University of Toronto
CLASSICAL SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY I: INEQUALITY AND AUTHORITY
SOC201H1F-L0101
Winter 2025
Lectures: Mondays 9:10 to 11 a.m. in SEE ACORN
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SCOPE AND AIMS

Having taken first-year courses in Sociology, you know that it is a divided discipline. It has diverse sub-areas (such as inequality, family, gender, immigration, and formal organizations). The contrast between quantitative and qualitative methods only begins to capture the range of approaches. There is no consensus over the appropriate role of the sociologist: detached analyst or committed advocate? Sociologists disagree on which questions are important as well as the kinds of evidence needed to address them properly. Other academic disciplines display diversity, fragmentation, and tension, however, and sociology itself is not totally chaotic (partly because sociologists cluster into schools). Further, classical theory provides a tool kit from which all draw for inspiration. In this course we examine a set of thinkers -- Alexis de Tocqueville, Karl Marx, Max Weber, Emile Durkheim, Georg Simmel – who responded to two great crises of modernity: the Industrial Revolution and the Democratic Revolution. Along with careful reading of primary texts and analysis of assumptions, concepts and arguments, the historical context in which these thinkers lived and worked will be considered. Although there can be no substitute for empirical evidence, our assumption is that without theory the nature and purpose of empirical inquiry remain insufficiently scrutinized. We will evaluate theories by comparing them, thereby paying attention to tensions, inconsistencies, and omissions. Challenging ideological bias in sociology's classical tradition will be an ongoing task. More generally, through a critical reading of theorists' works we will form judgements about ***how*** arguments are made.

PREREQUISITES

The prerequisites for this course are SOC100H1 and SOC150H1. Students without these prerequisites will be removed from the class list.

READINGS

The **Course reader** is available at the U of T Bookstore. It contains:

1. "Glossary of Concepts"
2. "Writing as Communication"
3. Weekly readings

EVALUATION

Mode of evaluation	Paper deadline/Test date	Weight in final grade
Position paper 1	February 3, 2025	25%
Test 1	February 10, 2025	25%
Position paper 2	March 24, 2025	25%
Test 2	March 31, 2025	25%

→ ***Test grades posted on Quercus within two weeks of test date.***

THEMES, THINKERS AND READINGS (with dates of original publication)

January 6. Introduction to the course

INEQUALITY

January 13. Tocqueville
- *Democracy in America,* vol. 2, pp. 561-580 (chapters 1 to 5 on social mores in aristocratic and democratic societies) [1840]

January 20. Marx and Engels
- Part I of *Manifesto of the Communist Party* ("Bourgeois and Proletarians") [1848]
- "The British Rule in India" and "The Future Results of British Rule in India" [1853]

January 27. Weber
- Excerpt from "Class, Status, Party" [1921]

February 3. Simmel
- Introduction to "Superordination and Subordination" [1908]

→ Position paper 1 on inequality due by 9:10 a.m.

February 10.

→ Test 1 on inequality from 9:10 to 10:30 a.m. in SS1073 (U of T student i.d. card needed to write this test)

AUTHORITY

February 24. Tocqueville
- *Democracy in America,* vol. 1, pp. 246-261 ("The Omnipotence of the Majority in the United States and its Effects") [1835]

March 3. Marx
- Excerpt from *The German Ideology* [written 1845-46]

March 10. Weber
- Excerpt from "Politics as a Vocation" [speech given in 1918]

March 17. Durkheim
- "Anomic Suicide" (from *Suicide)* [1897]

March 24. Simmel
- "The Metropolis and Mental Life" [1902-03]

→ Position paper 2 on authority due by 9:10 a.m.

March 31.

→ Test 2 on authority from 9:10 to 10:30 a.m. in SS1073 (U of T student i.d. card needed to write this test)

Copyright: 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. These materials are made available to you for your own study purposes and cannot be shared outside of the class or "published" in any way. Lectures, whether in person or online, cannot be recorded without the instructor's permission. Posting course materials or any recordings you may make to other websites without the express permission of the instructor will constitute copyright infringement.

Attendance: responsibility for being aware of what the professor says in lectures (including administrative announcements) rests with students.

