

University of Toronto– Sociology  
SOC6001H: Classical Sociological Theory  
Fall 2017, Mondays 9:30 AM - Noon  
725 Spadina Rd., Room 240

Instructor: Assistant Professor Steve G. Hoffman (PhD Northwestern)  
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Course web site: Portal

### **Course Description**

This course explores the development of sociological theory, focusing on the primary texts of six social theorists who have had an enduring impact on contemporary sociology. Although we will consider the broader intellectual climate and key figures in the development of sociology as a discipline, we focus on the works of Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Georg Simmel, and W.E.B. Du Bois. In addition to a consideration of the theoretical concepts and frameworks of these six theorists, we will delve into the biographical, intellectual, and institutional contexts within which these authors produced their works.

### **Class/Seminar Format**

The bulk of each class will consist of collaborative and largely open-ended discussion of the work assigned for that day. You will be the discussion leader for at least one class session, typically but not necessarily with a partner. In addition to briefly summarizing the assigned material, your responsibility as a discussion leader will be to guide our discussions of the material. How you go about leading our discussions will largely be up to you and your partner, although the emphasis should be placed on class engagement and collaboration. I will sometimes give short lectures that provide introductory or background material to help to contextualize the work in its broader contexts. Everyone is expected to actively engage in open-ended discussions of the material. Do not rely solely on the discussion leader, or me, to provide comprehensive learning material. Your active participation in each of our meetings is the most important ingredient to pulling off an effective graduate seminar. Please come to each class fully prepared to engage closely and carefully with the material we are covering.

Your active participation does not require you to be correct. Learning involves making mistakes. As economist Kenneth Boulding once said, “Nothing fails like success because we don’t learn from it. We learn only from failure.” Unfortunately, too much of the educational system is oriented to memorization. Although recall is a key part of learning, it is a fairly superficial one. Rather than “learning all the facts,” in this class we will try to use facts to build up portable insights that help make sense of our social worlds. Building anew sometimes involves making mistakes along the way, but it forges critical thinking skills that will remain with you a lifetime.

### **Goals and Outcomes (in three parts)**

The main goal for this course can be divided into three parts. The first goal is that you come to appreciate how the classical tradition in sociology can engender a rich understanding of the ways that personal history connects to shared history. Second, since theory goes to heart of what professional sociologists are supposed to be doing, everyone needs some baseline fluency. These first two parts, by and large, hold for most graduate seminars. So while they are genuine and important, they are also pretty dull.

The third part of the goal is more particular to a first-year seminar in classical sociological theory. I would like for everyone develop what Max Weber referred to as “musicality” with social theory. Developing a sense of musicality pushes beyond baseline expectations and into developing a skill set that will improve your teaching and scholarship. It is, however, a bit intangible as a learning outcome. For example, if you want an answer to the question, “What is sociological theory?,” I am afraid that you will leave class disappointed week after week. This question, innocent enough, assumes that theory is a discrete object that can be exchanged or shared among people. It assumes that theory is a signifier with a stable referent “out there,” in an objective world beyond words – that it is clearly definable. I think it is much more productive to think of theory as an assemblage of diverse activities and patterns of reasoning that are oriented toward marking out the patterning of social action. Theory, in this sense of the term, can be understood more as an ongoing process than a bounded object that can be “found” or “understood.”

The project of theorizing, more so than any other area of sociological scholarship that I can think of, is neither neatly organized nor ever finished. Think of this class as an invitation to join a loosely organized conversation focused on identifying the assumptions that often go unnoticed in social research as well as developing portable insights into a wide array of social structures, institutions, and interactions. I can formulate my goal as a test. We will have failed the test if, at the end of the semester, you answer the question, “What did you learn?” with something to the effect of “In Hoffman’s seminar I learned what sociological theory is.” We will have succeeded if you respond, “In Hoffman’s seminar, we learn how to theorize.”

### **Evaluation Components and Grading Policies**

<b>Type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Due</b>	<b>Weight</b>
Class Participation	Engage with course content, assigned discussion leadership role, group discussions, class exercises, and active listening.	Ongoing	10%
Position Paper and Discussion Leadership	Write and present a brief position paper on the week’s reading and lead discussion for that day’s class.	Dates will be assigned in class	10%
On the spot critique	Brief critique of another student’s presentation of their position paper.	Dates will be assigned in class	5%

100 Word Summaries	100 word summaries of the upcoming week's assigned readings	Posted to Blackboard each Saturday before the next class meeting, 11:59 PM	10%
Discussion Board	Online post of a discussion question or topic based on assigned reading.	Posted to Blackboard each Saturday before the next class meeting, 11:59 PM	5%
Paper #1	Application essay on Marx, Durkheim, and/or Weber	Monday, October 30 <sup>th</sup> , by 5:00 PM	30%
Paper #2	Application essay on Perkins Gilman, Simmel, and/or Du Bois	Monday, December 4 <sup>th</sup> , by 5:00 PM	30%
TOTAL			100%

