

**University of Toronto**  
**Department of Sociology**  
**SOC6001F - CLASSICAL SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY (Winter 2025)**  
**Professor J. Veugelers (jack.veugelers@utoronto.ca)**

Instead of trying to provide a general overview of classical sociological theory, this course will focus on some of the so-called "founding fathers" of the discipline. Among our main goals are ensuring familiarity with some of these thinkers' better-known writings; examining the interplay between history and sociological theory; and identifying some of the more important problems these thinkers were grappling with, whom they were arguing against, and what answers they proposed. Both individually and collectively, the success of this seminar will depend on adequate preparation and active participation.

**COURSE READINGS**

Durkheim, Emile

*The Division of Labor in Society* (1893)

*The Rules of Sociological Method* (1895)

*Suicide* (1897)

Gerth, H.H. and Mills, C. Wright (eds.)

*From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946) [ca. 1906 to 1918]

Simmel, Georg

"The Metropolis and Mental Life" (1903)

"The Stranger" (1908)

"The Web of Group Affiliations" (1908)

Tocqueville, Alexis de

*Democracy in America* (1835-40)

Tucker, Robert C. (ed.)

*The Marx-Engels Reader* (second edition), (New York: Norton, 1978) [ca. 1844-1884]

**REQUIREMENTS: DETAILS AND GUIDELINES**

1. Contributing to discussions
2. Six position papers
3. One presentation of a position paper
4. One on-the-spot summary of another student's presentation
5. Term paper

### **1. Contributing to discussions**

If a student says nothing at all, it means they are free riding on the contributions of others. They are losing a chance to practice their ability to speak in a scholarly setting. And they are denying the instructor a chance to adapt this course to all participants.

### **2. Six position papers**

To ensure breadth and to avoid omission, Tocqueville, Marx/Engels, Durkheim and Weber must each be the subject of at least one of the six position papers submitted.

Position papers are not supposed to summarize the week's readings. Instead, in 1½ to 2 typed, single-spaced pages, a position paper should make an argument. In a concise and creative fashion, a position paper should draw connections with other issues or theoretical approaches; and raise problems that should be part of the seminar discussion.

Position papers will be returned with comments from the instructor but will not be individually graded.

They are due at the beginning of the class that deals with the corresponding reading. Late position papers will not be accepted, so assignments for other courses should be considered when planning work for this seminar. Make two copies of each position paper, one to submit and the other to refer to during the seminar. Be prepared to present the main points of your position paper during the discussion.

Further guidelines for position papers:

- avoid summarizing: assume your reader is familiar with the work in question
- cut to the chase: state your main argument by the end of the first paragraph (also, consider stating your main question at the beginning)
- strive for originality, even in a small way: avoid repeating arguments made by others
- do not disdain “mere” comparison or adjudication between thinkers, theories or arguments for this is a proven path to new insight
- try to introduce a theme not emphasized or made explicit by the thinker(s) in question but potentially worth pursuing in the context of a given problem
- engage: no matter the approach taken, a position paper should provide evidence of scrutiny of the texts

### **3. One presentation**

Present the main argument contained in your position paper. Please refer to point-form notes, not a prepared text; and please do not read from a computer screen. A sign-up sheet will be distributed at the first class.

### **4. One on-the-spot summary of another student’s presentation**

Without embellishment, correction or commentary, repeat in succinct fashion the main points of the presentation given by another student. The purposes of this exercise are: (1) letting a presenter know whether they have communicated effectively; and (2) ensuring a shared understanding of the presentation prior to discussion.

## 5. Term paper

The final requirement is a term paper (length 20-25 pages, topic to be cleared first with the instructor). The due date is Friday, April 18, 2025. Please submit a hard copy as well as by Quercus by 4 p.m. on the due date. No extensions will be given except for legitimate, documented reasons beyond a student's control (e.g., illness or family crisis).

## EVALUATION

*The following will result in a final grade of A- for this course*

- submitting all 6 of the required position papers
- and contributing to discussions
- and giving the scheduled presentations
- and providing a summary of another presentation
- and submitting a competent term paper

*The following will result in a final grade below A-*

- submitting fewer than 6 of the required position papers
- or not contributing to discussions
- or not giving the scheduled presentation
- or not providing a summary of another presentation
- or submitting a term paper less than competent

*The following will raise a final grade*

- submitting all 6 of the required position papers
- and contributing to discussions
- and giving the scheduled presentation
- and providing a summary of another presentation
- and submitting: an excellent term paper → final grade of A  
a publishable term paper → final grade of A+

## 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.

Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin for the detection of possible plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin reference database. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin service are on the Turnitin website.

### **GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)**

A top grade can be achieved without using AI and students are accountable for the work they submit. Thus, AI is not recommended and may be used as a learning aid only. Any use of generative artificial intelligence tools for an assignment in this course *must be documented in an appendix*. This appendix must specify:

- what AI tool(s) were used
- how they were used (e.g., to come up with an argument; to identify the main ideas of thinkers; to find relevant examples; to engage with weaknesses or criticisms of theories; to propose the implications of an argument)
- where in the work submitted the results from the AI were incorporated (provide page numbers and paragraph locations)

*Representing as one's own an idea or the expression of an idea (i.e., the words used) that was AI-generated will be considered an academic offense in this course.*

### **ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES**

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. Please see the University of Toronto Governing Council "Statement of Commitment Regarding Persons with Disabilities" at <https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/statement-commitment-regarding-persons-disabilities-february-25-2021>.