Electronic devices in the classroom: laptops are permitted, but only for taking notes. Using laptops for other purposes will be treated as a breach of courtesy toward others. Texting, photography, cellphone use, and audio or video recording are also forbidden. Offenders will be asked to leave the classroom.

Communication: emails about tests and position papers should be sent to your TA. Emails with questions pertaining to matters explained in the syllabus will not receive a response.

Deadlines: work is due at the start of class on the due date.

Accessibility needs: If you require accommodations or have any accessibility concerns, please visit ***http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility*** as soon as possible.

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

A request to take a make-up test should be accompanied by contact information (student email address) so the date, time, and place of the make-up test can be communicated. A student who misses a test and the subsequent make-up test for valid reasons will not have a third chance to take the test. Instead, the grade assigned for the missed test will be the same as the grade the student earns for the other test in this course.

HELP FROM YOUR TEACHING ASSISTANT

Please be judicious in your use of email. Use it only for questions that are clear and specific. Before sending a question by email, be sure to check the course syllabus to see if an answer is there. Emails should not be seen as an alternative to doing the assigned reading or attending lectures. Expect to receive a response from your T.A. within three working days. For more in-depth discussions of the lectures, readings, tests, and position papers, take advantage of your T.A.'s tutorials.

READING WELL AND HAVING A MIND OF ONE'S OWN

> *"An open mind is like an open mouth: its purpose is to bite on something nourishing. Otherwise, it becomes like a sewer, accepting everything, rejecting nothing."* G.K. Chesterton

When we read texts written outside our time and place, some familiar qualities of mind help in making these texts our own. Among these qualities are curiosity, patience, flexibility, breadth, skepticism, fairness, imagination. What Bertrand Russell (in *A History of Western Philosophy,* London: Allen & Unwin, 1946, p. 58) writes about the encounter with philosophy applies just as well to classical sociology:

> *In studying a philosopher, the right attitude is neither reverence nor contempt, but first a kind of hypothetical sympathy, until it is possible to know what it feels like to believe in his theories, and only then a revival of the critical attitude, which should resemble, as far as possible, the state of mind of a person abandoning opinions which he hitherto held. Contempt interferes with the first part of this process, and reverence with the second. Two things are to be remembered: that a man whose opinions and theories are worth studying may be presumed to have had some intelligence, but that no man is likely to have arrived at complete and final truth on any subject whatever. When an intelligent man expresses a view which seems to us obviously absurd, we should not attempt to prove that it is somehow true, but we should try to understand how it ever came to seem true. This exercise of historical and psychological imagination at once enlarges the scope of our thinking and helps us to realize how foolish many of our own cherished prejudices will seem to an age which has a different temper of mind.*

Russell might have made more explicit that blind reverence is to be avoided not only toward texts but also our own cherished viewpoints and beliefs. Having read with a receptive mind, we must re-read with a probing mind, yes, but also with the strength of character needed to adjust, change, or reject an opinion or viewpoint of our own if this is what an honest encounter with the text entails. Re-reading with a specific question – perhaps one written down on a piece of paper placed next to the book – can help to make the mind's weighing of a text's worth more directed and fruitful. Always present of course, is context. Though broad, context here includes the known or immediate purpose for reading a given text; all the other texts one has read; and the social conditions that affect the likelihood that a reader will – as Immanuel Kant put it – stand up to the infantilizing tutelage of society's mental guardians by exerting a mature capacity to reason independently.

POSITION PAPERS: LENGTH, BREADTH, PLAGIARISM AND HOW TO SUBMIT

Position paper length: 2 to 3 pages (excluding references/bibliography) in 12-point font, double-spaced.

Breadth rule: a student whose two position papers fail to examine in reasonable detail a total of at least two thinkers will receive a penalty of 50% on their second position paper. If in doubt, check first with your TA.

Plagiarism: cheating and misrepresentation will not be tolerated. Students who commit an academic offence face a severe penalty. Avoid plagiarism by citing properly: practices acceptable in high school may prove unacceptable in university. Know where you stand by reading the "Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters" in the Calendar of the Faculty of Arts and Science. A first rule of thumb: each time you use a sequence of three or more words written by someone else, use quotation marks and give the source. But more than this is involved in citing properly -- read "HOW NOT TO PLAGIARIZE" below.

