

INTRODUCTION TO CLASSICAL SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

Term 1, Fall 2020

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Course Description

Introduction to Classical Sociological Theory provides an overview of the historical developments in sociological theory from the mid-19th century up to the early-20th century. This class should be taken before Sociology 2LL3, Introduction to Contemporary Sociological Theory.

We begin the course by examining why classical theory is considered “classical.” Through close readings of primary texts, we investigate the creation of a “canon” of sociological thought, examining the intellectual climate and key figures in the development of sociology as a discipline. The course covers extensively the lives and theories of Marx, Durkheim, and Weber—who are recognized as classical sociological theorists. We also delve into the theories of other thinkers—specifically, Gilman, Du Bois, and Simmel—whose place in classical sociological theory has been more contested. We will consider how gender and race shaped who is included and excluded as classical theorists. My aim is to offer you tools to critically think about the discourses that define classical social theory, and to develop your own perspective on how to study society and “the social.”

Course Objectives

By the end of the course students should be able to:

- read original classical social theory texts closely and critically
- critically analyze theoretical arguments and claims in classical sociology.
- recognize how race and gender have shaped classical social theory
- explain key concepts in classical sociological theory
- apply theoretical concepts to develop an analysis of social theories

Required Materials and Texts

- All journal articles and chapters assigned for this course are linked in the module and can be accessed via McMaster’s library system. For more information about locating journal articles, go to: https://library.mcmaster.ca/instruction/social-science-inquiry/finding-articles/story_html5.html

Course Evaluation – Overview

1. Class participation activities – 25%
2. Writing assignment – 25%
3. Mid-term exam – 20%
4. Final exam – 30%

Course Evaluation – Details

Class participation activities – (25%)

Class participation activities include five quizzes and five group writing exercises on a wiki. The purpose of the quizzes is to immediately assess your knowledge of the course topics. Each quiz is worth 2% (total 10%). You will also collaborate in small groups to contribute to a class-wide “wiki” site using the McMaster Wiki platform. These five exercises will provide you with an opportunity to think more deeply about what you are learning in the course while also strengthening your teamwork skills. Each wiki entry is worth 3% (total 15%).

Writing assignment (25%), due December 6 at 11:59pm

You will write an 8-page paper that applies a classical sociological theory to a current event or social issue of your choice. You may choose among any of the theorists covered in the course. The paper will contain two sections. The first half of the paper will discuss the major points of the theory that you have chosen. In the second half of the paper, you will apply the theory to a contemporary issue or event. One approach is to demonstrate that the theory is still relevant today. Another is to challenge the theorist’s ideas by showing how the event or social phenomena you are describing do not align with the theorist’s projections. It is also possible to combine the two approaches. Keep in mind that the quality of your writing will be an important component of your grade. Make sure to review the instructions for the assignment on Avenue.

Midterm exam (20%)

The mid-term exam is worth 20% of your total course grade. It will consist of 30 multiple-choice questions and one short-answer essay. You will complete the exam online using the Avenue to Learn “Quizzes” tool that will be made available for a specific, time-limited period as indicated in the Detailed Course Schedule. You must access and complete the test during this designated period. There will be no additional times at which it can be written.

Final exam (30%)

The final exam is worth 30% of your total course grade. It will consist of 40 multiple-choice questions and two short-answer essays. You will complete the exam online using the Avenue to Learn “Quizzes” tool. The final exam will take place during the exam period, and the exact date will be announced when available. You must access

and complete the exam during this designated period. There will be no additional times at which it can be written.

Extra Credit Discussion Sessions with the Professor (up to 2 points)

I will hold four one-hour-long discussion sessions in which we will review theoretical concepts and discuss the original texts assigned in the previous weeks. Participation in each of these discussion sessions will add .5 points for a possible total of 2 points towards the student's final grade. Come prepared to ask or text at least one question. Sessions will be held on **Thursdays at 5:30pm** on **Sept. 24, Oct. 22, Nov. 19, and Dec. 3**. All sessions will be held on Zoom. Links are provided in the course schedule below. You can get a free Zoom account at <https://www.mcmaster.ca/uts/zoom/index.html>.

Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings

Module 1: What Is Classical Social Theory: Sept 8 – 11

module learning outcomes

- understand the structure of course, expectations, and assignments,
- explain the importance of social theory to understanding social science,
- describe the historical background of sociological theory,
- summarize debates over the “founding fathers,” and
- appreciate the importance of reading and interpreting original texts.