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, 4th 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.

## **COPYRIGHT**

Course materials prepared by the instructor are considered by the University to be an instructor's intellectual property covered by the Copyright Act, RSC 1985, c C-42. These materials are made available to you for your own study purposes, and cannot be shared outside of the class or "published" in any way. Lectures, whether in person or online, cannot be recorded without the instructor's permission. Posting course materials or any recordings you may make to other websites without the express permission of the instructor will constitute copyright infringement.

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## **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>.

## **CULTIVATING MULTIPLE ATTITUDES IN ONE READER**

In reading texts that were written outside our time and place, a combination of attitudes -- such as receptivity, imagination, and skepticism -- can serve in making these texts our own. Consider what Bertrand Russell (in *A History of Western Philosophy*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1946, p. 58) writes about the mindset that a strong reader will exercise in their encounter with ancient philosophy:

*In studying a philosopher, the right attitude is neither reverence nor contempt, but first a kind of hypothetical sympathy, until it is possible to know what it feels like to believe in his theories, and only then a revival of the critical attitude, which should resemble, as far as possible, the state of mind of a person abandoning opinions which he hitherto held. Contempt interferes with the first part of this process, and reverence with the second. Two things are to be remembered: that a man whose opinions and theories are worth studying may be presumed to have had some intelligence, but that no man is likely to have arrived at complete and final truth on any subject whatever. When an intelligent man expresses a view which seems to us obviously absurd, we should not attempt to prove that it is somehow true, but we should try to understand how it ever came to seem true. This exercise of historical and psychological imagination at once enlarges the scope of our thinking, and helps us to realize how foolish many of our own cherished prejudices will seem to an age which has a different temper of mind.*

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

### **1. January 6: Introduction**

The relevance of classical sociological theory; course format and requirements; guidelines for reading, presenting and summarizing; advice on writing the position papers and the term paper.

### **2. January 13: Tocqueville**

Skim *Democracy in America* but read the following closely:

Volume 1. "Author's Introduction"; Part 1, chap. 3; Part 2, chaps. 4, 7, 9 & 10

Volume 2. Part 1, chaps. 1 to 7; Part 2, chaps. 1 to 8; Part 3, chaps. 19-26; Part 4, chap. 6.

### **3. January 20: Marx and Engels I**

"Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844" (pp. 66-81 only)

"Theses on Feuerbach" (pp. 143-145)

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

### **4. January 27: Marx and Engels II** "Wage Labour and Capital" (pp. 203-217)

*Manifesto of the Communist Party* (pp. 469-500)

"Critique of the Gotha Program" (pp. 525-541)

"On Imperialism in India" (pp. 653-664)

### **5. February 3: Marx and Engels III**

*The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (pp. 594-617)

“The Civil War in France” (pp. 618-652)

*The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (pp.734-59)

### **6. February 10: Durkheim I**

*Suicide*

[No class on February 17, Family Day]

### **7. February 24: Durkheim II**

*The Rules of Sociological Method*

### **8. March 3: Durkheim III**

*The Division of Labour in Society*

### **9. March 10: Weber I**

“Politics as a Vocation” (pp. 77-128)

“Science as a Vocation” (pp. 129-156)

“Class, Status, Party” (pp. 180-195)

### **10. March 17: Weber II**

“Bureaucracy” (pp. 196-244)

“The Sociology of Charismatic Authority” (pp. 245-252)

“The Meaning of Discipline” (pp. 253-264)

### **11. March 24: Weber III**

“The Protestant Sects and the Spirit of Capitalism” (pp. 302-322)

“Capitalism and Rural Society in Germany” (pp. 363-385)

“India: The Brahman and the Castes” (pp. 396-415)

### **12. March 31: Simmel**

“The Metropolis and Mental Life” (1903)

“The Stranger” (1908)

“The Web of Group Affiliations” (1908)

## **RECOMMENDED SUPPLEMENTARY TEXTS**

Antoni, Carlo. *From History to Sociology: The Transition in German Historical Thinking* (London: Merlin, 1959).

Ashley, David, and David Michael Orenstein. *Sociological Theory: Classical Statements*. Boston: Pearson, 2005).

Bendix, Reinhard. *Max Weber: An Intellectual Portrait* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1962).

Giddens, Anthony. *Capitalism and modern social theory: An analysis of the writings of Marx, Durkheim and Max Weber* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971).

Go, Julian. "For a postcolonial sociology." *Theory & Society* 42 (2013): 25-55.

Hughes, H. Stuart. *Consciousness and Society: The Reorientation of European Social Thought 1890-1930* (New York: Vintage, 1977).

Lichtheim, George. *Marxism: An Historical and Critical Study* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961).

Lukes, Stephen M. *Emile Durkheim: His Life and Work* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972).

Sydie, R.A. *Natural Women, Cultured Men: A Feminist Perspective on Sociological Theory* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1994).

Welch, Cheryl B. *The Cambridge Companion to Tocqueville* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

Zeitlin, Irving M. *Ideology and the Development of Sociological Theory*, Seventh edition (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2001).

Also: *Journal of Classical Sociology*.