### Rubric:

<i>Graduate</i>	
Truncated Refined Letter Grade Scale	Numerical Scale of Marks
A+	90 - 100%
A	85 - 89%
A-	80 - 84%
B+	77 - 79%
B	73 - 76%
B-	70 - 72%
FZ**	0 - 69%

### Grading:

#### I. Class Participation (10 pts.)

This is a graduate seminar, so your attendance each week is, of course, essential to our collective success. Please come promptly and prepared. Make sure you do the readings before class and be ready to grapple with them in a constructive fashion during class.

#### II. Position Paper and Discussion Leadership (10 pts.)

In addition to regular class participation, everyone will write and then present a position paper in class. The same week that you write and present a position paper, you will also serve as the discussion leader. We will make assignments for position papers, presentations, and discussion leadership in the first week of the seminar.

A position paper should be 3-4 double-spaced pages in length. In it, you will briefly summarize the week's readings. However, the summary should be mobilized in such a way that it stakes out an argument or position on the readings or the issues raised in them. The position

paper should make an argument by articulating a clear critique, drawing connections across theoretical frameworks or approaches, posing thematic convergences or divergences, and raising issues that require further elaboration and discussion in our seminar.

In addition to presenting her or his position paper, the discussion leader(s) will structure and facilitate the day's coverage of the material. The position paper should outline some of this, but please be responsive to discussions and issues raised by the rest of the class, which may or may not correspond closely to those raised in your position paper. How you structure the day's class is largely up to the discussion leader or leaders (some weeks will involve more than one discussion leader). The emphasis should be on facilitating an engaging and lively discussion that deepens our critical understanding and appreciation for the texts at hand, their broader contexts, and how and where they might remain relevant in today's social worlds.

If you are not a discussion leader, your role is to come prepared to discuss the material, help formulate or re-formulate class discussion questions, speculate on answers, and in general be an active, engaged, and constructive participant in our seminar. Please keep in mind that crystalline understanding of the material is not an expectation for participation, but a willingness to learn is. Please conduct yourself in a professional and attentive fashion. Please respect your peers and your instructor. In the spirit of perhaps the most famously misattributed quote in all the humanities (was it Plato? Philo of Alexandria? Rev. John Watson? Ian MacLaren?), "Be kind to one another, for most of us are fighting a hard battle."

### **III. "On the spot critique" (5 pts.)**

You will briefly critique another student's presentation of her or his position paper. The critique should be short – no more than a few minutes. You will not have access to the paper beforehand. The critique should very briefly capture the main theme or themes raised in the presentation. It might also raise issues that you think logically follow from the position paper that we might pursue in our subsequent discussion. It can also reference important ideas or aspects that the position paper did not cover.

The general goal here is that you are 1) honing your own skill at listening carefully and summarizing the intellectual work of a peer, 2) helping to engender a shared understanding of course material, and 3) informing the presenter on what was and was not communicated clearly and effectively.

### **IV. 100 Word Summaries (10 pts.)**

In addition to submitting a question and an answer before our meetings, please submit a brief summary of the readings to Blackboard. How brief? These summaries, no matter how many pages or how many authors we cover, will need a word count of one hundred or less. Submit the summary to the appropriate folder on the discussion board. This will be a challenge, but one you will face throughout your professional lives. It is very difficult to be succinct while also comprehensive. If you are not sure how short this is, this paragraph is exactly one hundred words in length.

### **V. Discussion Board Questions (5 pts.)**

Everyone is required to submit one (1) discussion board question to Blackboard each week. Please post no later than 11:59 AM on the Saturday before our Monday meetings. This should give us enough time to read the questions before we meet on Monday morning. To avoid last

minute technical glitches, posting ahead of time is always a good idea. Consider making a back-up copy of what you write in case it does not upload properly.

Discussion questions are a good place to raise issues that you find puzzling, would like to discuss more in class, try out a bit of analysis based on the readings, raise applications or extensions, or in general provide content that can help to structure our open discussions in class. These questions will help to structure our subsequent conversation. We will not be able to cover every discussion question of course, so if there is an issue raised in your discussion question that you want addressed be proactive in bringing it up during our meetings.

**TIP:** Try to avoid discussion questions that can be answered with a simple “yes” or “no.” Questions that begin with the adverbs “how” or “why” (e.g. “How do new information technologies shape interpersonal communication?”) are usually better than questions that start with “have” or “do” (e.g. “Do new information technologies impact interpersonal communication?”).

