

# Classical Social Theory (SOC 6010)<sup>1</sup>

Tues and Thurs, 2:30-3:45  
Eppler South, Room 302

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*“One the one hand, a social-theoretical vocabulary is a heuristic device, a sensitizing ‘framework’ for empirical research in the social sciences. It opens up a certain way of seeing and analyzing social phenomena. On the other hand, as vocabularies social theories mold and change our self-understanding. Even without being applied in empirical research, social theories provide us with a certain way of defining our position as human beings in a social world, which inevitably implies a political and ethical dimension. Above all social theories... provide cultural traditions for grasping ourselves—and frequently they are ways of breaking with cultural traditions of human self-perception, changing them and opening up ‘new’ possibilities of self-understanding”*

(Reckwitz 2002: 257)

*“Because disagreement is so rife in social science, serious problems of mutual understanding arise... For disagreement to be possible in a coherent, ongoing and consistent way, there must be some basis for a cultural relationship... This is where the classics come in. The functional necessity for classics develops because of the need for integrating the field of theoretical discourse... To mutually acknowledge a classic is to have a common point of reference. A classic reduces complexity... It is a symbol which condenses—‘stands for’—a range of diverse general commitments*

(Alexander 1987: 27).

*“What a [statistical model] does is to predict, but it predicts only within a local domain. But this is nevertheless something important to do, and understandable as an activity... [Theory’s] real job is different, but not entirely unrelated. ‘Theory’ poses and answers questions of a different kind. What are these questions? To put it simply, they are questions about whether, and how, past social concepts continue to apply, and about the implications of their failure to apply. Does ‘the family’ mean today what it once meant, and what follows from this? Does the category ‘woman’ mean now what it meant in the past? Does ‘representation,’ ‘democracy,’ or ‘citizenship’ mean today what it meant in the past?... This kind of problem often takes the different form of extending concepts to new domains of application, and asking why they do or do not apply”* (Turner 2008: 11)

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<sup>1</sup> This document serves as a general plan for the course and will likely change throughout the semester. Any changes will be announced in class and on the course website.

*"I have often pointed out, especially with regard to my relation to Max Weber, that you can think with a thinker against that thinker... To say that you can think at the same time with and against a thinker means radically contradicting the classificatory logic in accordance to which people are accustomed... to think of the relation you have with the thought of the past. I think you can think with Marx against Marx, with Marx and Durkheim against Weber, and vice versa. That's the way that science works"* (Bourdieu 1990: 49).

*When we read, we only ever come to our own understanding of a text. There isn't an objective or definitive understanding of a text available to us, or at least not one that is not established by power relationships that have nothing to do with its meaning. We apply our background experiences, our means (or tools) of understanding to understand what a text is saying. To the extent that those means of understanding are unique, we will always come to a unique understanding of a text, which may or may not be shared by others. In the process, we may challenge and change those means of understanding, often in subtle though unmistakably important ways. In the social sciences, there can then be a valid response to the claim 'I don't understand' and it is: 'develop your intuitions,' or more radically be willing to 'change yourself!' This is why there is no such thing as a text that is "too hard" to understand. All theoretical texts make some kind of difference for us as we develop our own understanding of them. They change the basic tools we use to interpret ourselves and make sense of the world around us"* (paraphrasing Hans-Georg Gadamer and Charles Taylor)

*Theory without data is empty; data without theory is blind*  
(ripping off Immanuel Kant)

*"You know, a little bit of theory goes a long way"*  
(Reinhard Bendix 1968: v)

## **1. Course description; or, why take a class in classical social theory?**

Classical theory is something of an anomaly in sociology today. While theory itself remains a kind of holy grail for research—i.e. the goal (as you will be told *ad nauseum* in your grad student career) of doing sociology is to produce “theory”—classical theory, or reading, discussing and analyzing the writings of “dead white guys” like Karl Marx, Max Weber, Emile Durkheim and Georg Simmel, often seems like a pointless and unjustifiable pursuit, particularly given the fact that what most sociologists spend most of their time doing—cleaning data, designing experiments, running regressions—has little or nothing to do with anything these guys had to say. So why, if this is true, is classical theory a *required* course in *all* sociology graduate (and undergraduate) programs around the country?

The writers that we'll read in this class are considered “classics” because together they provide a canon of (must read) sociological writings. Marx, Weber and Durkheim constitute a kind of “holy trinity,” with others, like Simmel, George Herbert Mead, Sigmund Freud, W.E.B DuBois, Herbert Spencer, Thorstein Veblen and Vilfredo Pareto (among a host of others) sometimes finding their way onto the A-list. One objective of this course is to discuss the merit of giving these writers the status and perks of being “a classic” (do they deserve it?). However, the reasons why you and every other first-year

soc grad student in America are forced to read this set of canonical writings from “sacred” authors are, on the face of it at least, less for the intrinsic merit of what they wrote than for conflicts and compromises involved in the formation of the discipline in the United States.

