

**Instructor: Professor Manfred B. Steger**

**Meeting Time & Place: Monday, 2:30 - 5:00 pm; BUSAD C103**

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## **SOC 611: CLASSICAL SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY**

### **Fall 2017: MARX TO PARSONS**

#### ***Course Description and Structure***

Serving as a graduate-level survey of classical sociological theory from Karl Marx to Talcott Parsons, this course invites students to engage in the historical study of major sociological currents. We proceed from the premise that classical sociological theory is neither outdated nor “abstract theory” disconnected from the “real world.” The influential perspectives we will encounter in this class continue to provide us with an appreciation of concrete social problems confronting us today. In our own age, for example, global social dynamics such as surging inequality, increasing social insecurity, and the growth of religious violence have forced many contemporary social thinkers to consciously draw on ideas first articulated by such pivotal “classical” social thinkers as those discussed in this course. Indeed, sociological theory at its best is a critical, problem-oriented mode of inquiry that both explores and challenges established categories and traditions.

In this course, we will appraise the writings of first-rate classical social theorists by focusing especially on their interpretations of the role of two major forces in modern societies: economics and religion/ideology. While we always bring our own culturally and historically specific standpoints and sets of biases to our reading of sociological texts, the goal of this course lies in expanding our present intellectual horizon of understanding by encountering and attempting to understand theories and views that at first sight might seem strange, alien, outdated, and even hostile to our own perspective. If successful, our readings and class discussions will help us to both appreciate our distance from and our kinship with those classical social theorists whose perspectives may differ markedly from our own. Employing such an open-minded strategy of interpretation corresponds to the enduring human quest for meaning and knowledge, as well as the desire to develop comprehensive and policy-relevant social theories and interpretations.

Most of our time will be taken up analyzing and discussing primary texts. Here are the three crucial questions that frame this course:

- *What are the main perspectives and intellectual currents of classical sociological theory?*
- *What are the pioneering contributions of the “Big Three”—Marx, Weber, and Durkheim—to the development of modern social thought?*
- *What are some valuable insights to be gained from the study of classical sociological theory that are still relevant today?*

### **Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)**

The SLOs for this course are closely aligned with the Sociology Department's posted MA Program and PhD Program student learning outcomes (SSLOs). These can be found here: <http://www.sociology.hawaii.edu/documents/uhm-soc-ma-phd-slo.pdf>

The five particular student-learning outcomes of this course are:

- *To understand the main dimensions, dynamics, and issues of classical sociological theories and their historical evolution from 1800-1930s (MA SSLOs 1,2,5; PHD SSLOs 1,2,4)*
- *To gain the ability of contrasting and comparing key concepts and themes in major sociological theories and theorists, especially conflict theory, interpretative theory, and functionalist theory (MA SSLOs 1,2; PhD SSLOs 1,2,6);*
- *To acquire the knowledge and skill to analyze a broad spectrum of classical sociological theory across major themes and concepts and with an critical eye toward the workings of asymmetrical power relations in modernity (MA SSLOs 1,2; PhD SSLOs 1,2)*
- *To appreciate the role of ideational and material forces (especially economics and religion/ideology) in modern societies (MA SSLOs 1,2; PhD SSLOs 1,2)*
- *To produce written and oral work that reflects a critical understanding of various forms of knowledge and understanding in modern societies (MA SSLOs 1,2,5,6; PhD SSLOs 1,2,4,7).*

### **Readings: Primary Sources (required)**

The following paperback books are available for purchase in the U.H. bookstore. Feel free to get cheaper e-book versions of these books (if available), **but do not use different editions** since we'll need to use the same textual references in class.

1) Craig Calhoun, *Classical Sociological Theory*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Wiley-Blackwell, 2012). ISBN: 978-0470655672

2) Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Penguin Classics, 2002). ISBN: 978-0140439212

3) Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society* (The Free Press, 2014). ISBN: 978-1476749730.

4) Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (Rough Draft Printing, 2013). ISBN: 978-1603865517.

5) Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* (Beacon Press, 1971). ISBN: 978-0807005958.

6) Karl Marx, 'Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy' (1859): <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1859/critique-pol-economy/preface.htm>

7) Karl Marx on British Colonial Rule in India (1853):  
"The British Rule in India": <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1853/06/25.htm>

8) Karl Marx, "The Future Results of British Rule in India":  
<http://marxists.anu.edu.au/archive/marx/works/1853/07/22.htm>

9) V. I. Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1917) (selections Parts V, VI, VII, X):  
<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1916/imp-hsc/index.htm>

10) Emile Durkheim, "Marxism and Sociology: The Materialist Conception of History" (1897); and "Sociology and the Social Sciences" (1903) from Emile Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method*, edited by Steven Lukes (New York: The Free Press, 1982):  
<http://comparsociology.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Emile-Durkheim-Rules-of-Sociological-Method-1982.pdf>, pp. 167-74; 175-208.

11) Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912), Introduction and Chapter 1, pp. 1-44; Chapter 4, pp. 85-90:  
[https://monoskop.org/images/a/a2/Durkheim\\_Emile\\_The\\_Elementary\\_Forms\\_of\\_Religious\\_life\\_1995.pdf](https://monoskop.org/images/a/a2/Durkheim_Emile_The_Elementary_Forms_of_Religious_life_1995.pdf)

### ***Readings: Secondary Sources (recommended)***

1) Alex Callinicos, *Social Theory: A Historical Introduction*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Polity, 2007).

2) Randall Collins, *Four Sociological Traditions* (Oxford UP, 2004).

3) Raymond Aron, *Main Currents of Sociological Thought*, 2 vols. (Transaction, 1998).

4) Lewis A. Coser, *Masters of Sociological Thought*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Waveland Press, 2003).

5) George Ritzer, *The Blackwell Companion to Major Classical Social Theorists* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2003).

6) Anthony Giddens, *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory* (Cambridge UP, 1973).

7) Estelle B. Friedman, *The Essential Feminist Reader* (Modern Library Classics, 2007).

### ***Requirements and Assessment***

Let me encourage you to maintain an exploratory mind and create your own active learning environment—not solely interacting with me, but with each other as well. I EXPECT REGULAR STUDENT ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION. You must be willing to engage in class discussions. I will facilitate student discussions by creating a safe context that allows you to speak up freely. But I do not accept the equation of subjective experience or unreflective "common sense" with "truth." Be prepared to engage with the questions raised in this seminar, regardless of your own preferences. Most of all, I am interested in preparing you for independent research which requires a tolerant, reflective mind, best summarized by Immanuel Kant's dictum, *Sapere aude*—'Have the courage to use your own understanding!'

The course readings and assignments have been carefully selected to generate broad in-class discussions and materials for your oral presentations. Students are required to write two 10-page (double-spaced, font 12) interpretive papers that engage in a contrast and comparison of three sociological theorists (per each paper) on a self-selected key concept/theme/problem. Each student is required to seek approval of his/her theme *in advance* in an individual consultation with the instructor (during office hours).

**Paper 1: Marx/Engels-Weber-Durkheim (due November 13 in class);**

**Paper 2: Freud-Du Bois-Mead-Horkheimer/Marcuse-Parsons (due Monday, December 11, at 2 pm).**

No late papers will be accepted.

In your interpretative contrast & comparison papers, you should carefully and critically contrast and compare the respective sociological views of your three thinkers on your self-selected key concept/theme/problem. With as much sophistication as possible, you should indicate how it reveals something of significance about the social dynamics in question. You should engage in a careful textual analysis and cite appropriate, short textual passages according to ASA style: [http://lib.trinity.edu/research/citing/ASA Style Citations 4.pdf](http://lib.trinity.edu/research/citing/ASA_Style_Citations_4.pdf).

*No book reports or summaries please!* You are NOT expected to incorporate in your papers additional secondary sources (books, journal articles, and reviews). Concentrate on the required primary sources. Your papers represent reflective exercises in sociological analysis, interpretation, and critical thinking. In order to support your efforts, I am willing to comment on ONE outline or draft of your papers, but you must come to my office hour to receive my feedback in a face-to-face interaction (no online draft or outline discussions).