Readings: Articles and videos linked in the module

Notes: Complete first activity that asks you to introduce yourself and share your thoughts on the meaning of Auguste Comte's writing on positive science.

Module 2: On the Origins of Sociological Theory: Sept 14 – 18

module learning outcomes

- explain what is meant by the "canon" and analyze it as a concept,
- describe the global context in which social theory arose,
- identify the structures of gender and race in the making of the canon,
- summarize debates over the “founding fathers,” and
- apply a different model for understanding classical sociological theory.

Readings: Articles and videos linked in the module

Notes: Complete the group writing exercise worth 3% of your grade.

Module 3: Karl Marx – Part I: Sept 21 – 25

module learning outcomes

- situate Marx in social context and identify the debates over his inclusion in the canon.
- identify the elements of the dialectic and describe how they relate to Marx's

theoretical perspective on the historical basis of inequality.

- explain the relationship between capitalism and alienation, and
- define the key concepts of Marxist theory.

Readings: Articles and videos linked in the module

Notes: Take quiz #1 worth 2% of your grade.

Extra credit discussion on Thursday, **Sept 24 at 5:30pm**

Zoom link: <https://mcmaster.zoom.us/j/97719052940>

Module 4: Karl Marx – Part 2: Sept 28 – Oct 2

module learning outcomes

- identify the importance of social change in Marx's ideas,
- explain Marx's conceptualization of class,
- describe how Marx envisioned the communist revolution, and
- apply Marx to current contexts.

Readings: Articles and videos linked in the module

Notes: Complete the group writing exercise worth 3% of your grade.

Module 5: Charlotte Perkins Gilman: Oct 5 – 9

module learning outcomes

- identify the intersections of early sociological theory and feminism.
- explain how Marx's ideas can apply to women.
- outline how socialization shapes women's inferior status, and
- define patriarchy and explain how it structures women's place in society.

Readings: Articles and videos linked in the module

Notes: Take quiz #2 worth 2% of your grade.

Fall Break: No course requirements: Oct 12 – 16

Module 6: Émile Durkheim – Part 1: Oct 19 – 23

module learning outcomes

- situate Durkheim in the canon and recognize his role in the growth of sociology,
- describe the elements of social solidarity (mechanic and organic) and its importance to modern societies,
- define collective consciousness and apply it to current examples, and
- outline how the division of labor can lead to anomie.

Readings: Articles linked in the module

Notes: Take quiz #3 worth 2% of your grade.

Extra credit discussion on Thursday, **Oct 22 at 5:30pm**

Zoom link: <https://mcmaster.zoom.us/j/91489965085>

Midterm exam for the week of Oct 26 – 30: The exam will take place on October 28. See Detailed Course Schedule for details.

Module 7: Émile Durkheim – Part 2: Nov 2 – 6

module learning outcomes

- explain the concept of social facts and how they relate to the discipline of sociology.
- outline the four types of suicide and describe how these were studied by Durkheim.
- define the concepts of sacred and profane, totemism, and collective effervescence as nonmaterial social facts.

Readings: Articles and videos linked in the module

Notes: Complete the group writing exercise worth 3% of your grade.

Module 8: W.E.B. Du Bois: Nov 9 – 13

module learning outcomes

- outline the history of race in North America and describe how it shaped Du Bois's own legacy.
- explain how the concepts of the Veil and double consciousness relate to understandings of race.
- define white supremacy and identify its place in the sociological discipline, and
- explain how scientific racism shaped approaches to research and made it possible to marginalize the scholarship of Du Bois.

Readings: Articles and videos linked in the module

Notes: Complete the group writing exercise worth 3% of your grade.

Module 9: Max Weber – Part I: Nov 16 – 20

module learning outcomes

- situate Weber in the context of the canon and identify the reasons that Marianne, his wife, is not included,
- outline the importance of Verstehen for the study of social life,
- discuss the importance of ideas in the material world, and
- describe the processes of rationalization and how this applies to contemporary organizations.

Readings: Articles linked in the module

Notes: Take quiz #4 worth 2% of your grade.

Extra credit discussion on Thursday, **Nov 19 at 5:30pm**

Zoom link: <https://mcmaster.zoom.us/j/92419983091>

Module 10: Max Weber – Part II: Nov 23 – 27

module learning outcomes

- explain how Weber and Marx differ in their approach to theorizing power relations,
- define Weber's concepts of economic class, status groups, and political parties, and apply them to the social world,
- describe Weber's concept of authority and its relationship to domination, and
- explain how Weber's ideas on race changed based on Du Bois's theoretical contributions.

