

Development of Sociological Theory

Fall 2010

James 3604 Brooklyn College
Sociology 7101X
Wednesdays, 6:30-8:10

Prof George Cavalletto
office hours after class
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Syllabus

The object of study. Nineteenth century Europe witnessed a radical transformation in the fundamental structures of social organization, a revolution that set in place modern capitalist society. We will grapple with the theoretical ideas of three major European thinkers who responded to this transformation. In particular, we will focus on ideas found in their writings that continue to be of use today, ideas that should increase our understanding of our world and of ourselves as social beings.

By the end of this course, students should be familiar with crucial concepts that animate classical social theory. They should be able to identify aspects of this theory that are applicable to a variety of arenas of contemporary social life. They should be able to make connections between this theory, research, and actual social behaviors, and to relate these approaches to an array of personal and social policy considerations.

The method of study. A principal aim of the course is training students to read critically theoretical texts of social science and to write about and discuss issues related to these readings intelligently. Therefore, *students are required to carefully read each class's texts prior to class and to complete most of the written homework assignments concerning these readings.*

The success of our joint discussion and thinking about these texts depends on readings being completed in advance of the class meeting. Even if a student plans not to do a homework assignment on a specific reading, the student is nonetheless required to complete the reading prior to class and to do so with the homework question in mind, making sure that this question is answered in the text's margins or at least in the student's mind.

Term grade will be based upon on the following:

- ***Attendance*** — class attendance is critical and required. More than two unexcused absences will cause your grade to be lowered by one notch (A to A-, A- to B+, B+ to B).
- ***Homework assignments*** — **50% of grade.** Students are encouraged to turn in each week's homework assignment. But students are required to turn in only *eight* of the twelve weekly assignments. Students who turn in more than the eight required homeworks will receive *extra credit*. *No late homeworks will be accepted!*
- ***Final examination*** — **50% of grade.**
- ***Class participation*** — Class participation is graded. You can *add up to 4 extra points* to your final grade by intelligent class participation and discussion pertinent to the readings and the issues raised by the readings. Disruptive, disrespectful class behavior will result in a student's course grade being lowered.

If your homework assignments are done well, they should prove very helpful in preparing for the final examination, as the final will focus on the same issues addressed by the assignments.

REQUIRED TEXTS

BOOK: *The Penguin Dictionary of Sociology* – copies at bookstore.

COURSE PACKETS: *All assigned readings will be passed out in class in the form of course packets*

Reading Assignments

Part I: Historical Context—The Emergence of Modern Capitalist Society

Sept 1: Introduction and overview

Sept 15: Engels—From Pre-Industrial Rural Society To Industrial Urban Society

- Friedrich Engels, *The Conditions of the Working Class in England in 1844*

Part II: Karl Marx: Dynamics of Capitalist Society

Sept 22: Marx—Early Philosophical & Political Writings

- Marx, “Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*”
- Early Marx’s Philosophical Writings:
 - Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*
 - “Notes of 1844: Free Human production,”
 - “Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*”
- Early Marx’s Political Writings:
 - Manifesto of the Communist Party*
 - The Poverty of Philosophy*

Sept 29: Marx, *Capital*—Commodities

- Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, Part I

Oct 6: Marx, *Capital*—Labor and Capital

- Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, Parts II and III

Oct 13: Marx, *Capital*—The Factory, Surplus Population, and Primitive Accumulation

- Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, Parts IV, VII, and VIII

Part III: Max Weber: Capitalism, the Non-Rational & Modern Rationalization

Oct 20: Weber—Paradoxical Origins of the Disenchanted Rationalization of the Modern World

- Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*

Oct 27: Weber—What is Sociology?

- Weber, *Economy and Society*, Chapter 1, “Basic Sociological Terms”

Nov 3: Weber—Class and Status, Capitalism and Socialism

- Weber, *Economy and Society*:
 - “Status Groups and Classes”
 - “The Distribution of Power within the Political Community: Class, Status and Party”
 - “Sociological Categories of Economic Action”
- Weber, *General Economic History*:
 - “The Meaning and Presupposition of Modern Capitalism”
 - “The Development of Industrial Technique”
 - “The Evolution of the Capitalistic Spirit”
- Weber, “Socialism”

Nov 10: Weber—Politics and the Social Structures of Domination; Religion and the Worldly Life Orders

- Weber, “Politics as a Vocation”
- Weber, *Economy and Society*:
 - “The Types of Legitimate Domination”
 - “Bureaucracy”
- Weber, “Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions”

Part IV: Emile Durkheim: Structures of Social Relatedness

Nov 17: Durkheim—What is Sociology?

- Emile Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method*
- Emile Durkheim, “Individual and Collective Representations”

Nov 24: Durkheim—The Division Of Labor

- Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*

Dec 1: Durkheim—Suicide, Excessive Individualism and Anomie

- Durkheim, *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*

Dec 8: review for final

Dec 15: final