

## CLASSICAL SOCIOLOGY THEORY

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Office Hour: By appointment

### Course Description:

This course is a basic introduction to classical theories of Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx, and Max Weber, the three scholars that established the foundation of sociology. While many students might be skeptical and often ask, “Who cares and why do we have to learn ‘outdated’ knowledge,” this course attempts to not only introduce some of their fundamental writings but also connect these writings with important issues in modern society. This course will have two goals in reading and discussing these materials. The first is to understand the theoretical arguments of these authors. We will begin with what theory is and how theories differ from empirical studies. We then discuss the logic of arguments, the underlying assumptions, and the contradictions the arguments encounter in each line of argumentation. The second goal of this course is to use these arguments to construct your “theoretical point,” how to make it, how to defend the assertion of these authors, and what evidence to include or exclude in line with a particular theoretical claim. We will wrap up the semester by comparing three theorists through poster presentations.

\*The syllabus has not yet been finished, and I will update it if I get the lectureship, but this is the structure of the course that I want to teach, and the elements that I think are fundamental to understanding classical theory. I did not put many secondary materials or some of their interesting pieces. But I am willing to provide it if students ask for further info. Some of the materials are copied from Bob, but I modified the order given my understanding and reading of these theories.

\* I agree with Nick that students feel unfamiliar with and do not understand why they have to read classical theory. However, I did not replace readings with more new materials. My goal of this course, however, is to persuade them that classical theory is not “old” and “outdated.” Instead, classical theory is also contemporary if we understand them thoroughly.

### Required Book for courses:

For required readings, books are required. You can obtain them in University Bookstore or purchase online. For additional articles, I will post them on Canvas. If you have difficulties accessing these materials, feel free to let me know.

Reading Tips: Some writings might be dense and hard to understand. I encourage you to check the following questions first before completing the required readings.

Emile Durkheim. Suicide.

Emile Durkheim. The Division of Labor in Society.

Emile Durkheim. The Elementary Forms of Religious Life. (Karen Fields translation only!)

Karl Marx. The Marx-Engels Reader. (Robert Tucker, ed.)

Max Weber. The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.

Max Weber. The Theory of Social and Economic Organization.

### Course Requirements and Grades:

The grading consists of five components. The mid-term and final exams include multiple-choice questions as well as elaboration questions. You are required to answer these questions in a timely manner. The grading of exams depends on whether you capture the key ideas and relationships

between concepts in line with the readings we have gone through. For in-class participation, I will have 10 minutes break that allows students to ask questions. I strongly encourage students to ask questions because sometimes, even simple questions can clarify misunderstandings.

For final papers, you are not allowed to write a lengthy paper as you often do in other courses. Instead, you are required to draw a conceptual map to compare three classical theorists—Durkheim, Marx, and Weber—and print it out as posters to show your classmates. You will present in front of your posters as audiences come and go and answer others' curiosities about how you construct your understanding in this way rather than that way. We will devote our final lecture to allowing each of you to go around and look at each other's posters, peer-review others' presentations, and wrap up with takeaways.

Midterm 30 %  
Final Exam 30%  
In-class Participation 20%  
Final Presentation & Poster 15%  
Others TBD 5%

### ***Week1: What is theory and why do we learn from classical theories ?***

Readings TBD

The topic of the week: We will discuss what theory is and the approaches scholars use to define the theory. What does it mean to “theorize” things? Does theorization differ from generalization? Does theory mean the relationship among concepts? Does theory include presumptions of how social worlds operate? We will discuss these issues in the first class.

\*May move to week2 if students cannot finish readings, or stay in week1.

### ***Week2: Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) Suicide I***

Intro to Course and to Durkheim

Emile Durkheim. *Suicide*. New York: Free Press, Reading: pp. 145-151; 217-228; 152-160; 171-189; 197-202; 208-216

The topic of the book: While some common sense may be like sociology 101 today, it was not in the past. Durkheim's early writing on *Suicide* is an important book that distinguishes “Sociology” from other disciplines. We will read *Suicide* to see how Durkheim explains Suicide as a “social fact” than an “individual behavior.”

Questions to consider: What does it mean to say that suicide is a social fact? What is social integration? (208-210); What indices or measures does D use for integration? What is altruistic suicide, and what are its causes? (221) What is egoistic suicide, and what are its causes? (159) Why is women's suicide rate lower than men's? How is women's suicide rate related to their degree of social integration? (215-216)

### ***Week3: Emile Durkheim The Division of Labor in Society***

Emile Durkheim. *The Division of Labor in Society*. New York: Free Press. Reading: pp., 1-2; 11-29; 31-64; 68-86; 149-165; 172-174.

The topic of the book: Many sociologists are viewed as sociologists by explaining social transformation. In the book written later on, Durkheim explained why a society transforms from mechanical solidarity to organic solidarity. The topic is related to our occupations, division of labor,

and many other functions in society. Today we will focus on the first part of this book.

Questions to consider: What are the functions of the division of labor? (pp. 11-30) What is the relation between the division of labor and solidarity? (pp. 11-30) What is a crime and what is the function of punishment? (pp. 31-64) What is mechanical solidarity? (p. 31-64) What is organic solidarity? What is restitutive law? (pp. 68-86) What are the “non-contractual elements of contract”? What on earth does this have to do with organic solidarity? (pp. 158-163) Why does organic solidarity become more common in modern society? (pp. 172-174)

#### **Week4: Emile Durkheim The Division of Labor in Society**

Reading: pp. 118-123; 200-205; 217-223; 226-244; 310-322.

