

**University of Toronto | Department of Sociology**  
**Fall 2025**  
**SOC201H1F (LEC5101): Classical Sociological Theory**

Class meets Wednesdays, 5:10 pm-7pm  
Location: See ACORN

Tutorials: Thursdays 3-4pm / 4pm-5pm / 5pm-6pm / 6pm-7pm – see ACORN for locations

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Instructor: Hammad Khan  
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Office hours: Fridays 3-5pm (and by appointment)

Teaching Assistants: TBA  
TA Email: Can be found on quercus  
TA Office Hours: Can be found on quercus

### Course Description

What does *perspective* really mean, and how do we use it to understand the world around us? This course offers a critical and creative introduction to classical sociological theory, anchored in the writings of Marx, Durkheim, Weber, and Simmel. We explore how these thinkers responded to the upheavals of their time including industrialization, revolution, slavery, colonialism, and the radical transformation of social life. But we also ask: *Whose modernity? And from which point of view?*

To widen the frame, we also spend dedicated time with Mary Wollstonecraft, Simone de Beauvoir, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman to interrogate the gendered exclusions of Enlightenment thought, and with W.E.B. Du Bois and Frantz Fanon to confront how race, colonialism, and epistemic violence have shaped (and often erased from) the classical canon. Together, we examine key sociological concepts like alienation, rationalization, structure and agency, social facts, and the social construction of race and gender, and trace how these concepts continue to inform contemporary debates about inequality and global crises.

### Course Goals

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Critically examine classical sociological theory as a response to the social, political, and economic transformations of modernity, including colonialism, slavery, revolution, and industrial capitalism.
2. Interrogate the foundational concepts of classical sociology within their historical contexts and contemporary relevance.
3. Expand the boundaries of the “classical canon” by engaging with gendered and racialized critiques from thinkers often excluded from mainstream sociological theory.

4. Exercise the analytical and interpretive skills necessary to connect sociological theory with ongoing global challenges related to inequality, identity, and social transformation.
5. Develop the ability to apply classical sociological theory to contemporary structures of power and exclusion.
6. Critique the ongoing legacies and current manifestations of global capitalism, and to examine how classical theory helps us understand, and challenge, the forms of domination, discipline, and dispossession it continues to produce.

*Prerequisite:*

The prerequisite to take SOC201 is SOC100H1+ SOC150H1. Students without the prerequisite will be removed without notice.

*IMPORTANT: Lectures and course materials prepared by the instructor are considered by the University to be an instructor's intellectual property covered by the Copyright Act, RSC 1985, c C-42. Course materials such as PowerPoint slides are made available to you for your own study purposes. These materials cannot be shared outside of the class or "published" in any way. Posting slides to other websites without the express permission of the instructor will constitute copyright infringement.*

Assessment Details

<b>Evaluation Component</b>	<b>Due Date</b>	<b>Weight</b>
Participation	Ongoing	10%
In-Class Test 1	October 1, 2025	25%
Response Paper	October 15, 2025	15%
Research Paper	November 12, 2025	25%
In-Class Final Test	November 26, 2025	25%

***Participation: 10%***

Students are required to attend all lectures and tutorial sessions. Attendance will be taken during all tutorials. Participation will be assessed holistically across tutorials and lectures and through general engagement in the course.

***In-Class Test 1: 25%***

***October 1, 2025***

This test contains two sections. Section A will require students to answer two essay questions. Students will have some options in picking two to answer from provided questions. Section B will ask students to provide brief definitions of important concepts. Once again, students will have some options here as well.

***Response Paper: 15%***

***Due October 15, 2025***

For the response paper, students are asked to pick one piece of popular media or literature they like and critique it through a Marxian lens. This can be a TV show, a movie, a poem, a novel, or any relevant materials. This should involve providing a detailed summary and context for the piece of media, especially those elements that you will be including in your analysis. You should then discuss the relevant concepts from Marx you will be using to draw your critique and analysis. Irrespective of your approach, you should include a discussion of Marx's materialist conception of history, class conflict, wealth inequity, globalizing tendency of capitalism, and alienation. Finally, the final portion of your discussion should include limitations of a Marxian framework in analysis, and how it can be improved or progressed. More details on the assignment will be provided through quercus.