### **VI. Paper 1 (30 pts.)**

In the first paper, you will write up a 8-10 page theoretical analysis of a contemporary social problem of your choice. In it, you will focus on the theoretical perspectives of Marx, Durkheim, and Weber. The paper should move beyond summary by making a standalone theoretical argument. You might consider organizing the argument around which theorist provides a more enlightening framework or set of analytic concepts for analyzing the social problem at hand. Or consider which aspects of each theorist’s work best captures certain aspects of the problem. You might also consider frameworks and/or concepts can be synthesized so to better capture important or illuminating features of the social problem.

This paper will be due no later than **Monday, October 30<sup>th</sup>, by 5:00 PM**. It can be brought to class in hardcopy or sent to me by email.

### **VII. Paper 2 (30 pts.)**

In the second paper, write a position paper on whether or not the theorists we covered in the second half of our theory seminar should be included in the “theoretical cannon” of sociology. The paper should focus on the theoretical frameworks, key ideas, and main concepts of Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Georg Simmel, and W.E.B. Du Bois. Should their works be assigned and studied in required sociological theory courses like ours? Why or why not?

It is perfectly acceptable to argue that there should not be a theoretical cannon at all in sociology, although in making this argument be sure that you nevertheless focus on the theoretical frameworks, key ideas, and main concepts of Perkins Gilman, Simmel, and Du Bois.

This paper will be due no later than **Monday, December 4<sup>th</sup>, by 5:00 PM**. It can be brought to class in hardcopy or sent to me by email.

#### General Guidelines for Papers:

- 12 point font, double spaced.
- At least 1” margins on all sides.
- Check spelling and read your work before turning it in.
- Use proper citation conventions.
- Avoid totalizing terms such as “always,” “never,” “totally,” and “completely,” or phrases like “since the beginning of time...”, which lead to weak theorizing because they oversimplify the human condition.

## **Academic Integrity**

Copying, plagiarizing, falsifying medical certificates, or other forms of academic misconduct will not be tolerated. Any student caught engaging in such activities will be referred to the Dean's office for adjudication. Any student abetting or otherwise assisting in such misconduct will also be subject to academic penalties. Students are expected to cite sources in all written work and presentations. See this link for tips for how to use sources well:

(<http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize>).

According to Section B.I.1.(e) of the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters it is an offence *"to submit, without the knowledge and approval of the instructor to whom it is submitted, any academic work for which credit has previously been obtained or is being sought in another course or program of study in the University or elsewhere."*

By enrolling in this course, you agree to abide by the university's rules regarding academic conduct, as outlined in the Calendar. You are expected to be familiar with the *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* (<http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/osai/The-rules/code/the-code-of-behaviour-on-academic-matters>) and *Code of Student Conduct* (<http://www.viceprovoststudents.utoronto.ca/publicationsandpolicies/codeofstudentconduct.htm>) which spell out your rights, your duties and provide all the details on grading regulations and academic offences at the University of Toronto.

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to Turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site.

## **Accessibility Services**

Please see the University of Toronto Governing Council "Statement of Commitment Regarding Persons with Disabilities" at

<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/Assets/Governing+Council+Digital+Assets/Policies/PDF/ppnov012004.pdf>. It is the University of Toronto's goal to create a community that is inclusive of all persons and treats all members of the community in an equitable manner. In creating such a community, the University aims to foster a climate of understanding and mutual respect for the dignity and worth of all persons.

In working toward this goal, the University will strive to provide support for, and facilitate the accommodation of individuals with disabilities so that all may share the same level of access to opportunities, participate in the full range of activities that the University offers, and achieve their full potential as members of the University community. We take seriously our obligation to make this course as welcoming and accessible as feasible for students with diverse needs. We also understand that disabilities can change over time and will do our best to accommodate you.

Students seeking support must have an intake interview with a disability advisor to discuss their individual needs. In many instances it is easier to arrange certain accommodations with more advance notice, so we strongly encourage you to act as quickly as possible. To schedule a registration appointment with a disability advisor, please visit Accessibility Services at <http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as>, call at 416-978-8060, or email at: [accessibility.services@utoronto.ca](mailto:accessibility.services@utoronto.ca). The office is located at 455 Spadina Avenue, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Suite

400.

Additional student resources for distressed or emergency situations can be located at [distressedstudent.utoronto.ca](http://distressedstudent.utoronto.ca); Health & Wellness Centre, 416-978-8030, <http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/hwc>, or Student Crisis Response, 416-946-7111.

