

CLASSICAL SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

SOC 201H1 Fall 2023 LEC5101

Times: Wednesdays, 5:10 to 8 pm.

Instructor: Joseph M. Bryant

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Location:

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Office Hours: by arrangement

It is impossible to demonstrate anything accurately, without starting from the appropriate first principles and sustaining a connected argument until the conclusions are reached.
Aristotle, *Topics*

The historical investigation of the development of a science is most needful, lest the principles treasured up in it become a system of half-understood precepts, or worse, a system of prejudices. Historical investigation not only promotes the understanding of that which now is, but also brings new possibilities before us by showing that what now exists is in great measure conventional and accidental.
Ernst Mach, *Science of Mechanics* (1883)

** The prerequisite to take SOC201H1 is SOC100H1 and SOC150H1.

University policy mandates that students without this requirement will be removed upon discovery.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Introduction to the history, nature, and role of sociological theory, through an examination of the works of key classical theorists such as Karl Marx, Max Weber, Emile Durkheim, Georg Simmel, George Herbert Mead, Karl Mannheim, and others.

COURSE SYNOPSIS: The main focus of this course will be directed towards exploring and understanding the development of Sociological Theories in the so-called “Classical” Phase, when the foundations of the emerging discipline of Sociology were established: in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Knowledge of those theoretical “points of departure” is essential for comprehending subsequent theoretical developments in Sociology, for the “classics” continue to provide not only many of the basic orienting assumptions for sociological research, but also much of conceptual terminology presently being utilized in explicating social worlds and their transformations over time. As we shall attempt to establish, all forms of theoretical knowledge are in varying degrees “conditioned” by the social and historical contexts in which they originated, as well as “informed” by the inherited thought-traditions to which they respond, constructively and critically. Sociological Theory, in short, has a History, ... and that history is also sociological.

TEXTS: Selected Readings to be placed as Modules on Quercus

REQUIREMENTS and GRADING:

4 Reading Reflections (~200 words each) on the Assigned Weekly Texts: *Your Selection!* (5% each = 20%);

*** To be uploaded by the date of the weekly Readings you choose, and prior to the corresponding Lecture

1 Research Essay, approximately 1200 to 1500 words in length, due Nov. 22 (30%);

2 Tests (Oct. 11 & Nov. 29), form to be determined (20% + 20% = 40% total);

1 Critical Reflection Commentary (~800 words), due Dec. 8 (10%)

& Class Participation (for outstanding contributions, bonus maximum of 3%)

Learning Objectives: To (i) Master the arcane mysteries of Sociological Theories, as they pertain to the diverse social worlds human beings create, and are created by; (ii) Regale friends, family, and prospective future employers with your deep knowledge of complex subjects; and (iii) Enhance your skills in the crafts of writing and carrying out research.

Course Policy on use of Artificial Intelligence Tools.

Higher Education is guided by an all-important distinction between *knowledge* and *information*. Knowledge develops through the critical processing of information, i.e., identifying its reliability, significance,

making connections with other facts and findings, making note of informational gaps, limitations, and possible biases. **Knowledge**, as acquired through learning and study, is thus something **you possess** or carry within you, as applied, creative, and responsive intelligence. **Information** consists of evidence, data, reports, etc., that **you access** and obtain from external sources. Artificial intelligence tools allow for new and impressive means for acquiring and presenting information, and will doubtless find expanding use within universities in the years to come.

However, since the primary purpose of Higher Education is to promote and facilitate knowledge development, the use of AI technologies in our course is strictly restricted to information-gather functions. Accordingly:

Students may not copy or paraphrase any material created by generative Artificial Intelligence applications, including ChatGPT and other AI writing and coding assistants, for the purpose of composing and completing any of the research & writing assignments in this course.

Specifically: the Reading Reflections; Research Essay; and Critical Reflection Commentary.

The knowing use of generative Artificial Intelligence tools for any purpose other than information-gathering may accordingly be considered an academic offense.

Academic Integrity is fundamental to learning at UofT. Familiarize yourself with the *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters*, at (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>) . It is the University rule book for academic behaviour, and you are expected to know the rules.

Plagiarism Policy: Ouriginal Sometimes, students will be required to submit their assignments to the University's plagiarism detection tool for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the tool's reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation web site (<https://uoft.me/pdt-faq>). For some of your assignments, we will be using the software *Ouriginal*. It uses text matching technology as a method to uphold the University's high academic integrity standards to detect any potential plagiarism. *Ouriginal* is integrated into Quercus. For assignments set up to use *Ouriginal*, the software will review your paper when it is uploaded to Quercus. For more on *Ouriginal's* privacy policy please review its [Privacy Policy](#). Students not wishing their assignment to be submitted through *Ouriginal* will not be assessed unless a student instead provides, along with their work, 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.

Email policy: Owing to the large number of junk mailings I receive, I do not favor using this medium for class communication, other than for emergencies. My email address and home phone number are in the public domain, but my preference is for you to contact me in class for all course-related matters.

NOTE: The TAs should be contacted first regarding all routine course matters.

