

Sociology 475
Classical Sociological Theory

Bob Freeland
Email: freeland@ssc.wisc.edu

Office: 8103 Social Science Bldng
Office hours: TR, 4-5 or by appt.

This course is a basic introduction to the writings of Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx, and Max Weber. We will have two goals in reading and discussing this material during the course of the quarter. The first, not surprisingly, is to understand the theoretical arguments that these authors are making – the logic of their arguments, the underlying assumptions, the internal contradictions and difficulties the arguments encounter, and the ways in which the authors (sometimes) support their theoretical arguments with data. The second goal of the class is to use these readings as examples of how to construct theoretical arguments in sociology. Many courses in the social sciences and humanities ask students to use texts as vehicles for criticism – that is, to summarize what particular authors say about a topic and to critique or defend the assertions of those authors. The focus in this course will be on using the readings to begin to learn how to make theoretically coherent arguments and to begin to support those arguments with empirical data (or at least specify how this could be done).

Students are required to do all course readings in advance of the class, to attend and **participate in discussions and lectures**. **PLEASE BRING THE BOOK THAT WE ARE READING IN A GIVEN WEEK TO CLASS WITH YOU**. We will often pay close attention to passages in the text. Students are also required to complete three take-home assignments – one for each theorist. Grading is as follows:

Paper #1	30%
Paper #2	30%
Paper #3	30%
Attendance/Participation	10%

IMPORTANT NOTE ON PAPER ASSIGNMENTS: The papers should be considered take-home exams. **It is extremely unlikely that you will be able to do a good job on the papers if you do not attend class.** For all papers, I require that you turn in both: a) a hard copy (typed) of the paper; b) a computer file version of the paper. The latter can be emailed to me. **YOU WILL NOT RECEIVE CREDIT OR A GRADE FOR THESE ASSIGNMENTS UNTIL YOU TURN IN BOTH COPIES -- HARD COPY AND COMPUTER FILE!!!!**

Books for Course

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.

All readings listed in the syllabus are required and are available at the University bookstore unless otherwise noted. If you purchase them online or elsewhere, please be sure to get the right translation of the Elementary Forms.

Statements of Symbolic Compliance to Institutional Rules

Points A-E cover a number of rules and directives promulgated by the university and higher-level institutions that regulate the classroom. (Except for point E, which is entirely mine.) For a discussion of the origins and functions of such rules, see Meyer and Rowan (1977). Note that their discussion of decoupling is sometimes apposite.

A. Academic honesty. As with all courses at the University of Wisconsin, you are expected to follow the University's rules and regulations pertaining to academic honesty and integrity. The standards are outlined by the [Office of the Dean of Students](http://www.students.wisc.edu/doso/academic-integrity/) at <http://www.students.wisc.edu/doso/academic-integrity/>

According to UWS 14, academic misconduct is defined as:

- seeks to claim credit for the work or efforts of another without authorization or citation;
- uses unauthorized materials or fabricated data in any academic exercise;
- forges or falsifies academic documents or records;
- intentionally impedes or damages the academic work of others;
- engages in conduct aimed at making false representation of a student's academic performance;
- assists other students in any of these acts.

For a complete description of behaviors that violate the University's standards as well the disciplinary penalties and procedures, please see the Dean of Students [website](#). If you have questions about the rules for any of the assignments or exams, please ask your instructor or one of the TAs.

I take plagiarism and academic misconduct very seriously, and it is not uncommon for me to refer cases to the dean's office, so please don't do it!!

B. Accommodations. Please send the instructor an email by the end of the second week of the course if you are eligible for special arrangements or accommodations for testing, assignments, or other aspects of the course. This may be the case if English is your second language or you experience a physical or psychological condition that makes it difficult for you to complete assignments and/or exams without some modification of those tasks. Accommodations are provided for students who qualify for disability services through the [McBurney Center](#). Their website has detailed instructions about how to qualify: <http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu/>. Provide a copy of your accommodations request (VISA) to the instructor by the end of the second week of class. We try to reserve rooms and proctors by the third week in class, so we must know of all accommodations by then.