As late as 1928, the founder of the Harvard Department of Sociology, Pitrim Sorokin, published a book-length survey entitled *Contemporary Sociological Theories*, which consisted of synopses and analysis of hundreds of writers (mostly European and Russian), nearly all of them obscure and forgotten (though Jesus Christ made the cut!). Yet Sorokin considered all of them to be important precursors of modern sociological thought. Fast forward nine years to the publication of Talcott Parsons’ (Sorokin’s junior colleague and rival at Harvard) landmark *The Structure of Social Action*, and the canon had been whittled down to just four: Durkheim and Weber (both of whom Sorokin mentioned but didn’t find very important) alongside the Italian political theorist Vilfredo Pareto and the British economist Alfred Marshall. As Parsons claimed, each of these figures “converged” on the quintessential sociological approach, which for him involved the “voluntarist” theory of action.

Much to his surprise, Parsons’ bold attempt to create a sociological canon was a huge success. Within a generation, Durkheim and Weber were enshrined as co-founders of sociology, replacing the panoply of figures Sorokin had credited. Even challenges to Parsons’ original list—in particular by the ‘60s social rebellions, which made Marx the equal of Weber and Durkheim, and, more recently, by the rise of social network analysis, which has made Simmel a household name—have not fundamentally changed it. More importantly, Parsons’ sense that sociology as a scientific enterprise needed to have a canon of key writers has also remained firmly in place. No other social science has this, and (lucky you) no other discipline requires that its students take this kind of class (psychologists don’t read Freud, physicists don’t read Newton; biologists don’t read Darwin).

So why do we do it? This ties into the objectives and premises for this course:

- Classical social theory is *important as an integrative cultural element of the discipline*. Put bluntly: you cannot be a functioning member of the sociology tribe without being well-versed in what these classical writers have to say. This constitutes one of the few pieces of common knowledge that holds sociology (a very fragmented and disparate field) together. Hence, *this course will provide you with a kind of invaluable field-specific “cultural capital.”*
- Studying and writing about the classics is a *live intellectual tradition*. The exegesis and historical re-interpretation of the classical tradition by contemporary scholars (effectively started by Sorokin and Parsons) continues to this day. Debates about the intellectual importance and conceptual clarification of classical sociological thought constitute an

important subfield in the wider sociological discipline. In other words, sociologists can and do make entire careers out of reading and writing about these guys. Hence, *this course is designed to introduce you to this area of scholarship in order to possibly allow you to contribute to it.*

- The classics remain valuable as ideational and theoretical sources that inform *contemporary empirical research*. Rather than being a purely (and merely) a “theoretical” line of thinking, the classical tradition continues to be close dialogue with contemporary sociological *research*. In this case, you would not be able to understand or take part in what counts as empirical inquiry in sociology today without having a solid understanding of the classics. Hence, *this course is intended to provide you with an introduction to some of this research and, in this way, help to “professionalize” you as a sociologist.*
- The classics are simply *good reads* if you are interested in thinking sociologically about the world (I hope you are). It is important to remember, in this regard, that sociology is probably the least obvious scientific discipline to find a place in the university. What sociologists actually do is a complete mystery to almost everyone, including other sociologists. (Good advice: never tell anyone that you’re a sociologist unless you’re prepared to spend several hours in frustrated conversation trying to explain what you do and justifying why the discipline exists). How to do sociology, and how to do it well, is not at all straightforward. As we’ll discover, Marx, Weber, Durkheim and Simmel had remarkably little in common. What they did share, however, was the ability to do sociology *extremely well*. Hence, *this course will allow you to read exemplary applications of the sociological imagination in ways that will instruct, inform and inspire you.*
- Finally, as part of *learning how to “theorize,”* the classics provide invaluable intellectual resources to sharpen your intuitions and help you develop ideas of *theoretical* importance to the field of sociology (no small feat). This (often overlooked) benefit they provide will be part of our focus in this course (particularly the first few weeks): learning what a theory is, learning why theory is the lifeblood of sociology (just as it is every other scientific/humanities discipline), the different ways in which sociologists theorize, and the ways that theories can impact and make a difference for empirical research (and quite possibly your life as a human animal). As the old saying goes, “one can learn more from reading a neglected passage of Simmel [or Marx, Weber, Durkheim] than from another social survey conducted by the GSS.”

## 2. Course website

We will be using Lore instead of Canvas or Blackboard for the course website. The format is similar to Facebook, and it's easy to post links and comments that starts or keeps a conversation going.. Readings will be posted there, and I'll also post optional readings, news articles, and other things that seem relevant to the class.

Here's the URL: <http://lore.com/Classical-Social-Theory-.1>

This is also where you'll submit your reaction papers and paper assignments. Which brings us to...

### 3. Requirements

*This class is a seminar* (not a lecture).<sup>2</sup> What this means is that, while I will inform our discussion as best I can and lead it toward important points, what happens each time we meet together in class is largely up to you. I will refrain from lecturing as much as possible. This is in order to make the course as beneficial to you as possible.

With that in mind, these are the requirements on which you will be graded:

1. Attendance and active participation in class discussions

This means (a) coming prepared (doing “all” the reading) to every class; (b) discussing the readings in class as part of a collective discussion. This active participation expectation holds even when (i) you don’t think you understand the readings; (ii) you hate them; (iii) you are hung over; (iv) you are filled with rage at the injustice of the formation of the theoretical canon.