Finally, students will be responsible for serving as discussants (5 teams of 2 students). Students will: a) engage in an *immanent critique* of self-selected themes and textual passages from the readings; and b) lead the ensuing *discussion* involving the entire class (total 60 min). Student teams will be asked to sign up for a specific theorist at the latest by the third week of class. Assignments on particular theorists/weeks will be made on first-come, first-serve basis. In addition the assigned readings, your presentation may include additional supportive (brief) materials (for example, handouts, charts, and/or visual materials like PowerPoints, video clips, or other web-based materials).

Regular class attendance is required. Please inform the instructor *in advance* if you have to miss class for really important reasons!

### **A Note on Grades**

You must complete all assigned written and oral work in order to pass the seminar. Any student found guilty of plagiarism will fail the seminar. Your oral class presentation, engaged discussion, and participation will count for 20% and your essays for 40% each (total 80%). Thus, your seminar grade will reflect your presentation, participation, and the overall quality of your written work. Students who participate regularly during our class discussions will receive *extra*

*credit*—meaning that if you find yourself between two grades at the end of the semester, you will receive the *higher grade*.

Please be advised that *overparticipation* and the monopolization of class discussion at the expense of your peers may hurt the quality of the course, especially if such actions tend to derail the thematic agenda. I reserve the right to cut off discussion at any point in order keep us on track and help *all* students to engage with the relevant materials. A significant element in academic study is the ability to learn to listen to other voices. For the purposes of this course, you should interpret the grades you receive in the following terms:

*1) In-Class Presentations (Immanent Critique):*

An 'A' or 'A-' will only be given to presentations that are clearly superior in form as well as content. Typically, such immanent critiques of self-selected textual passages are coherent, well organized, and adhere to the given time frame. 'A' students show their critical and careful reading of the text(s) and generate genuine interest and excitement for their topic. They lead discussions effortlessly, distribute speaking time fairly, and stay focused on their theme.

*2) Interpretative Contrast & Comparison Papers:*

Much of the above pertains to your essays as well. In addition to treating the subject in a sophisticated and creative manner, 'A' papers exhibit elegant and clear prose. Such papers draw connections between non-obvious points; they are well organized and furnish adequate citations of primary and secondary sources without losing their own unique and distinct voice. To get an 'A', you must demonstrate your ability to go *beyond* the expected.

**Office Hours**

Monday, 9:30 – 11:00 am; and by appointment.

Students are encouraged to see me during office hours on a regular basis. Please clarify any difficult readings and/or other problems as soon as they arise. Don't wait until the last few weeks of the semester.

**Academic Conduct and Plagiarism**

Students are expected to abide by the university's policies regarding academic integrity. Actions that are academically dishonest include, but not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication of information, interfering with the education of another student. Violation of these policies will not be tolerated and will result in serious consequences including receiving no credit for the assignment, a failing grade, or, in serious cases, it might lead to suspension or expulsion. The university policy on academic dishonesty can be found at the UH Manoa Student Conduct Code Policies Section IV Proscribed Conduct. For detail information, please consult the following website:

[http://studentaffairs.manoa.hawaii.edu/policies/conduct\\_code/proscribed\\_conduct.php](http://studentaffairs.manoa.hawaii.edu/policies/conduct_code/proscribed_conduct.php)

**Disability Accommodation**

If you have a disability for which you need an accommodation, please make an appointment with the UH Manoa KOKUA Program (Disability Access Services) at (808) 956-7511, or via email [kokua@hawaii.edu](mailto:kokua@hawaii.edu). For more information please access its website: <http://www.hawaii.edu/kokua/>

**Subject to Change Statement**

This syllabus and schedule are provisional and are subject to change. It is at the discretion of the instructor to do so for the purpose of furthering the educational objectives of the course. While the instructor will notify students of any changes through class announcements and email communications, it is students' responsibility to check on the course syllabus periodically for changes.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

### **WEEK 1 (Aug 21): Introduction to the Course; General Overview of Enlightenment Precursors of Sociological Theory (Comte, Kant, Smith, Hegel).**

Read Kant and Smith in Calhoun, pp. 50-82.