If you wish to request a scheduling accommodation for religious observances, send an email by the end of the second week of the course stating the specific date(s) for which you request accommodation; campus policy requires that religious observances be accommodated if you make a timely request early in the term. See the university's [web page](#) for details: <https://kb.wisc.edu/page.php?id=21698>

C. Departmental notice of grievance and appeal rights. The Department of Sociology regularly conducts student evaluations of all professors and teaching assistants near the end of the semester. Students who have more immediate concerns about this course should report them to the instructor or to the chair, 8128 Social Science (Pamela.oliver@wisc.edu).

D. Department learning objectives. Beyond the specific substantive and methodological content covered in this course, it has been designed to achieve the following instructional objectives designated as priorities by the Department of sociology:

- *Critically Evaluate Published Research.* Sociology graduates will be able to read and evaluate published research as it appears in academic journals and popular or policy publications.

- *Communicate Skillfully*: Sociology majors write papers that build arguments and assess evidence in a clear and effective manner.
- *Critical Thinking about Society and Social Processes*: Sociology graduates can look beyond the surface of issues to discover the "why" and "how" of social order and structure and consider the underlying social mechanisms that may be creating a situation, identify evidence that may adjudicate between alternate explanations for phenomena, and develop proposed policies or action plans in light of theory and data.
- *Prepare for Graduate School and the Job Market*: Students use their social research skills to identify opportunities for employment or further study, assess their qualifications for these opportunities, and identify strategies for gaining the necessary knowledge and experience to improve their qualifications. Students are encouraged to develop and maintain portfolios of their written work and educational experiences to aid them in preparing applications and to learn how to present their.
- This class also has the goal of teaching you to begin to articulate coherent and testable theoretical arguments, but that goal is the instructor's.

E. Electronics:

I do not allow audio or video taping of lectures or discussions without express, written permission. Under no circumstances are students allowed to post audio or video recordings on the internet or third party websites.

I. Emile Durkheim (1858-1917)

Thursday, September 3

Intro to Course and to Durkheim

Week of September 8-10 – Suicide

Emile Durkheim. Suicide. New York: Free Press,

Reading: pp. 145-151; 217-228; 152-160; 171-189; 197-202; 208-216

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)

Week of September 15-17 – Suicide

Emile Durkheim. Suicide. New York: Free Press,

Reading: pp. 241-290.

Questions to consider:

What is social regulation? What indices or measures does D use for regulation?

What is anomic suicide and what are its causes? (246, 258)

Why is women's suicide rate lower than men's? How is women's suicide rate related to their degree of social regulation?

What is the difference between anomie and egoism? Why do we often see both together?

Based on Durkheim's theory, would you expect suicide rates in the U.S. to be high or low compared to the rest of the world?

Week of September 22-24 – 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.

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)

Week of September 29 – October 1 – The Division of Labor

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?

Week of October 6-8 – 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.

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)

Week of October 13-15 – 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)

FIRST ASSIGNMENT HANDED OUT IN CLASS THURSDAY 10/15 DUE THURSDAY 10/22

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

Week of October 20-22 – 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)

Week of October 27-29 – The Division of Labor and Class

Readings: Marx-Engels Reader., **pp. 189-200** (German Ideology); **pp. 738-741** (Origin of the Family, Engels); **pp. 164-186** (German Ideology); **pp. 441-442** (excerpt from Capital, v 3.);

Questions to consider:

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)

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)

Week of November 3-5 – What Is Historical Materialism?

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)

Week of November 10-12 – Capitalism as a Mode of Production

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

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 surplus value and how is it produced? (p. 362)

What is relative surplus value and how is it produced? (p. 379 ff.)

SECOND ASSIGNMENT HANDED OUT IN CLASS 11/12, DUE 11/19

III. Max Weber (1864-1920)

Week of November 17-19 - 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).

November 24 – The Protestant Ethic/catch up

No readings assigned

November 26 – Thanksgiving Holiday, no class!

Week of December 1-3 – 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?

Week of December 8-10 – The Types of Action, Rationalization, and Legitimacy

Readings: The Theory of Social and Economic Organization, pp. 324-329; 341-345; 358-366

The Sociology of Charismatic Authority. in From Max Weber, pp. 245-252. (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?

December 15 – Bureaucracy

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

What are the characteristics of bureaucracy, and how do they lead to effectiveness?

How is bureaucracy related to the legitimate forms of authority?

THIRD PAPER ASSIGNMENT HANDED OUT IN CLASS 12/15 DUE 12/23 by 5 pm