To help facilitate this, each of you will be expected to **lead the class discussion at least twice** (or more if you wish) **during the course of the semester**. In order to “lead the class discussion,” you will be required to briefly (in 5-10 minutes) summarize and evaluate (critique, compare with another theorist, perhaps apply to an empirical problem) the main points as you see them in the readings for that day, drawing on whatever supplementary material you see fit (handouts, perhaps videos that fit the concepts involved and/or are funny). You will *choose* the two days that you would like to present and they will be distributed on a first come,

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<sup>2</sup> Nice definition of “seminar” provided by Richard Gale, head honcho, Carnegie Academy of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: “Many define seminars by size (between five and twenty) or configuration (a circle around a central table), by focus (the centrality of a shared text) or professorial function (facilitator or conductor). But beneath these aspects is a pedagogy wherein everyone has a voice and each person’s ideas are valued, a venue for exploring varied perspectives, an opportunity to experiment, a way to flesh-out skeletal ideas through the challenge of friendly critics. The seminar is a community working on the principle that if many hands make light work then many minds make deep meaning. Participation is vital, responsibility is shared, and ownership is produced students who take learning into their own hands and make something meaningful out it.”

first service basis. I *highly encourage* you to come talk with me before you lead the class discussion on your chosen (you will pick the two that you want to lead... first come first serve) day. I guarantee this will save you from doing more of the reading(s) than you might otherwise think you *have* to do in order to be a successful discussion leader.

PLEASE NOTE: the goal of leading the class discussion is not to evaluate/test/grill/embarrass you. It is rather to *get the conversation started* each day by having you add your own summary and spin on the readings. If the stuff that Gadamer/Taylor are trying to say (above) is even partially correct, this should be no problem.

If you're extremely worried about this (talking) requirement, particularly as it pertains to talking about difficult material like theory, keep the following point in mind: *interpreting* Marx, Weber, Durkheim, and Simmel is an active intellectual pursuit and entirely open-ended (see again Gadamer/Taylor stuff above). This lends substantial truth to the old cliché that "there is no such thing as a stupid question." In fact, and I don't exaggerate in saying this, many of the breakthroughs that have come in interpreting what these guys had to say began when someone asked a stupid question about them. I hope this will serve as good incentive to get you to talk in class.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, sociologists (no matter how awkwardly) are expected to talk in public places about things. So think of the talking requirement for this course as a low-stakes exercise in professionalization. However, if you are still uncomfortable about this, I suggest you practice talking in the mirror or just remember the simple words: "I'm good enough, I'm smart enough, and gosh darnit people like me!"

## 2. Electronically submitted reaction papers

Each student will be required to submit **twelve reaction papers** over the course of the semester (15 total weeks, excepting week 1), which means that you have three "get out of reaction paper free" cards that you can use at your discretion. What is a reaction paper? The format is open-ended, but they must no more than two pages

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<sup>3</sup> Moreover, although American culture makes us all possessive individualists, particularly when it comes to knowledge (think: "he/she is a genius"), sociologists (especially Bourdieu) have done much to demonstrate the social basis for all demonstrations of what is perceived to be individual genius. More than this, however, we learn stuff better, more thoroughly and more easily when we work together, which means participating in class is vitally important to you. Proof comes from McKeachie (2006) and his really great discussion of the value of *collective* discussions for learning (reiteration of points Gale makes above). Here is the gist of what McK. says: the purpose of collective, in-class discussion is to (1) encourage you to actively incorporate the course material into your knowledge base; (2) evaluate the soundness of competing logic within the reading and from your fellow classmates; (3) apply theories onto examples (and vice versa); (4) uncover new and different perspectives; (5) develop various cognitive skills of learning, articulation, and argumentation that you wouldn't develop anywhere else (i.e. from thinking about this stuff all by yourself or by refusing to say what you think about it when you come to class).

long. As a kind of default format, you might consider discussing one or all of the following in each of your reaction papers: what you agreed with about a reading and why, what you disagreed with in a reading and why, what confused you in a reading and why. Please cite the parts of the readings that you discuss in your reaction papers.

These will be **due on the submission box on Lore at noon before the Thursday class.** I will try my absolute best to read all of them by the time class starts that day.

### 3. Paper assignment

**One theory paper of between 15 and 30 (double-spaced... whew!) pages.** What is a “theory paper” you may ask? In contemporary sociology, a theory paper is one which (among other things) deals with either (a) the *intellectual history* of an idea or concept in classical social theory (tracking the history of Marx’s concept of ideology or Simmel’s concept of social forms); (b) the *development of a line of thinking* in a single classical social theorist (Durkheim’s views of morality between the Division of Labour and The Elementary Forms); (c) *draws conceptual connections* between two or more different classical theorists or the classical theoretical tradition (Marx and Durkheim on crime); (d) *connects a classical line of thinking or classical thinker with a more contemporary line of thinking or thinkers* (compares Durkheim and Stephanie Koontz on the family); or (2) *resolves or sheds light on conceptual contradictions within the work of one or more classical theorist(s)* (what did Marx really mean by “communism”? Is Weber’s notion of “value-spheres” logically coherent?).

