

Sociology 282 Spring 2005
Classical and Contemporary
Sociological Theory
Tues., Thurs., 11-12.15

Professor Vujačić
King 305a
Office Hours:
Tues, 12.30-2, Thurs. 1-2.30

Classical and Contemporary Sociological Theory

Classical sociology arose in response to the dramatic social transformation of European societies in the wake of the Industrial and French revolutions. Its central focus were the numerous social and political problems opened up by the advent of modern industrial society from the disintegration of community and the decline of the sacred to the emergence of new forms of exploitation and class conflict, and the pervasive rationalization and routinization of social life. The founding fathers of modern sociology--Durkheim, Marx, and Weber--formulated their theories in response to such problems, establishing, in the process, three distinct traditions in sociological theory and research.

This course explores the continuities between classical and contemporary sociological theory and research within each one of these three traditions: Durkheimian, Marxist, Weberian. The course is divided into three four-week segments, each one devoted to one of the three traditions. Each four-week segment, in turn, is divided into three parts: 1) an initial two-week segment devoted to the “canonical” works of the original thinker; 2) a third week devoted to the theoretical elaborations and empirical applications of the original theories in contemporary sociology; 3) a fourth week devoted to the use of sociological theory as social critique. Throughout the course, a consistent effort is made to evaluate sociological theories from the point of view of their empirical validity and explanatory power, as well as their “background assumptions” (values and methodological presuppositions).

Practical Considerations.

In order to facilitate the assimilation of difficult material that is being covered fairly rapidly, a number of background readings are assigned. The main background reading for this class is Lewis Coser=s *Masters of Sociological Thought* (the sections on Marx, Durkheim, and Weber). Background readings by Tom Bottomore and Robert Holton will help students understand the context and development of contemporary sociological theories (functionalism, Marxism, critical theory), and are *mandatory*. Readings which deal with specific criticisms of Durkheim=s theory of suicide (Pope) or Marx=s historical analysis of class conflict (Dahrendorf) and Weber=s *Protestant Ethic* (Hamilton) are *optional, but strongly encouraged*. Students are expected to have done the reading before class. This is very important, as the reading for this class is rather abstract and difficult at times. You will quickly lose track if you are behind in the reading. Remember that this is a four-unit course mandatory for all sociology majors and you are expected to devote the corresponding amount of time and effort to study.

Course requirements:

There will be two in-class quizzes (40 minute blue-book exams), two 6-7 page papers, and a final examination.

Grading will be done on the following basis:

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| 2 quizzes: | 2x10%=20% |
| 2 papers (6-7 pages): | 2x25%=50% |
| Final exam: | 20% |
| Attendance and Participation: | 10% |

Course Schedule and Readings

Week One. Introduction. The History of Sociology and Sociological Theory

Robert Nisbet, *The Sociological Tradition*, 3-61; 71-97.

Part One. The Durkheimian Tradition

Week Two. Community and Society. From Mechanical to Organic Solidarity

Background Reading. “Emile Durkheim,” in Lewis Coser, *Masters of Sociological Thought*, 128-174.

Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*, 1-87; 101-125.

Week Three. The Disintegration of Community and Suicide

Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*, 126-175; Preface to the second edition, pp. xxxi-lix.

Emile Durkheim, *Suicide*, 152-170; 241-276.

Critique. Whitney Pope, *Durkheim=s Suicide. A Classic Analyzed*, 9-60.

Week Four. The Durkheimian Tradition: Structural Functionalism and Its Critics

Background Reading. Robert Holton, “Talcott Parsons,” in Rob Stones, *Key Sociological Thinkers*, pp. 96-109.

Talcott Parsons, “Social Systems,” in Parsons, *Social Systems and the Evolution of Action Theory* (1977), 177-203.

Robert Merton, "Manifest and Latent Functions," 73-138 in Robert K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (1968, second edition).

Ralf Dahrendorf, "Out of Utopia: Towards a Reorientation of Sociological Analysis," in Dahrendorf, *Essays in the Theory of Society*, 107-129.

Week Five. The Durkheimian Critique of Excessive Individualism.

Robert Bellah et. al., *Habits of the Heart*, vii-xxxix (introduction to new edition), 3-163, 275-307.

1st Quiz, Thursday, March 10, 40 minutes in class

Part Two. The Marxist Tradition.

Week Six. The Early Marx and the Critique of Alienation

Background Reading. Lewis Coser, *Masters of Sociological Thought*, 42-87.

All readings from Marx and Engels in Tucker, *ed.*, *The Marx-Engels Reader*:

"Marx on the History of His Opinions," 3-7;

"Estranged Labor," 70-81;

"The Power of Money in Bourgeois Society," 101-105;

"Alienation and Social Classes," 133-135;

"The German Ideology," 148-163; 172 (from top of page)-200.

Week Seven. Marx as a Theorist of Class Conflict and Capitalism.

Robert Tucker, *The Marx-Engels Reader*:

"Wage Labor and Capital," 203-217;

"The Communist Manifesto," 469-501;

"Socialism: Utopian and Scientific," pp.683-717.

Critique: Ralf Dahrendorf, *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society*, 3-71.

Week Eight. The Marxist Tradition. Class Reproduction in Modern Society

Background Reading. Tom Bottomore, "Marxism and Sociology," in Bottomore and Nisbet, *A History of Sociological Analysis*, 118-148.

Jay McLeod, *Ain't No Making It. Aspirations and Attainment in a Low-Income*

Neighborhood, 3-151, 239-269.

First paper due on Thursday, April 7, by 4p.m. in King 305a

Week Nine. Marxism as Critical Theory

Background Reading. Tom Bottomore, *The Frankfurt School*.

Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 1-55, 144-169, 247-257.

Jürgen Habermas, "Technology and Science as Ideology," in Steven Seidman, ed., *Jürgen Habermas on Society and Politics*, 237-265.

Part Three: The Weberian Tradition

Week Ten. Religion and the Rise of Capitalism

Background Reading. Lewis Coser, *Masters of Sociological Thought*, 216-260.

Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism*, 13-128.

Second Quiz, Thursday, April 21, 40 minutes in class

Week Eleven. Religion and the Rise of Capitalism II

Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism*, 155-183.

Critique. Richard Hamilton, "Max Weber and the Protestant Ethic," in Hamilton, *The Social Misconstruction of Reality*, 32-106.

Week Twelve. Weber=s Sociology of Rationalization

Max Weber, "Bureaucracy," in Hans Gerth and C.Wright Mills, eds., *From Max Weber*, 196-244.

Second paper due, Thursday, May 5

Week Thirteen. Weberian Social Criticism. The Nightmare of Rationalization

George Ritzer, *The McDonaldization of Society*

Final Exam as Scheduled