*NOTE: You will have to clear your choice with your grading TA*

***Research Paper: 25%***

**Due November 12, 2025**

This research paper assignment invites you to exercise your theoretical muscles through both critical analysis and application. It is designed to help you think across the classical theorists you've encountered in this course and explore how their ideas remain relevant in analyzing the contemporary social world.

Assignment Overview

Your paper will be structured in three main sections:

Part I: Theoretical Critique

Select one core theorist — either Max Weber, Émile Durkheim, or Georg Simmel — and analyze their framework in depth. If you wish, you may also choose a different classical theorist (such as Du Bois, Fanon, Wollstonecraft, de Beauvoir or Perkins Gilman) not yet covered in class, provided you can engage their work meaningfully and academically.

Use this theorist's ideas to critique, extend, or offer an alternative to Karl Marx's broader paradigm. Focus on the concepts, assumptions, and theoretical logics that define both frameworks. What tensions, contradictions, or complementarities exist between them?

Part II: Integrating Frameworks

Build on your analysis to develop an integrated framework that draws from both Marx and your chosen theorist. This section should demonstrate how combining their insights leads to a more flexible or critical sociological model for understanding society. Rather than choosing one side, explore how their interaction deepens your conceptual analysis.

Part III: Application to a Real-World Event

Apply your integrated framework to a specific real-world event or social phenomenon. This event may be historical or contemporary, and can involve micro-level (individual or interpersonal), meso-level (organizational or institutional), or macro-level (structural or global) analysis.

You must support your analysis with two external sources, which must be:

- Academic (peer-reviewed journals)
- Or Governmental (e.g., Stats Canada, U.S. Census, WHO, etc.)

### Examples of Applicable Events or Phenomena

Here are some examples of topics you might consider. You can pick your own topic not in this list:

In a Canadian Context:

- The housing affordability crisis in Toronto or Vancouver
- The experience of international students and the rise of diploma mills
- The gig economy and food delivery apps like UberEats and SkipTheDishes
- The popularity (and policing) of TikTok activism or “slacktivism”
- Campus protests around Palestine, tuition hikes, or climate justice

In the U.S. or Global Context:

- Anti-Asian hate during COVID-19 and its racialized roots
- Rise of the Manosphere and its links to the global economy
- Rise of white nationalism sentiments and the ascent of Trumpian politics
- The aesthetics and politics of “quiet quitting” or workplace burnout
- Climate anxiety and how it affects Gen Z’s worldview

### Formatting & Guidelines

- Maximum 2000 words (excluding references)
- Use ASA citation style
- While a formal thesis statement is not required, your argument should still be coherent, logically structured, and well-supported
- You are not expected to “solve” the issue. Instead, focus on theoretical interpretation and sociological insight

### ***In-Class Final Test: 25%***

**November 26, 2025**

Same format as the first test. This exam covers only the second half of the course, but prior knowledge and cumulative understanding will be useful.

### *Grading Criteria/ ‘Rubric’*

The evaluation for this course is based on the overall quality of the answers and the research paper as reflected in research, analytical and writing skills. The research paper should be written in a formal style and should not have any abbreviations, slangs, emoticons or digital language in the main text. You must carefully proofread your paper for typographical errors before submitting the paper. You will lose marks for typographical errors, the use of abbreviations in the main text and for spelling mistakes. The overall grading criteria for the research paper and the test answers are listed below. These are broad guidelines and the actual grade will depend on the specificities of particular papers/tests.

A: Superior comprehension of the course readings and lectures, combined with outstanding critical, analytical and writing skills

B. Comprehension of the course readings and lectures, some evidence of critical analytical skills, weak writing skills

C. Comprehension of course readings and lectures, weak analytical and writing skills

D. Some comprehension of course readings and lectures, no critical engagement with the substance of the course and poor writing skills.

F. Little evidence of meaningful engagement with the course material, weak analytical skills, poor writing skills; outstanding writing skills but no engagement with the course material.