Questions to consider: What is the relationship between mechanical and organic solidarity? (pp. 118-123 vs. 226-244) What happens to the content of collective consciousness under organic solidarity? (226-244) What is the forced division of labor? (310-322) What consequences does a forced division of labor have for society and solidarity? Why?

#### **Week4: Emile Durkheim, The Elementary Forms of Religious Life**

Emile Durkheim. The Elementary Forms of Religious Life. New York: Free Press. Reading: pp. 1,2; 8-45; 190-193; 207-241.

The topic of the book: In the second book, I want you to pay attention to symbolic, collective representation compared to the first book of division of labor. What is the subjective side of social world that can explain individual and collective behaviors, and how Durkheim discusses them? We will focus on the important dichotomy that Durkheim constructs that divides society—sacred and profane.

Questions to consider: What are the three elements of religion? (21-44) What are the sacred and the profane? What factors cause an object to be classified in one of these categories or another? (33-39) What does Durkheim mean when he argues that the totem is a symbol? What is it a symbol of? (191-193) What is the function of religion in a society, for Durkheim? (211-216) What does Durkheim mean when he says that god and society are one and the same? Why is it important that god/society is a moral force, and not simply a physical one? (207-224) Why is it necessary to symbolize the relationship between individual and god/society in the form of a totem? (221-241)

#### **Week5: Emile Durkheim, The Elementary Forms of Religious Life/Finish up Durkheim**

Emile Durkheim. The Elementary Forms of Religious Life. New York: Free Press. Reading: Elementary Forms, pp. 418-448

Questions to consider: Why does Durkheim say that “the fundamental categories of thought...[and] nearly all the great social institutions were born in religion”? What does he say about the relationship between religion and abstraction? (418-448)

II. Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820-1895)

#### **Week5: The German Ideology**

Karl Marx. Theses on Feurbach and The German Ideology. The Marx-Engels Reader. Readings: pp. 143-163.

Questions to consider: What is the German Ideology? (p. 147-149) What is Marx’s criticism of the

German Ideology? (p. 165; 11th thesis on Feurbach, p. 145) What are the premises of all history? (146-63)

### **Week6 Karl Marx (1818-1883) – Capitalism as mode of production**

Readings: Marx-Engels Reader., pp. 344-384; 417-428 (Capital, v. 1).

Topic of the book: We typically hear others cite Marx. But many of citations are not from Marx's real writing. This week we will focus on Marx's three volumes of capital. The important but less discussed book series that establish our understanding of labor power, capitalism, and value (e.g. salaries, incomes... etc). I will briefly introduce three volumes and then focus on volume 1 to discuss these fundamental concepts.

Questions to consider: What is labor power? What is the value of labor power? (p. 339) What is the source of profit in capitalism? (p. 357) What is absolute and surplus value and how is it produced? (p. 362) What is relative surplus value and how is it produced? (p. 379 ff.)

### **Week7 Karl Marx. History as a succession of modes of production.**

Readings: Marx-Engels Reader., pp. 579-585; 203-218; 302-343.

Questions to consider: What does Marx mean when he says that history is a succession of modes of production? (151-155; 163-165) What is the feudal mode of production? How is surplus extracted in feudalism? How is feudalism justified or legitimated? What is the capitalist mode of production? (203-218) What are the two components of the division of labor? (158-64) What is the relationship between ideas and material elements of society? (164-175)

### **Week8 Karl Marx. Division of Labor**

Readings TBD (Capital V3)

Questions to consider: What are classes? (738-40) What are the natural and voluntary divisions of labor? (160-1) What is the difference between the civilized and natural division of labor? (185) What is communism? (160-165; 191-193; 197-200)

III. Max Weber (1864-1920)

### **Week 9: Max Weber- The Protestant Ethic**

Max Weber. The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism. New York: Routledge. Reading: pp. Xxviii-xlii; 3-124.

Questions to consider: How does modern capitalism differ from traditional capitalism? (pp. Xxxv-xlii). What is the Spirit of Capitalism? (Chapter 2, and esp. pp. 18-21 & 30-33). What is the Protestant Ethic? Asceticism? What is the difference between the doctrines of Luther and Calvin in this regard? (Ch. 3 vs. pp. 53-80) What is the connection between the Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism? (Ch. 5) How do the Baptist sects strengthen the connection between Protestantism and capitalism? (pp. 92-101). What happens to the Protestant Ethic over time? How does this affect capitalism? (pp. 119-125).

### **Week 10 Spring Break-, no class!**

### **Week 11 Max Weber- Subjective Understanding and Causal Explanation**

Max Weber. The Theory of Social and Economic Organization. New York: Free Press. Reading: pp. 87-120.

Questions to consider: What is explanatory understanding? (p. 95) What is adequacy at the level of meaning?(p. 98) What is a causal explanation? (p. 98) What is the relationship between adequacy at the level of meaning and causal explanation? Why do we need to understand subjective meaning in order to arrive at a correct causal explanation?

### **Week12: Max Weber-The Types of Action, Rationalization, and Legitimacy, and Bureaucracy**

Readings: The Theory of Social and Economic Organization, pp. 324-329; 341-345; 358-366The Sociology of Charismatic Authority. in From Max Weber, pp. 245-252. (will be distributed)

Readings: – Bureaucracy., in From Max Weber, pp. 196-199; 204-216; 221-235; 240-244. (will be distributed)

Questions to consider: What are the three types of authority? How is each legitimated?What is the source of moral authority in each? What are the characteristics of bureaucracy, and how do they lead to effectiveness? How is bureaucracy related to the legitimate forms of authority? How does Weber understand state bureaucracy and government?

\*May delete some readings so that students can finish them.

### **Week13: Wrapping Up and Theory Poster Party**