### **Equity and Diversity**

The University of Toronto is committed to equity and respect for diversity. All members of the learning environment in this course should strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect. As a course instructor, I will neither condone nor tolerate behaviour that undermines the dignity or self-esteem of any individual in this course and wish to be alerted to any attempt to create an intimidating or hostile environment. It is our collective responsibility to create a space that is inclusive and welcomes discussion. Discrimination, harassment and hate speech will not be tolerated.

Additional information and reports on Equity and Diversity at the University of Toronto is available at <http://equity.hrandequity.utoronto.ca>.

**Required Readings** (any edition is fine unless specifically noted. The University of Toronto St. George Bookstore, 214 College St., 416.640.7900, should have copies of the books available. I asked that they provide used copies if possible to help keep costs down.):

1. Blackboard posted reading material
2. Tucker, Robert C. 1978 [1972]. *The Marx-Engels Reader. Second Edition*. New York City, NY: W.W. Norton & Company.
3. Durkheim, Emile. *The Division of Labor in Society*.
4. Durkheim, Emile. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*.
5. Weber, Max. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.
6. Weber, Max. *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. Translated, edited and with an introduction by H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills
7. Simmel, Georg. 1972. *On Individuality and Social Forms*. Edited by D. Levine. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
8. Gilman, Charlotte Perkins. *Women and Economics*.
9. Du Bois, W.E.B. *The Souls of Black Folks*.

### **A Few Additional Resources (not required reading, but these might be helpful):**

- Collins, Randall. 1994. *Four Sociological Traditions*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Coser, Lewis. 1977. *Masters of Sociological Thought*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich.
- Ritzer, George. *Classical Sociological Theory*. (Latest Edition). McGraw Hill.
- Zeitlin, Irving. 2000. *Ideology and the Development of Sociological Theory 7<sup>th</sup> Edition*
- *Journal of Classical Sociology*
- *Sociological Theory*
- *Theory and Society*

- *Theory, Culture, and Society*

## SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND READINGS

- Week 1, Sept. 11:     **Introductions and Orientation**
- Week 2, Sept. 18:     **Karl Marx**  
 from *The Marx-Engels Reader, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*:
- Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844
  - Theses on Feuerbach
  - The German Ideology, Pt. I
  - The Manifesto of the Communist Party
- Week 3, Sept. 25:     **Karl Marx**  
 from *The Marx-Engels Reader, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*:
- *Capital, Volume One*, pgs. 294-361; 436-438
  - *Capital, Volume Three*, pgs. 439-442
  - The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State, by Friedrich Engels
- Week 4, Oct. 2:       **Emile Durkheim**
- *Division of Labor in Society* (read Intro., Book I: Chs. 2-3, Book II: Chs. 1-2, Book III: Ch. 2, Conclusion)
  - *Suicide* (excerpts posted to Blackboard)
- Week 5, Oct. 9:       **Emile Durkheim**
- *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (read Intro., Book I: Chs. 1-4, Book II: Chs. 5-7, Conclusion)
- Week 6, Oct. 16:     **Max Weber**
- *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*
- Week 7, Oct. 23:     **Max Weber**  
 From *From Max Weber*:
- Science as a Vocation
  - Class, Status, Party
  - Bureaucracy
  - The Social Psychology of the World Religions
- Week 8, Oct. 30:     **Contemporary Marx, Durkheim, and Weber**  
 Posted on Blackboard:
- Manza, Jeff and M.A. McCarthy. 2011. "The Neo-Marxist Legacy in American Sociology." *Annual Review of Sociology* 37:155-183.
  - Crow, Graham. 2010. "Social Solidarities." *Sociology Compass*. 4, 1: 52-60.
  - Swedberg, Richard. 2003. "The changing picture of Max Weber's sociology." *Annual Review of Sociology*: 283-306.

***Paper #1 due Monday, Oct. 30, by 5:00 PM***

- Week 9, Nov. 6: No classes this week
- Week 10, Nov. 13: **Charlotte Perkins Gilman**  
*Women and Economics*
- Week 11, Nov. 20: **Georg Simmel**  
From *Individuality and Social Forms*:
- Ch. 3: The Problem of Sociology
  - Ch. 5: Exchange
  - Ch. 10: The Stranger
  - Ch. 19: Fashion
  - Ch. 20: The Metropolis and Mental Life
  - Ch. 23: The Transcendent Character of Life
- Week 12, Nov. 27: **W.E.B. Du Bois**  
*The Philadelphia Negro* (excerpts posted to Blackboard)  
*The Souls of Black Folk*  
*A Scholar Denied* (excerpts posted to Blackboard)
- Week 13, Dec. 4: **Open**

***Paper #2 due Monday, December 4, 5:00 PM***