Classical Sociological Theory
Seio Nakajima
Tuesday 4:30-7:00 p.m., BUSAD D102

Course Description:

This seminar has three major goals: (1) To familiarize students with the main themes, key questions, and central arguments developed in classical sociological theory by reading and discussing texts written by major classical sociological thinkers (e.g., Marx, Weber, Durkheim) (mastering of theory). (2) To consider how (even the seemingly abstract) classical sociological theories both inform and draw from real-world empirical phenomena (e.g., Weber’s *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* is, first and foremost, a very detailed archival work of empirical investigation; Durkheim’s *Suicide* is full of empirical statistical data) (mastering of application of theory to empirical research). (3) To prepare a short research proposal as a final paper on a subject of the student’s choosing by explicitly engaging with one or more classical sociological theorists we discuss in class (mastering of theoretically-informed methods and research design).

Notes:

- We do discuss “theory,” but the emphasis is “putting classical sociological theories to work” in concrete, empirical research settings. We will not talk theories in the abstract, but always deal with “theories in action.” Roughly 50% of time and effort will be spent for achieving goal (1) above, 30% for goal (2), and 20% for goal (3). Goal (3) will be achieved by writing a final paper that utilizes classical sociological theory in your own topic of interest.
- As the course title indicates, this seminar is a course on “classical sociological theory.” However, except for the already well-accepted “canons” of Marx, Weber, Durkheim, and perhaps Simmel, what to include in “classical sociological theory” varies. In selecting the readings in this course, I tried my best to find the greatest common denominator among different possibilities. In addition, I selected the readings in relation to another theory course offered in our department focusing on “contemporary sociological theory” (SOC 612), and tried to avoid overlaps between the two courses. For example, I could have assigned Irving Goffman in the course on contemporary sociological theory, but since SOC 612 focuses on more recent theorists other than Goffman, I decided to include him in this seminar.
- Students should be aware that this is an extremely reading and discussion-intensive course. Seminar participants are expected to attend every session and
be prepared for every class.

- In addition to the three major goals above, whenever appropriate, we will discuss miscellaneous technical “know-hows” of doing academic research. E.g., how to find relevant academic literature, use of citation software for organizing references, etc. What to discuss each semester largely depends on the needs and interests of the students taking the course.

- This is a required course for sociology graduate students, but I understand students may come from diverse disciplinary background, so I do not expect all participants to have graduate-level knowledge in sociological theory and methods. I will provide “mini-lectures” on sociology (and other topics) whenever necessary so every student has an equal opportunity to learn from and enjoy this seminar!

**Required Texts:**


- The readings marked with * are available at Laulima. The readings marked with @ are available at UH Library Electronic Resources or publicly available on the Internet.

**Course Requirements:** [Total = 100%]

1) **Active participation in seminar discussions.** [20%]

   Remember the aphorism: “Even to have expressed a false thought boldly and clearly is already to have gained a great deal.” (Ludwig Wittgenstein). So, don't be shy and speak up!

2) **Three short analytic papers on Marx, Weber, and Durkheim.** [60% = 20% x 3]

   6 double-spaced pages. More detailed instructions TBA.

3) **Final paper (a short research proposal).** [20%]

   9 double-spaced pages. A short research proposal on a topic of student’s own choosing in consultation with the instructor, explicitly engaging with one or more theorists we discuss in class. I want you to come up with research questions that derive from the theories we learn, and briefly specify how you would go about collecting and analyzing empirical data. More detailed instructions TBA.

**Class Schedule**

**Week 1: August 27: Introduction**

No required reading. Get acquainted.
Week 2: September 3: Why Is Classical Theory Classical?


[Approx. total reading pages: 64 pages]


“Introduction to Part I.” Pp. 21-29 in CST.

[61 pages]

Week 4: September 17: The Sociological Theory of Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859)

“Introduction to Part II.” Pp. 85-93 in CST.

[48 pages]

Week 5: September 24: The Sociological Theory of Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820-1895) I

“Introduction to Part III.” Pp. 135-141 in CST.

[44 pages]

**Week 6: October 1: The Sociological Theory of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels II**


[46 pages]

**Week 7: October 8: The Sociological Theory of Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) I**

**FIRST ANALYTIC PAPER (MARX) DUE AT LAULIMA DROP BOX BY 11:59 P.M.**

*“Introduction to Part IV.” Pp. 195-200 in CST.

[59 pages]

**Week 8: October 15: The Sociological Theory of Emile Durkheim II**


[45 pages]

*Introduction to Part V." Pp. 267-272 in CST.

[59 pages]

Week 10: October 29: The Sociological Theory of Max Weber II


[59 pages]


SECOND ANALYTIC PAPER (DURKHEIM) DUE AT LAULIMA DROP BOX BY 11:59 P.M.

"Introduction to Part VI." Pp. 341-346 in CST.
Freud, Sigmund. “Civilization and its Discontents” [1929] (from Civilization and its
Discontents). Pp. 396-403 in CST.

[78 pages]


**“Introduction to Part I.”** Pp. 27-34 in CST.

[57 pages]

Week 13: November 19: A Rediscovered Classic?: Gabriel Tarde (1843-1904)


[90 pages]

“Introduction to Part VII.” Pp. 421-424 in CST.

[66 pages]


THIRD ANALYTIC PAPER (WEBER) DUE AT LAULIMA DROP BOX BY 11:59 P.M.

“Introduction to Part III.” Pp. 489-494 in CST.

[54 pages]


[43 pages]

Exam Week: December 17

FINAL PAPER DUE AT LAULIMA DROP BOX BY 11:59 P.M.
Academic Honesty: “Acts of dishonesty, including but not limited to the following: 

a. Cheating, plagiarism, or other forms of academic dishonesty.
b. Furnishing false information to any UH official, faculty member, or office.
c. Forgery, alteration, or misuse of any UH document, record, or form of identification.

The term 'cheating' includes, but is not limited to: (1) use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations; (2) use of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments; (3) the acquisition, without permission, of tests or other academic material belonging to a member of the UH faculty, staff or student (4) engaging in any behavior specifically prohibited by a faculty member in the course syllabus or class discussion.

The term 'plagiarism' includes, but is not limited to, the use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgement. It also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.”

[E7.208 UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEMWIDE STUDENT CONDUCT CODE, July 2009]

Kokua Statement: “Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability is invited to contact me privately. I would be happy to work with you, and the KOKUA Program (Office for Students with Disabilities) to ensure reasonable accommodations in my course. KOKUA can be reached at (808) 956-7511 or (808) 956-7612 (voice/text) in room 013 of the Queen Lili’uokalani Center for Student Services.”

eCAFE: “The Department of Sociology is committed to a continual improvement of the quality of its course offerings. To allow for this to occur, your help, as the consumers of these courses is needed. You are there and only you can tell us about your educational experience in your classes. Towards the end of the semester, you will be informed that the eCAFE system is available to you to complete your course evaluation. We encourage you to login to http://www.hawaii.edu/ecafe/ to submit your evaluations.”