Submitting the same work for more than one course: section B.I.1.(e) of the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters says it is an offence *"to submit, without the knowledge and approval of the instructor to whom it is submitted, any academic work for which credit has previously been obtained or is being sought in another course or program of study in the University or elsewhere."*

Submit your position paper online through Quercus by the start of class on the due date: assignments not submitted through Turnitin will receive a grade of zero (0 %) unless a student also 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 theirs.

Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin for the detection of possible plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin reference database. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin service are on the Turnitin website.

ONLINE WRITING RESOURCES

Visit ***www.writing.utoronto.ca*** for:

- reading and research tips
- writing tips (research, organization, grammar, punctuation, style)
- standard citation formats
- advice on how to avoid plagiarism
- guidelines about different types of writing

GENERATIVE ARTIFICAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

A top grade can be achieved without using AI and students are accountable for the work they submit. Thus, AI is not recommended and may be used as a learning aid only. Any use of generative artificial intelligence tools for an assignment in this course ***must be documented in an appendix.*** This appendix must specify:

- what AI tool(s) were used
- how they were used (e.g., to come up with an argument; to identify the main ideas of thinkers; to find relevant examples; to engage with weaknesses or criticisms of theories; to propose the implications of an argument)
- where in the work submitted the results from the AI were incorporated (provide page numbers and paragraph locations)

Representing as one's own an idea or the expression of an idea (i.e., the words used) that was AI-generated will be considered an academic offense in this course.

POSITION PAPER GUIDELINES

A good position paper takes a position while engaging with classical theory. It uses logic and evidence to persuade the reader of the validity of a distinctive interpretation advanced by YOU. Your task is to **make an argument, not to summarize the course material.** Your paper should build on a sound understanding of the lectures and readings. It might be structured as follows:

- Introduction: state the question you are addressing, the argument you will make and how your position paper will make this argument
- Exposition: briefly but clearly set forth the ideas you are analysing
- Analysis: present your argument as it pertains to these ideas – this is the body of the paper, where success

in persuading your reader is most likely to be realized
- Conclusion: summarize your paper's argument and say what it implies for: (1) the ideas that provide the focus for your paper (as stated in your earlier Introduction and Exposition); and (2) a general theme in sociology (e.g., race, ethnicity, class, gender, industrialization, democracy, social change, feudalism, capitalism, globalization, progress) -- "if my argument is valid, then a broader implication for sociology is that …"

Your paper may raise new questions, point out logical gaps or hidden contradictions, or draw connections with other issues, theoretical approaches or developments in society. Here are some questions that might stimulate thinking at the early stage when you are trying to find and formulate an argument:

- What are the main questions or issues? What is their significance? Who (or what intellectual school) is a thinker arguing against? Is a thinker addressing a controversy and taking sides? Is a thinker identifying a problem previously unseen? Is a thinker offering a solution to an already-recognized problem, or simply criticizing earlier solutions?
- What is the logic of a thinker's argument? What assumptions does a thinker make? Are these assumptions tacit or explicit? Do the conclusions flow logically from the assumptions? What kind of evidence, first principle, or other understanding is marshalled to make the argument persuasive?
- What are the important concepts? How are they defined? What biases are built into them?
- Relate a text to others by thinkers studied in this course. Do you detect a polemic, even a hidden one? Does a common theme run between texts, and if so, how does a text you are discussing fit in?
- What is a thinker's vision of historical change? Does a text seem anachronistic, or does it say something important that transcends its time and place?
- What are the implications for research? What kinds of study would test a thinker's assertions? Indeed, are a thinker's assertions at all verifiable through research?

If stuck, read a secondary source (some listed at the end of this syllabus). Ask yourself: Are the ideas of _____ outdated, or have they stood the test of time? For example, are Tocqueville's ideas about inequality still valid today? Why or why not?