Keep in mind that the larger goal of this requirement is to help you write a paper that you intend to publish—I don’t want you to look at what you submit as merely a “course paper.” Publishing is an essential part of being a sociologist. Perhaps most indicative of this is the fact that it is quickly becoming necessary to publish *as a graduate student* even to be considered for a tenure-track job in the discipline.

I want this class to be as helpful for you as possible in this (very important) regard. So when picking a paper topic or type of “theory paper” to write (certainly not limited to the types listed here), keep in mind this long-term perspective. Having said that, the paper you submit is not meant to be a final or polished product. It will ultimately be a *draft* (even the final version you turn in, though keep in mind that it should be a *complete paper*) that, hopefully, you will continue to work on in the future.

To help you with this, you might approach your paper from the following standpoint: choose some fundamental puzzle in your field of sociology (or allied discipline) that at least some of our theorists have struggled with as well.

Hopefully your puzzle is one that you think is important for you to solve in order to successfully carry out your *own* work. Puzzle over this (puzzle) using (quoting, analyzing the ideas of) the theorists who seem most relevant to it. The paper will write itself!

**Due date:** December 19 at noon.

#### 4. Grading policy

First rule of grad school: *grades don't matter*. As I was once told, “the issue of grades should not take a single metaphorical inch of cognitive space in your head.” I pass this advice along to you. However, your reputation among the faculty does matter—*a lot*. The easiest way to get a good reputation among the faculty is to do well in the required courses (like this one!). Keep this formula in mind when it comes to the grading policy and your participation in this course.

What does this mean for the course requirements? The way that grading will work is if you do well on all three of the course requirements (contribute to class, send in your reaction papers, write a good paper or good working papers) you will get an A. If, on the contrary, you take a vow of silence in class and/or do not submit reaction papers, you will not get an A, regardless of how great your paper is. It should go without saying that talking a lot in class and submitting all of your reaction papers, but not turning in a final paper or not turning in all of your working papers will not get you an A (and in this instance, you will fail the class). The point, basically, is make sure to complete all the required assignments.

For those of you who like the security of numbers, here is the grading rubric:

Assignment	Percent of Final Grade
Reaction Papers (12)	20%
Paper Assignment	40%
Attendance and Participation (includes leading class discussion twice)	40%

The more general point to emphasize is that if you make an *effort* to be a productive member of this class, doing what is asked of you and making the most of your (and my) time over the course of the semester, you will get an A in the class (though that might not actually mean much in the larger scope of things).

Three caveats to mention about this: I know the material we deal with in this class may be intimidating for you, and that there is a lot of required reading. I also know the first semester of grad school is extremely busy, time-consuming and often overwhelming. Finally, I don't expect you to become an expert in social theory by the end of this course. What I do expect is that you to *try* to make this class as beneficial for your future career as a sociologist as I, and others in the field (particularly the directors of graduate study who all seem to agree that classical social theory should be required of first-year graduate students) know that it can be.<sup>4</sup> I think I've organized the course in such a way that satisfying the assignments will not only mean getting an A in the class, but it will also *not waste your time* because it will involve you doing things that you will otherwise have to do in order to become a sociologist (I presume this is what you want to be?). Your participation in this course should ultimately be viewed in terms of how it furthers *that* goal.

## 5. Readings

The readings are the core this course. Everything should start and stop with them, no matter how tangential. However misguided classical social theory courses are as far as intent and purpose go, the format everywhere is pretty much the same and remains very simple: dive right into the primary texts (head first) and see what you find. So that's what we'll do.

Relatively speaking, there is a lot of reading required for this class. I realize how pressed for time and brain-space you are, but *try to get through as much of it each week as you can*. I'll send out discussion questions (and the page numbers with important stuff on them) the week before each class to help you get your bearings, but bear in mind that the most interesting stuff usually comes when you read something you didn't expect or are completely clueless about, but have an intuition that *something* is there. So as not to forestall such moments of insight, my guidance will be minimal.

Second rule of grad school: *you can never read too much*. Reading is just about the only way (though not necessarily the best way) to acquire the kind of intellectual capital you'll need in order to be a functioning member of the discipline. Plus, if you name-drop a classical theorist, idea, article, etc, this makes you look *very* good in the eyes of authority figures. So basically what you get from reading as much as you can, especially of the classics and especially at this early and impressionable stage of your grad school career, is *pure gold* that will pay dividends well into the future. Take advantage of it (because very soon you won't have any time to do it).

To further help you make sense of these guys (and also to show you the various things you can write about and contribute to the "classical theory" wing of the sociological enterprise), I constructed a "further reading" list of secondary articles and books which

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<sup>4</sup> Please recall the course objectives given above.

will be available on the course website and is being added to slowly. None of what is on that list is required reading, and if you never even look at it, that's perfectly fine. But some of the titles might catch your eye and I encourage you to explore. This list might also help you in completing your paper assignment.

As for primary texts: the **bold books listed below are required**. The rest of the readings (drawn from these books) will be distributed through Lore as either weblink or PDF. All of the books are available in the campus bookstore.

