

Sociology 210: Classical Social Theory

Tue - 12:45 - Room 109 | Thu - 12:45 - Room 109

Instructor: Benjamin Quasinowski

Office: Room 234

Consultation Hours: Thu – 9:30-10:30&by appointment

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Course Description

The first part of this course will introduce you to three major thinkers of classical social theory (CST): Marx, Weber, and Durkheim. It is meant to deliver an overview of important and basic concepts and theories. In the second part of the course, you will see that CST is very much alive in current theoretical approaches. A guiding question throughout this course will be why and how CST is so important for understanding what is going on in contemporary sociological thinking. We will touch on issues like the micro-macro problem, the place for social critique, and questions raised by post-structuralism. All these issues can be seen as the heritage of CST.

Course Objectives

- You will understand the basic concepts of the CST of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim.
- You will be able to identify the heritage of CST concepts in more recent social theories.

Topics and Readings

During the first part of the course, our readings will be based on the book *Understanding Classical Sociology* by Hughes et al. After the fall break, we will look into contemporary approaches that build on and integrate concepts and approaches of CST. All readings will be provided to students electronically (see e-course).

Week I: August 22nd

Tue.: Course Overview & Expectations

Thu.: Introduction

Week II: August 29th

Tue.: Marx – biography; critique of Hegel's idealism

Thu.: Marx –critique of political economy

Week III: Sept. 5th

Tue.: Marx– partnership with Engels; materialist conception of history

Thu.: Marx – issues of interpretation

Week IV: Sept. 12th

Tue.: Marx – changes in the nature of capitalism; Marx's legacy

Thu.: Weber – early career; Weber and modern capitalism

Week V: Sept. 19th

Tue.: Weber – organization of society; capitalism, rationality and social change

Thu.: Weber – the methodological Weber; legacy

Week VI: Sept. 26th

Tue.: Durkheim – study of social action; reality of society

Thu.: Durkheim – unity of society; autonomy and constraint

Week VII: Oct. 3rd

Tue.: Durkheim – solidarity of society; thought and society

Thu.: Durkheim – diagnosis of society; aftermath

Week VIII: Oct. 10th

Tue.: Lecture & Review

Thu.: TBA

Fall Break October 17th – October 21st No Classes this Week!

Week X: Oct. 24th

Tue.: Sociological Marxism I

Thu.: Sociological Marxism II

Week XI: Oct. 31st

Tue.: Critical Social Theory I

Thu.: Critical Social Theory II

Week XII: Nov. 7th

Tue.: The Micro-Macro Problem I

Thu.: The Micro-Macro Problem II

Week XIII: Nov. 14th

Tue.: The Micro-Macro Problem III

Thu.: The Micro-Macro Problem IV

Week XIV: Nov. 21st

Tue.: Poststructuralism versus Classical Social Theory I
Thu.: Poststructuralism versus Classical Social Theory II

Week XV: Nov. 28th

Tue.: Lecture
Thu.: **Holiday – No Class**

Week XVI: Dec. 5th

Tue.: Presentation of Student Papers I
Thu.: Presentation of Student Papers II & Review

Assignments

Essay – Students will turn in one major essay (3,000 words) that deals with the reading material in-depth. Students will examine one of the main theoretical approaches of CST and trace its heritage and importance for current issues in social theory.

The essays should be composed according to a standard research format. Your choice of format is free, so long as you use the format clearly and consistently. Papers may be submitted to me either in hardcopy or electronically. I will return them to you with comments added. The essay will be due not later than the 6th of December. **Later papers will not be accepted.**

Presentations - Each student is expected to make one presentation based either a) on his/her essay or b) on a reading assignment. A presentation should last around 10 minutes, and should include both arguments and questions based on the respective topic of the essay or the reading assignment.

Evaluation

Grades will be determined according to attendance/participation, a presentation, and one essay.

Final grades will be determined as follows:

- 1 essay = 50%
- 1 presentation = 20%
- Attendance/participation = 30%

The grade scale for the course is:

100-93: A	76-73: C
92-90: -A	72-70: -C
89-87: +B	69-67: +D
86-83: B	66-63: D
80-82: -B	60-62: -D
79-77: +C	<60: F

Academic Honesty

The AUCA Code of Academic Honesty is written in the university handbook, and you are all at least formally aware of the meaning of cheating and plagiarism. If you have any questions, concerns, or are unsure about what to do in a particular case, please come to me for advice. I will be happy to help you work through any difficulties or uncertainties, particularly those regarding proper citation of sources.

Attendance

Attending class regularly is important, as an aspect of this course is participation in our intensive discussions. All absences will affect your attendance grade, but you are allowed a maximum of four absences over the course of the semester. Beyond this allowance, any absences without serious mitigating circumstances will result in a drop from the course. Students are neither to arrive to class late, nor leave early. Should a drop for any of the abovementioned reasons become necessary in the second half of the course, it will be a case of withdraw and failure, meaning that you will receive a grade of F for the course.

-Syllabus may be subject to changes-