Readings: Articles linked in the module

Notes: Complete the group writing exercise worth 3% of your grade.

Module 11: Georg Simmel: Nov 30 – Dec 4

module learning outcomes

- explain why Simmel was seen as an outsider to sociology,
- describe Simmel's theory of the relationship between individual action and structure,
- identify different social types and the importance of social relations that configure "the stranger," and
- identify and analyze contemporary examples of "the stranger."

Readings: Articles linked in the module

Notes: Take quiz #5 worth 2% of your grade.

Extra credit discussion on Thursday, **Dec 3 at 5:30pm**

Zoom link: <https://mcmaster.zoom.us/j/93135861400>

Writing assignment due Dec 6 at 11:59pm

Course Policies

Submission of Assignments

All group wiki exercises will be posted to a course-specific wiki site that uses the McMaster Wiki platform. For instructions, see Wiki Group Exercises on Avenue to Learn.

You will need to submit your writing assignment to the Avenue to Learn submission folder. All submissions will also be checked for plagiarism using Turnitin.com.

To submit your assignment:

1. Click **Assessments** (top navigation bar)
2. Select **Assignments**
3. Click the **Assignment** folder
4. Upload the file to submit your assignment for grading.

Review of Marks

Occasionally, students may disagree with the marks they receive. If this occurs, you may request a review of a mark by writing a brief (1 page) memo that describes in detail the nature of the perceived marking error. Submit this memo to me via email. You may submit requests for review no sooner than 48 hours and no later than 2 weeks after the assignments are returned. Please note that when a mark is reviewed the new mark may be lower than the original.

Late Assignments

The McMaster Student Absence Form (<http://www.mcmaster.ca/msaf/>) is a self-reporting tool for Undergraduate Students to report absences that last up to 3 days and provides the ability to request accommodation for any missed academic work. You may submit a maximum of 1 Academic Work Missed request per term. It is YOUR responsibility to follow up with your instructor immediately regarding the nature of the accommodation. If you are absent more than 3 days, exceed 1 request per term, or are absent for a reason other than medical, you MUST visit your Associate Dean's Office (Faculty Office). You may be required to provide supporting documentation. This form should be filled out when you are about to return to class after your absence. In the absence of a vetted excuse, late assignments will be marked down 5 percentage points for each day late.

Absences, Missed Work, Illness

In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar "Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work".

Avenue to Learn

In this course we will be using Avenue to Learn. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

Turnitin.com

In this course we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. Students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via Avenue to Learn (A2L) plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty. Students who do not wish to submit their work through A2L and/or Turnitin.com must still submit an electronic and/or hardcopy to the instructor. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com or A2L. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). For more information please refer to the [Turnitin.com Policy](#).

University Policies

Academic Integrity Statement

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty

- Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- Improper collaboration in group work.
- Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Authenticity/Plagiarism Detection

Some courses may use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via an online learning platform (e.g. A2L, etc.) using plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students who do not wish their work to be submitted through the plagiarism detection software must inform the Instructor before the assignment is due. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to the plagiarism detection software. **All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld** (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). For more details about McMaster's use of Turnitin.com please go to www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

Courses with an Online Element

Some courses may use on-line elements (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn (A2L), LearnLink, web pages, capa, Moodle, ThinkingCap, etc.). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a course using these elements, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in a course that uses on-line elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services](#) (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or sas@mcmaster.ca to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University's [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) policy.

Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous or Spiritual Observances (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the RISO policy. Students requiring a [RISO](#) accommodation should submit their request to their Faculty Office normally within 10 working days of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

Conduct Expectations

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the [Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) (the "Code"). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, whether in person or online.

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students' access to these platforms.

Copyright and Recording

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, including lectures by University instructors

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student's own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

Course Modification

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

Extreme Circumstances

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.

Land Acknowledgement Statement

McMaster University recognizes and acknowledges that it is located on the traditional territories of the Mississauga and Haudenosaunee nations, and within the lands protected by the “Dish With One Spoon” Wampum agreement.

Grades

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

MARK	GRADE
90-100	A+
85-89	A
80-84	A-
77-79	B+
73-76	B
70-72	B-
67-69	C+
63-66	C
60-62	C-
57-59	D+
53-56	D
50-52	D-
0-49	F