Durkheim:

**1982 [1895]. *The Rules of Sociological Method and Selected Texts on Sociology and its Method*.** Edited by Steven Lukes. Translated by W.D. Halls. Publisher: The Free Press  
(ISBN: 0029079403)

1979 ({1897}. *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*. Edited by George Simpson. Translated by John Spaulding and George Simpson. Publisher: The Free Press.  
(ISBN: 0684836327)3

**1995 {1912}. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*.** Translated by Karen Fields. Publisher: The Free Press  
(ISBN: 9780029079379)

1984[1893]. *The Division of Labour in Society*. Translated by W.D Halls. Publisher: The Free Press  
(ISBN: 0684836386)

Marx:

1976 [1867]. *Capital, Volume 1*. Translated by Ben Fowkes. Publisher: Penguin or Vintage  
(ISBN: 978-0140445688)

**1978. *The Marx-Engels Reader*. Second Edition.** Edited by Robert Tucker.  
Publisher: WW Norton  
(ISBN: 039309040) THE RED COVER, not the blue.

Weber:

1905[2001]. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Publisher: Roxbury.  
Translated by Stephen Kalberg.  
(ISBN: 1579583385)

**1946. *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. Edited by H.H. Gerth and C Wright Mills. Publisher: Oxford University Press.**  
(ISBN: 0195004620)

1963. *The Sociology of Religion*. Translated by Ephraim Fischoff. Publisher: Beacon Press.  
(ISBN: 0807042056)

1994. *Max Weber: Sociological Writings*. Edited by W. Heydebrand. Publisher: Continuum.  
(ISBN: 0826407196)

Simmel:

**1972. *Georg Simmel on Individuality and Social Forms*. Edited by Donald Levine. Publisher: University of Chicago Press**  
(ISBN: 0226757765)

1998. *Simmel on Culture: Selected Writings*. Edited by David Frisby and Mike Featherstone. Publisher: Sage Publications.  
(ISBN: 0803986521)

1964. *Conflict and the Web of Group Affiliations*. Translated by Kurt Wolff and Reinhard Bendix. Publisher: The Free Press.  
(ISBN: 0029288401)

#### **Optional General Texts:**

We won't read from these for class, but they are good general references for what we'll be discussing.

Craig Calhoun, et al. *Classical Sociological Theory*. (Latest Edition): Blackwell

George Ritzer. *Classical Sociological Theory*. (Latest Edition): McGraw Hill

Jonathan Turner. *Classical Sociological Theory*. (Latest Edition): Wadsworth

Anthony Giddens. 1971. *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory*. Cambridge University Press.

Randall Collins. 1994. *Four Sociological Traditions*. Oxford University Press

Lewis Coser. 1977. *Masters of Sociological Thought*. Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich.

Donald Levine. 1995. *Visions of the Sociological Tradition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Alan Swingewood. 2001. *A Short History of Sociological Theory*. London: Palgrave

## [Course Schedule 6010]

MER = *Marx-Engels Reader*

FMW = *From Max Weber*

GSIS = *Georg Simmel on Individuality and Social Forms*

### **Week 1: Preliminaries**

#### **Welcome Week**

8/26 Welcome

8/28 What is theory anyway?

Sub-question: Is this class really *that* scary?

- Gabriel Abend (2008). “The meaning of ‘theory.’” *Sociological Theory* 26: 173-199
  - read intro and pp 177-184 (Lore)
- C Wright Mills (1959). “The promise” (Lore)
- Charles Taylor. (1985) “Self-interpreting animals” (optional)

### **Week 2: Theorizing I**

#### **Entry into Theorizing**

9/2 “Theorizing,” or what can theory do for you?

Sub-question: Theory is not merely a set of concepts; it’s also a skill. Huh?

- Richard Swedberg (2012). “Theorizing in sociology and social science: turning to the context of discovery.” *Theory and Society* 41: 1-40. (Lore)
- Stephen Turner, “The maturity of social theory” (optional) (Lore)

9/4 The hunt for social laws (and why we’re not reading Comte. You can thank me later)

Sub-question: What is a social law? How can we find one?

- Carl Hempel (1962). “Two models of scientific explanation.” (Lore)
- Jonathan Turner (1985). “In defense of positivism.” (Lore)

## **Week 3: Theorizing II**

### **Merton, Parsons, and Philosophies of Science**

9/9 Prologue to Present-Day Sociology: Parsons fought Merton and (thank God) Merton won

Sub-question: Should we armchair theorize or theorize with empirical intent?

- Robert Merton (1949). “On sociological theories of the middle range.” (Lore)
- Talcott Parsons (1950). “On the prospects of sociological theory” (Lore)
- George Homans, “Bringing men back in” (optional)

9/11 Necessary philosophical background readings (if nothing else... papers that will help you win barroom debates with friends over the nature of science! Do those still happen?)

Sub-question: Evidence and method determines whether our theory is true and why we believe it... right?