Whatever direction you take, make sure your paper is well-written. **When writing about sociological theory it is always best to use both primary and secondary sources. When drawing on these sources for words or ideas, cite them using a standard citation format.**

GRADING CRITERIA

The main criteria for evaluating position papers are:

- clarity of the argument
- originality of the argument
- adequacy of evidence used to support the argument
- appropriate use of primary and secondary sources
- coherence of ideas (concise expression, smooth transitions, logical organization)
- engaging style (tone, stance toward audience, level of formality)
- correct grammar, punctuation, citation form

The order of these criteria does not reflect their importance for good writing or their weight in calculating your grade: each of these criteria matters. For more help, please ask your TA. In addition, refer to "Writing as Communication" in the course package and ***www.utoronto.ca/writing/***.

RE-MARKING POSITION PAPERS
Students who believe their work has been unfairly marked should see the TA for a re-evaluation. Students may do this up to two weeks after the work in question is returned to them.

HOW NOT TO PLAGIARIZE
By Margaret Procter, former Coordinator of Writing Support, University of Toronto (with minor adaptations for this syllabus).

> *From the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters*:
> It shall be an offence for a student knowingly:
>
> (d) to represent as one's own any idea or expression of an idea or work of another in any academic examination or term test or in connection with any other form of academic work, i.e. to commit plagiarism. Wherever in the Code an offence is described as depending on "knowing", the offence shall likewise be deemed to have been committed if the person ought reasonably to have known.

You've already heard the warnings about plagiarism. Obviously it's against the rules to buy essays or copy from your friends' homework, and it's also plagiarism to borrow passages from books or articles or websites without identifying them. You know that the purpose of any paper is to show your own thinking, not create a patchwork of borrowed ideas. But you may still be wondering how you're supposed to give proper references to all the reading you've done and all the ideas you've encountered.

The point of documenting sources in academic papers is not just to avoid unpleasant visits to the Dean's office, but to demonstrate that you know what is going on in your field of study. It's also a courtesy to your readers because it helps them consult the material you've found.

The different systems for typing up references are admittedly a nuisance. But the real challenge is establishing the relationship of your thinking to the reading you've done (yes, that includes the Internet). Here are some common questions and basic answers.

1. ***Can't I avoid problems just by listing every source in the reference list?*** No, you need to integrate your acknowledgements into your own writing. Give the reference as soon as you've mentioned the idea you're using, not just at the end of the paragraph. It's often a good idea to name the authors ("X states" and "Y argues against X") and then indicate your own stand ("A more inclusive perspective, however . . . "). Have a look at journal articles in your discipline to see how experts refer to their sources.

2. ***If I put the ideas into my own words, do I still have to clog up my pages with all those names and numbers?*** Sorry—yes, you do. In academic papers, you need to keep mentioning authors and pages and dates to show how your ideas are related to those of the experts. It's sensible to use your own words because that saves space and lets you connect ideas smoothly. But whether you quote a passage directly in quotation marks, paraphrase it closely in your own words, or just summarize it rapidly, you need to identify the source then and there. (That applies to Internet sources too: you still need author and date as well as title and URL.)

3. ***But I didn't know anything about the subject until I started this paper. Do I have to give an acknowledgement for every point I make?*** You're safer to over-reference than to skimp. But you can cut down the clutter by recognizing that some ideas are "common knowledge" in the field—that is, taken for granted by people knowledgeable about the topic. Facts easily found in standard reference books are considered common knowledge: the date of the Armistice for World War I, for example, or the present population of Canada. You don't need to name a specific source for them, even if you learned them only when doing your research. They're easily verified and not likely to be controversial. In some disciplines, information covered in class

lectures doesn't need acknowledgement. Some interpretive ideas may also be so well accepted that you don't need to name a specific source: that Picasso is a distinguished modernist painter, for instance, or that smoking is harmful to health. Check with your TA if you're in doubt whether a specific point is considered common knowledge in your field.

4. ***How can I tell what's my own idea and what has come from somebody else?*** Careful record-keeping helps. Always write down the author, title and publication information (including the URL and other identifying information for web pages) so you can attach names and dates to specific ideas. Taking good notes is also essential. Don't paste passages from web pages into your draft: that's asking for trouble. As you read any text—online or on the page—summarize useful points in your own words. If you record a phrase or sentence you might want to quote, put quotation marks around it in your notes to remind yourself that you're copying the author's exact words. And make a deliberate effort as you read to notice connections among ideas, especially contrasts and disagreements, and also to jot down questions or thoughts of your own. If you find as you write that you're following one or two of your sources too closely, deliberately look back in your notes for other sources that take different views; then write about the differences and why they exist.