**Readings for week 2:** Marx & Engels, "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844," "Wage Labor and Capital," and "Classes," in Calhoun, pp. 146-55; 182-92.

## **PART I: THE CLASSICAL SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES OF MARX, WEBER, AND DURKHEIM**

### **WEEK 2 (Aug 28): Marx & Engels: Conflict Theory: Alienation, Labor & Capital, Exploitation**

**Readings for week 4 & 5:** Marx and Engels, "The German Ideology," (Calhoun, pp. 142-45); Marx, "Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy" (required readings # 6); and *The Communist Manifesto* (Calhoun, pp. 156-71).

### **WEEK 3: (Sept 4): NO CLASS (LABOR DAY)**

### **WEEK 4 & 5 (Sept 11, 18): Marx & Engels: Historical Materialism, Dialectics, Revolution, Communism**

**Readings for week 6:** Marx on British Colonial Rule in India (required reading # 7 & 8); and Lenin, "Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism" (required reading # 9).

### **WEEK 6 (Sept 25): Marx & Engels: Colonialism & V. I. Lenin: Imperialism**

**Readings for week 7:** Calhoun, pp. 273-90.

**Student Presentation #1 on Marx (Colonialism) and Lenin (Imperialism)**

### **WEEK 7 (Oct 2): Weber: Interpretative Theory: Sociological Method, *Verstehen*, Basic Terms**

**Readings for week 8:** Calhoun, pp. 310-338.

### **WEEK 8 (Oct 9): Weber: Power, Domination, Bureaucracy**

**Readings for week 9:** Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (all).

### **WEEK 9 (Oct 16): Weber: Capitalism & Religion**

**Student Presentation #2 on Weber's *The Protestant Ethic***

**Readings for week 10:** Calhoun, pp. 201-219; "Marxism and Sociology: The Materialist Conception of History" (1897); and "Sociology and the Social Sciences" (1903) (required reading # 10).

**WEEK 10 (Oct 23): Durkheim: Functionalist Theory: Rules of Sociological Method, Sociology and the Social Sciences, Critique of Materialist Conception of History**

**Readings for week 11:** Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society* (all).

**WEEK 11 (Oct 30): Durkheim: The Division of Labor in Society**

**Student Presentation #3 on Durkheim's *The Division of Labor in Society***

**Readings for week 12:** Calhoun, pp. 255-64; Excerpts from Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (required reading #11).

**WEEK 12 (Nov 6): Durkheim: Sociology of Religion, Anomie**

**Readings for week 13:** Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*; Calhoun, pp. 361-95 (Simmel).

## **PART II: SELF & SOCIETY IN CLASSICAL SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY**

**WEEK 13 (Nov 13): Psychoanalytic Theory & Social Individuality: Freud & Simmel**

**Readings for week 14:** Calhoun, pp. 347-60 (Mead); 404-9 (Du Bois).

**Paper #1 due. No late papers will be accepted!**

**WEEK 14 (Nov 20): Double Consciousness & Symbolic Interactionism: Du Bois & Mead**

**Student Presentation #4 on Mead/Du Bois**

**Readings for week 15:** Calhoun, pp. 425-440 (Horkheimer); pp. 465-77 (Horkheimer & Adorno); Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* (all).

## **PART III: CRITICAL THEORY AND STRUCTURAL FUNCTIONALISM**

**WEEK 15 (Nov 27): Critical Theory: Horkheimer & Marcuse**

**Readings for week 16:** Calhoun, pp. 489-522 (Parsons)

**WEEK 16 (Dec 4): Structural Functionalism: Talcott Parsons**

**Student Presentation #5 on Parsons**

**Paper #2 due: Monday, December 11, at 2pm. No late essays will be accepted!**