- Karl Popper. (1963) “Science as falsification” (Lore)
- Paul Feyerabend. (1964). Selections from “Explanation, reduction and empiricism” and “Reply to my critics” (Lore)
- Imre Lakatos. (1970). “Falsification and the methodology of scientific research programmes.” (Lore)

## **Week 4: Theorizing III**

### **On the Many Uses of Theory**

9/16 Alternative uses of theory in sociology I

Sub-question: How can theory help empirical research if we’re not hunting for social laws?

- Herbert Blumer. (1954). “What is wrong with social theory?” (Lore)
- John Goldthorpe. (2001). “Causation, statistics and sociology.” (Lore)
- Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin. “Grounded theory methodology” (Lore)
- Andrew Abbott (1989). “Against general linear reality” (optional) (Lore)

9/18 Alternative uses of theory in sociology II

Sub-question: How can you do sociology if you don't have a variable?

- John Levi Martin. (2011). "Why questions? What explanations?" (Lore)
- Max Horkheimer. (1937). "Traditional theory and critical theory" (Lore)
- Isaac Reed and Jeffrey Alexander. (2008). "Social science as reading and performance" (Lore)

## **Week 5: Prelude to Classical Theory**

**Pressing forth toward the classics ...**

9/23 The only known attempt in recent memory to try and put all of these guys on the same page

Sub-question: What can sociology explain that other disciplines can't explain? IOW: Why aren't sociologists simply low-prestige (and lesser paid) psychologists?

- John Levi Martin. (2001). "On the limits of sociological theory." (Lore)
- Maurice Mandelbaum (1955). "Societal facts" (optional) (Lore)
- J.W.N Watkins (1956). "Methodological individualism and social tendencies" (optional) (Lore)

9/25 The best possible answer given (to date) for reading these guys

Sub-question: Why read these old, dead white guys and not other persons?

- Jeffrey Alexander. (1987). "The centrality of the classics" (Lore)
- Anthony Giddens, "Classical social theory and the origins of modern sociology" (optional) (Lore)
- Arthur Stinchcombe, "Should sociologists forget their mothers and their fathers?" (optional) (Lore)

## **Week 6: Marx I**

**The Theory of Social Change**

Sub-question: Does society change through revolution or evolution?

9/30

- Marx, “Contribution to the critique of Hegel’s philosophy of right,” MER pp. 53-66
- Marx, “Society and economy in history,” MER pp. 136-143
- Marx, “Preface” to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (Lore)
- Loic Wacquant (1985), “Heuristic models in Marxian theory” (optional) (Lore)
- G.A. Cohen, “Functional explanation, consequence explanation and Marxism” (optional) (Lore)
- Michael Burawoy, “Karl Marx and the satanic mills” (optional) (Lore)

10/2

- Marx and Engels, “Manifesto of the communist party,” MER pp. 463-491, 499-500
- Marshall Berman (1988), “Marx, modernism and modernization” (optional) (Lore)
- Terrell Carver, “Retranslating the manifesto” (optional) (Lore)
- Gareth Stedman Jones, “Introduction to *The Communist Manifesto*” (optional)

## Week 7: Marx II

### Ideologies, Fetishism, *Praxis* and Other Strange Stuff

Sub-question: Can we really trust what we see, think, believe, know, even do?

10/7

- Marx, “Theses on Feuerbach,” MER pp. 143-145
- Marx, “The German ideology: part 1,” MER pp. 146-200
- Marx, “The fetishism of the commodity and its secret” (Lore)
- Marx, “The method of political economy” (Lore)
- G.A. Cohen, “Marx and the withering away of social science” (optional) (Lore)
- Roy Bhaskar, “Science vs. ideology in the critique of political economy” (optional) (Lore)
- Daniel Bell, “The misreading of ideology: the social determination of ideas in Marx’s work” (optional) (Lore)

- Alf Hornborg, “Symbolic technologies: machines and the Marxian notion of fetishism” (optional) (Lore)
- Slavoj Zizek, “How did Marx invent the symptom?” (optional)

10/9 (no class Fall Break)

## Week 8: Marx III

### Capitalism 101

Sub-question: Is anyone really reading this?

10/14

- Marx, *Capital* (Lore)
  - “Preface to the first edition,” pp. 89-94
  - “The commodity,” pp. 125-138
  - “The general formula for capital,” pp. 247-258
  - “The sale and purchase of labor power,” pp. 270-283
  - “The labor process and the valorization process,” pp. 283-307
- Marx, “Alienation and social classes,” MER pp. 133-135
- David Harvey, “Reading Marx’s Capital”
   
<https://www.youtube.com/user/readingcapital> (optional, but highly recommended if you’re interested in Marxian analysis of capitalism)
- Michael Macy, “Value theory and the golden eggs: appropriating the magic of accumulation” (optional) (Lore)
- G.A. Cohen, “The labor theory of value and the concept of exploitation” (optional) (Lore)

10/16

- Marx, *Capital* (Lore)
  - “The degree of exploitation of labor power,” pp. 320-329
  - “The secret of primitive accumulation,” pp. 873-877
  - “The historical tendency of capitalist accumulation,” pp. 927-931
  - “The modern theory of colonization,” pp. 941-943
- Marx, “Crisis theory,” MER pp. 450-455
- Anthony Giddens, “Marx, Weber and the development of capitalism” (optional) (Lore)

- Giovanni Arrighi, “The three hegemonies of historical capitalism” (optional) (Lore)
- Thomas Sowell, “Marx’s Capital after one hundred years” (optional) (Lore)
- Richard Biernacki, “Labor as an imagined commodity” (optional) (Lore)

## **Week 9: Weber I**

### **Objectivity, Policy, and Science**

Sub-question: What *can't* sociology do?