### Late Assignments

- In order not to be considered late, assignments must be submitted by the due date listed on the syllabus. *You are expected to keep a back-up copy of your assignment in case it is lost.*
- Late assignments must be submitted to the instructor via Quercus ***and*** through email.
- Late assignments for reasons that are within your control will be penalized 10% marks per day (including weekends). The penalty will run from the day the assignment was due until the day it is submitted to the instructor via Quercus, and through email.
- Assignments that are more than 3 days late for reasons within your control will not be accepted.
- The penalty period includes weekends and holidays.

### Missed deadlines and tests:

Missed deadlines and tests: Students who miss a paper deadline or a test will receive a mark of zero for that paper or test unless the reason is a circumstance beyond their control. Within three

days of missing a paper deadline or test, students must send the instructor a request for consideration. Students must document their request with one of the following:

- Absence declaration via ACORN (can only be used once during the semester)
- U of T Verification of Illness or Injury Form
- College Registrar's letter (e.g., in case of personal/family crisis or emergency)
- Letter of Academic Accommodation from Accessibility Services

Students who miss the test or are late in submitting an assignment for other reasons, such as family or other personal reasons, should request their College Registrar to email the instructor.

## Student Responsibilities and Expectations

Students are expected to participate actively by 1) completing assigned readings, 2) actively participating in class discussions (including lectures and tutorials), and 3) keeping up to date on course information posted on quercus. In all activities, students are to be respectful of fellow classmates and teaching staff.

### **Email Policy:**

I will respond to your email within two business days (48 hours, except weekends and holidays). Emails that do not follow the following guidelines will not receive a response:

Your use of an official U of T address is required. Please include the course code (e.g. SOC201) in the subject line and your full name and student number in your message. Please do not send a repeat email (e.g., "did you get my email?"). In general, please treat emails as you would any other professional communication. You should be respectful in the way you address the instructor and the TA. Email is most suitable for questions that are clear, concise, and easily answerable; if you are confused about the course material or need to discuss a concept, please attend office hours or make an appointment with a member of the teaching team instead. Please read the syllabus carefully before asking a general question about the course. Questions pertaining to details that can be answered through the syllabus will also not be answered.

### **Teaching Assistant's Help:**

Your T.A.(s) will hold scheduled online office hours and respond to your emails within 48 hours. Please be thoughtful in your use of emails. Use it only for questions that are brief and specific. To reiterate, questions that have been addressed in the syllabus will not be answered. Thus, please be sure to check the course outline to see if an answer is already available before sending a question by email.

*Emails should not be viewed as an alternative to doing the assigned reading or attending lectures and tutorials*

### **Turnitin:**

Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers

will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service is described on the Turnitin.com web site.

Assignments not submitted through Turnitin will receive a grade of zero (0 %), unless a student instead provides, along with their position paper, sufficient secondary material (e.g., reading notes, outlines of the paper, rough drafts of the final draft, etc.) to establish that the paper they submit is truly their own. The alternative (not submitting via Turnitin) is in place because, strictly speaking, using Turnitin is voluntary for students at the University of Toronto.

### Accessibility Statement

The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations or have any accessibility concerns, please visit <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/as> as soon as possible.

### Textbook and Other Readings

**John Bratton and David Denham, *Capitalism and Classical Social Theory*, University of Toronto Press, 2014, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition.**

*(Note: The 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of this textbook is available online through UofT's library website. This is not the most recent edition of this text. Since most of the theory content is similar, the decision was made to minimize student costs for the class to ensure more equity and accessibility. You are welcome to refer to the more recent 4<sup>th</sup> Edition for corresponding readings if you choose. That version includes more contemporary examples and more context around the COVID-19 Pandemic. Either one of these versions are acceptable)*

Library link:

[https://librarysearch.library.utoronto.ca/discovery/fulldisplay?docid=alma991106964002606196&context=L&vid=01UTORONTO\\_INST:UTORONTO&lang=en&search\\_scope=UTL\\_AND\\_CI&adaptor=Local%20Search%20Engine&tab=Everything&query=any,contains,Capitalism%20and%20classical%20social%20theory](https://librarysearch.library.utoronto.ca/discovery/fulldisplay?docid=alma991106964002606196&context=L&vid=01UTORONTO_INST:UTORONTO&lang=en&search_scope=UTL_AND_CI&adaptor=Local%20Search%20Engine&tab=Everything&query=any,contains,Capitalism%20and%20classical%20social%20theory)

