and you did it well. You worked hard and learned a good deal. The quality of your work was good.
- C. You did all the work. It is clear that you learned a number of things, though those things may not hang together in a systematic and critical understanding of the course material. The quality of your work was adequate.
- D. You did most of the work, including all the major course requirements. You may have learned some things, but it is not clear that you learned anything important. The quality of your work was less than adequate.
- F. You have demonstrated an obstinate ignorance. You did not complete the course requirements. You have proved unwilling or unable to do college level work in this subject area.