10/21

- Weber, “Basic sociological terms” (Lore)
- Weber, “Class, status and party” FMW, pp 180-196
- Weber, “Ideal-type constructs” (optional) (Lore)
- Lawrence Scuff, “Fleeing the iron cage: politics and culture in the thought of Max Weber” (optional) (Lore)
- Marion Fourcade and Kieran Healy, “Classification situations: life-chances in the neoliberal era” (optional) (Lore)
- Stephen Turner, “Weber on action” (optional) (Lore)
- Erik Olin Wright, “The shadow of exploitation in Weber’s class analysis” (optional) (Lore)

10/23

- Weber, “Science as a vocation,” FMW pp. 129-156
- Weber, “Objectivity in social science,” “The tension between science and policy-making” (Lore)
- Steven Seidman, “The main aims and thematic structures of Max Weber’s sociology” (optional) (Lore)
- Mark Warren, “Max Weber’s liberalism for a Nietzschean world” (optional) (Lore)

## **Week 10: Weber II**

### **The Grand Project: Rationalization and the Cultural Uniqueness of Modern Society**

Sub-question: Why is the west (Europe/America) apparently so different than the rest of the world? What makes cultures different from each other?

10/28

- Weber, “Prefatory remarks to collected essays in the sociology of religion” (Lore)
- Weber, “Different roads to salvation” and “Asceticism, mysticism and salvation religion” (Lore)
- Benjamin Nelson, “Max Weber’s ‘Author’s Introduction’: A master clue to his main aims” (optional) (Lore)
- Stephen Kalberg, “The rationalization of action in Max Weber’s sociology of religion” (optional) (Lore)
- Richard Nisbett and Takahiro Masuda, “Culture and point of view” (optional) (Lore)

10/30

- Weber, “Bureaucracy,” FMW 196-244
- Weber, “Religious rejections of the world and their directions,” FMW 323-359
- George Ritzer, “Professionalization, bureaucratization, and rationalization: the views of Max Weber” (optional) (Lore)
- Alfred Eisen, “The meanings and confusions of Weberian ‘rationality’” (optional) (Lore)
- Ann Swidler, “The concept of rationality in the work of Max Weber” (optional) (Lore)

## Week 11: Weber III

### The Protestant Ethic and the Power of Ideas

Sub-question: How can (religious, political, moral) beliefs make us do things? What kind of effect can actions motivated by beliefs have?

11/4

- Weber, *The Protestant Ethic* (Lore)
  - “Religious affiliation and social stratification,” pp. 3-13
  - “The spirit of capitalism,” pp. 13-39
  - “Luther’s concept of the calling,” pp. 39-42
  - “The religious foundations of this-worldly asceticism,” pp. 53-69

“Asceticism and the spirit of capitalism,” pp. 103-127

- Talcott Parsons, “The role of ideas in social action” (optional) (Lore)
- John Meyer et al, “Ontology and rationalization in the western cultural account” (optional) (Lore)
- Randall Collins, “Max Weber’s last theory of capitalism: a systemization” (optional) (Lore)

11/6 (no class due to conference travel)

## Week 12: Durkheim I

### A Charter for Sociology: Social Facts as Things

Sub-question: So society is made up of stuff that we can't see or touch but only feel? Is this some kind of joke?

11/11

- Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method* (Lore)  
“Prefaces,” pp. 31-49  
“What is a social fact?,” pp. 50-60  
“Rules for the observation of social facts,” pp. 60-85  
“Rules for the distinction between the normal and the pathological,” pp. 85-108  
“Rules for the explanation of social facts,” pp. 119-147
- Theodore Porter, “Statistical and social facts from Quelet to Durkheim” (optional) (Lore)
- R. Keith Sawyer, “Emergence in sociology: contemporary philosophy of mind and its implications for sociological theory” (optional) (Lore)
- Patricia McCormak, “The paradox of Durkheim’s manifesto: Reconsidering the *Rules of Sociological Method*” (optional) (Lore)

11/13

- Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method* (Lore)  
“Rules for the demonstration of sociological proof,” pp. 147-159  
“Conclusion,” pp. 159-167
- Durkheim, *Suicide* (Lore)  
“Introduction,” pp. 41-57  
“How to determine social causes and social types,” pp. 145-151

- Stephen Turner, “Durkheim as Methodologist: Parts I and II” (optional) (Lore)
- H. Selvin, “Durkheim’s Suicide and the problems of empirical research” (optional) (Lore)
- Peter Bearman, “The Social Structure of Suicide” (optional) (Lore)

## Week 13: Durkheim II

### Solidarity and Morality: The Sublime Objects of Sociology

Sub-question: Why doesn’t society simply fall apart, even if we want it to?