**In addition to the main textbook, you are required to finish several readings from the primary texts of theorists discussed in this course. These readings, and relevant sections, will be provided through quercus as links.**

### Course Schedule

Students are expected to complete all required readings prior to each lecture, and to have finished necessary preparations before each tutorial section

*Note: Every attempt will be made to follow this schedule, but it is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.*

September 3  
Foundations: Core Concepts, The Enlightenment, and Sociological Theory

Readings:

Bratton and Denham: Chapters 1-3

Immanuel Kant: "What is the Enlightenment"

<https://www.columbia.edu/acis/ets/CCREAD/etscc/kant.html>

Supplementary:

Welton, Michael: "Sorrow, Shame and Rage: the Wretched Legacy of Canada's Residential Schools", Counterpunch, June 28, 2021

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2021/06/28/sorrow-shame-and-rage/>

September 10  
Marxian Theoretical Foundations

Readings:

Bratton and Denham: Chapters 4 and 5

Marx and Engels: The German Ideology

[https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Marx\\_The\\_German\\_Ideology.pdf](https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Marx_The_German_Ideology.pdf)

SECTION A ONLY

Karl Marx: Preface to the Critique of Political Economy, 1859

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1859/critique-pol-economy/preface.htm> pp, 14-27  
Chapter 1 and 2

September 17  
Marxian Economics

Readings:

Bratton and Denham: Chapter 6

Karl Marx: Wage Labour and Capital. pp. 7-23

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/wage-labour-capital.pdf>

September 24  
Marx's Legacy, and Simmel

Readings:

Karl Marx: The Communist Manifesto. pp. 14-27

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Manifesto.pdf>

Karl Marx: Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, “Estranged Labour”

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/labour.htm>

Georg Simmel: The Stranger and The Metropolis and Mental Life (relevant sections to be provided through quercus)

October 1  
Test 1

No Readings  
First in-class test

October 8  
Max Weber I

Readings:

Denham and Bratton: Chapter 10

Max Weber: Objectivity in the Social Sciences. Section I, pp. 3-17

<https://jthomasniu.org/class/Stuff/PDF/weber-objectivity.pdf>

Max Weber: Basic Sociological Terms

<https://web.seducoahuila.gob.mx/biblioweb/upload/Weber-Basic-Sociological-Terms.pdf>

Max Weber: Bureaucracy (relevant sections to be provided through quercus)

October 15  
Max Weber II

**Response Papers Due**

Readings:

Denham and Bratton: Chapters 11 and 12

Max Weber: Class, Status, Society (relevant sections to be provided through quercus)

Max Weber: The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (relevant sections to be provided through quercus)

October 22  
Durkheim 1

Readings:

Denham and Bratton: Chapters 7 and 8

Emile Durkheim: The Rules of Sociological Method (relevant sections to be provided through quercus)

Emile Durkheim: The Division of Labour in Society (relevant sections to be provided through quercus)

October 29  
Reading Week

Reading Week – No Lecture and No Tutorials

November 5  
Durkheim 2

Readings:

Denham and Bratton: Chapter 9

Emile Durkheim: The Elementary Forms of Religious Life (relevant sections to be provided through quercus)

Emile Durkheim: Suicide (relevant sections to be provided through quercus)

November 12  
Gender

### **Research Papers Due**

Readings:

Denham and Bratton: Chapter 13

Mary Wollstonecraft: A Vindication of the Rights of Women (relevant sections to be provided through quercus)

Simone de Beauvoir: *The Second Sex* (relevant sections to be provided through quercus)

Charlotte Perkins Gilman: *The Yellow Wallpaper* (relevant sections to be provided through quercus)

November 19  
Race

Readings:

Denham and Bratton: Chapter 14

W.E.B. Du Bois: *The Souls of Black Folk*. chapter 1, “Of Our Spiritual Strivings” (relevant sections to be provided through quercus)

Franz Fanon: *Black Skin, White Masks*, “Introduction” (relevant sections to be provided through quercus)

November 26  
Final Test

No Readings

Final in-class test