5. ***So what exactly do I have to document?*** With experience reading academic prose, you'll soon get used to the ways writers in your field refer to their sources. Here are the main times you should give acknowledgements.

a. Quotations, paraphrases, or summaries: If you use the author's exact words, enclose them in quotation marks, or indent passages of more than four lines. But it's seldom worthwhile to use long quotations. Quote only when the original words are especially memorable. In most cases, use your own words to summarize the idea you want to discuss, emphasizing the points relevant to your argument. But be sure to name sources even when you are not using the exact original words. As in the examples below, it's often a good idea to mention the author's name. That gains you some reflected authority and indicates where the borrowing starts and stops.

☞As Zeitlin (2001:194-196) argues, it would be wrong to see Weber as a thinker who set out to refute the ideas of Marx.

☞As Zeitlin (2001:195) argues, "Weber and Marx are compatible and complementary".

And give the following entry in the References section of your paper:

☞Zeitlin, Irving. *Ideology and the Rise of Sociological Theory,* 7th edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2001.

b. Specific ideas used as evidence for your argument or interpretation: First consider whether the ideas you're mentioning are "common knowledge" according to the definition in point 3 above; if so, you may not need to give a reference. But when you're relying on ideas that might be disputed by people in your discipline, establish that they're trustworthy by referring to authoritative sources.

☞European revolutionaries of the period were united by a common enemy: absolutism.[1]

Or:

☞"One accidental factor which reinforced the internationalism of 1830-48 was exile. Most political militants of

the Continental left were expatriates for some time, many for decades".[2]

And include the following in your footnotes or endnotes:

☞ [1] Eric J. Hobsbawm (1962). *The Age of Revolution 1789-1848 (*New York: New American Library), p. 161.
☞ [2] Hobsbawm, *Age of Revolution,* p. 160.

c. Distinctive or authoritative ideas, whether you agree with them or not: The way you introduce the reference can indicate your attitude and lead into your own argument.

☞Consistent with Zeitlin's interpretation, Lewis Coser (1977) writes that for Weber an ideal type is "an analytical construct".

And include the following entry in the References section of your paper:

☞Coser, L. (1977). "The Ideal Type." Retrieved May 20, 2011 from *http://www.bolenderinitiatives.com*

Among the referencing systems used by academics, English Canadian sociologists usually use the system found in the Zeitlin and Coser examples above. However, footnote or endnote systems are also common (see the Hobsbawm example above). For this course, providing a Digital Object Identifier number for articles is not required. Journals like *International Sociological Review* also provide good examples of referencing style.

For more guidance, go to **www.utoronto.ca/writing/** or refer to a guide such as Margot Northey, Lorne Tepperman, and Patrizia Albanese (2023), *Making Sense in the Social Sciences: A Student's Guide to Research and Writing (8th edition).*

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

Ashley, David, and David Michael Orenstein. *Sociological Theory: Classical Statements,* 6th edition (Boston: Pearson, 2005).

Bendix, Reinhard. *Max Weber: An Intellectual Portrait* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1962).

Collins, Randall. *Four Sociological Traditions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

Coser, Lewis A. *Masters of Sociological Thought: Ideas in Historical and Sociological Context,* 2nd edition (Fort Worth, Texas: Harcourt Brace, 1977).
Giddens, Anthony. *Capitalism and modern social theory: An analysis of the writings of Marx, Durkheim and* Max Weber (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971).

Go, Julian. *Postcolonial Thought and Social Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

Hughes, H. Stuart. Consciousness and Society: The Reorientation of European Social Thought 1890-1930 (New York: Vintage, 1977).

Lichtheim, George. *Marxism: An Historical and Critical Study* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961).

Lukes, Stephen M. *Emile Durkheim: His Life and Work* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972).

Sydie, R.A. *Natural Women, Cultured Men: A Feminist Perspective on Sociological Theory* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1994).

Welch, Cheryl B. *The Cambridge Companion to Tocqueville* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

Zeitlin, Irving M. *Ideology and the Development of Sociological Theory,* 7th edition (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 2001).

Also: *Journal of Classical Sociology.*