11/18

- Durkheim, *The Division of Labour in Society* (Lore)
  - “Preface to the first edition”
  - “Introduction,” pp. 1-8
  - “Mechanical solidarity, or solidarity by similarities,” pp. 31-68
  - “Solidarity arising from the division of labor, or organic solidarity,” pp. 68-88
  - “The increasing preponderance of organic solidarity and its consequences,” pp. 101-143
- Robert Merton, “Durkheim’s Division of Labor in Society” (optional) (Lore)
- Whitney Pope and Barclay Johnson, “Inside organic solidarity” (optional) (Lore)
- Whitney Pope and Charles Ragin, “Mechanical solidarity, repressive justice and lynchings in Louisiana” (optional) (Lore)

11/20

- Durkheim, *The Division of Labour in Society* (Lore)
  - “Conclusion,” pp. 329-343
- Durkheim, “Review of Ferdinand Tonnies *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*” (Lore)
- Durkheim, “Individualism and the intellectuals” (Lore)
- Erving Goffman, “On the nature of deference and demeanor” (optional) (Lore)
- James Chriss, “Durkheim’s cult of the individual as civil religion” (optional) (Lore)
- Jonathan Turner, “Durkheim’s theory of social organization” (optional) (Lore)

## Week 14: Durkheim III

## Durkheim Gone Wild! Ritual, Religion and the Categories of Thought

Sub-question: Our “categories of thought” are caused by society. What does this mean? I don’t know. Let’s find out!

11/25

- Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*
  - “Introduction,” pp. 1-21
  - “Definition of religious phenomena and of religion,” pp. 21-44
  - “The notion of totemic principle, or mana, and the idea of force,” pp. 190-207
  - “Origin of the notion of totemic principle, or mana,” pp. 207-242
  - “The negative cult and its functions,” pp. 303-330
  - “The positive cult: elements of sacrifice,” pp. 330-355
  - “Mimetic rites and the principle of causality,” pp. 355-374
  - “Piacular rites and the ambiguity of the notion of the sacred,” pp. 392-417
  - “Conclusion,” pp. 418-448
- Durkheim, “The dualism of human nature and its social conditions” (Lore)
- W.S.F Pickering, “Representations as understood by Durkheim” (optional) (Lore)
- Anne Rawls, “Durkheim’s epistemology: the neglected argument” (optional) (Lore)
- Chris Shilling and Phillip Mellor, “Durkheim, morality and modernity: collective effervescence, homo duplex and the sources of moral action” (optional) (Lore)
- Richard Della Fave, “Ritual and the legitimation of inequality” (optional) (Lore)
- Alexander Riley, “Renegade Durkheimianism and the transgressive left sacred” (optional) (Lore)

11/27 (no class Thanksgiving)

## Week 15: Simmel I

### How is Sociology (Not to Mention Society) Even Possible?

Sub-question: What is formal sociology?

12/2

- Simmel, “How is society possible,” GSIS pp. 6-23
- Simmel, “The problem of sociology,” GSIS pp. 23-36
- Simmel, “The transcendent character of life” GSIS pp. 353-375

- Simmel, “Sociability” GSIS pp. 127-141
- Simmel, “Exchange,” GSIS pp. 43-70 (optional)
- Simmel, “Conflict,” GSIS pp. 70-96 (optional)
- Simmel, “Domination,” GSIS pp. 96-121 (optional)
- Theodore Abel, “The contribution of Georg Simmel: a reappraisal” (optional) (Lore)
- Donald Levine, “Simmel as a resource for sociological metatheory” (optional) (Lore)

12/4

- Simmel, “The metropolis and the mental life” (Lore)
- Simmel, “Money in modern culture” (Lore)
- Simmel, “The philosophy of fashion” (Lore)
- Simmel, “The crisis of culture” (Lore)
- Elisabeth Goodstein, “Style as substance: Simmel’s phenomenology of culture” (optional) (Lore)
- Donald Levine, “Simmel as educator: on individuality and modern culture” (optional) (Lore)
- Fredric Jameson, “The theoretical hesitation: Benjamin’s sociological predecessor” (optional) (Lore)

## **Week 16: Simmel II**

### **Godfather of the Network Revolution**

Sub-question: Are you still awake?

12/9

- Simmel, “Group expansion and the development of individuality” GSIS pp. 251-294
- Pescosolido and Rubin, “The web of group-affiliations revisited: social life, postmodernism, and sociology” (Lore)
- Jan Fuse, “The meaning structure of social networks” (optional) (Lore)
- Patrick Waiter, “Simmel and the image of individuality” (optional) (Lore)

12/11

- Simmel, “The number of members of the group determining the sociological form of the group, I” (Lore)
- Simmel, “The stranger” GSIS pp. 143-150
- Burt, “Structural holes and good ideas” (Lore)
- Barry Wellman, “Structural analysis: from method and metaphor to theory and substance” (optional) (Lore)
- Emily Erickson, “Formalist and relationalist theory in social network analysis” (optional) (Lore)

**Final Paper**

**Due Friday, December 19 at Noon**