Missed Tests: Owing to the large enrolment, no "make-up" tests will be offered. For students with officially legitimate reasons and documentable proof for absences on test days, the policy will be to substitute a score from another assignment for the legitimately missed exam.

Missed Lectures: *Students who miss classes are expected to obtain lecture notes from classmates.*

Policy on Extension Requests: Extensions for completing course assignments can only be given in accordance

with university rules, which are limited to medical situations or family emergencies. Documentation will be required to establish compliance. NOTE: Late papers without such documentation will not be accepted, and scored as '0' pts.

Students who miss a test or are late in submitting an assignment **due to medical reasons**, need to email the instructor (not the TA), and also declare their absence on the system (ACORN). (NOTE: Because of Covid-19, students do NOT need to submit the usual documentation, i.e., medical notes or the Verification of Illness forms). Missed or late work **due to other reasons, such as family or other personal reasons**, should request their College Registrar to email the instructor.

ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES: If you require accommodations or have any accessibility concerns, please visit <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility> as soon as possible.

WRITING ASSISTANCE

Students can find information about college writing centres at <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/writing-centres/arts-and-science>. It is recommended that you *book appointments well in advance*, as the Writing Centres are commonly very busy. See also the website Writing at the University of Toronto at www.writing.utoronto.ca. For numerous practical advice files, see www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice. Information about the English Language Learning program (ELL) is available at: <http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/advising/ell>. There is also Reading eWriting, an online program that helps students engage course readings more effectively.

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Publius Terentius Afer (c.195-160 BC) Roman comedic playwright from North Africa, Libyan Berber descent, purchased slave of a Roman senator, educated and later freed; six plays survive. Terence gives us a wonderful and inspiring motto for the social sciences (and life in general!):

Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto. “Being human, I consider nothing that is human alien to me.”

And a cautionary note on knowledge & method:

We are the instruments of our instruments.

Kenneth Burke (1966)

FALL TERM

1. Sept. 13 ***Introduction: From Social Philosophy to Sociological Theory***

Readings: Francis Bacon, “*Idola Mentis*” (6 pgs);

J.M. Bryant, “Sociological Theory, Part One: Getting One’s Bearings” (10 pgs)

2. Sept. 20 ***What is Theory?***

Readings: Vilfredo Pareto, “What is Sociology?,” from *The Mind and Society* (1 pg);

J.M. Bryant, "Sociological Theory, Part Two: Theories of Structure and Agency" (pgs 1-13 *SI*)
[pp. 17-24 survey "Contemporary Theories": Dramaturgy, Phenomenology, Rational Choice, Feminism, etc.]

3. Sept. 27 ***Karl Marx and the Materialist Conception of History***

Readings: Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology* (on Historical Materialism, 5 pgs);
The Communist Manifesto, Chapter I (10 pgs); reread section on Marx in Sociological Theory Part Two

4. Oct. 4 ***Karl Marx and the Materialist Conception of History (cont.)***

Reading: Karl Marx, *Capital, Volume One*: Part VIII: Primitive Accumulation (abridged, 16 pgs)

Tutorial Session (after lecture): Review in Preparation of Test # 1

**** Essay Assignment provided ****

5. Oct. 11 ***Karl Marx and the Materialist Conception of History (cont.)***

Reading: Marx, *Capital, Volume One*: Part VIII: Primitive Accumulation (cont. & 4 pg. "Synopsis")

***** Test # 1 ***** [covering readings & lectures through week 4]

6. Oct. 18 ***Max Weber: Historical-Comparative Sociology: States and Economies***

Readings: Max Weber, on Politics, Bureaucracy, etc. (7 pgs); reread section on Weber in Part Two

7. Oct. 25 ***Max Weber: Historical-Comparative Sociology: Religions***

Reading: Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (abridged & annotated, 16 pgs)

8. Nov. 1 ***Emile Durkheim: On Sociological Method, as illustrated by Suicide***

Readings: Review "Sociological Theory, Part Two": Durkheim (pp. 7-10)

***** Nov. 6-10 *****

READING WEEK

All science would be superfluous if the outward appearance and the essence of things directly coincided.

Karl Marx, *Capital* Vol. III

9. Nov. 15 ***Emile Durkheim: Sociology of Religion***
Georg Simmel: Formal Sociology

Readings: Durkheim, Selected Excerpts on Religion (4 pgs); Simmel, "The Stranger" (4 pgs)

10. Nov. 22 **George Herbert Mead: Minds, Selves, and Societies**

Readings: “Sociological Theory. Part Two”: section on Mead in Symbolic Interactionism (pp.12-13)

Mead, “Play, the Game, and the Generalized Other” (6 pgs)

Tutorial Session (after lecture): Review in Preparation of Test # 2

*** **ESSAY ASSIGNMENT DUE** ***

11. Nov. 29 **George Herbert Mead: Minds, Selves, and Societies (cont.)**

Readings: “The I and the Me” (2.5 pgs)

*** **Test # 2** *** [covering readings and lectures from weeks 5-11]

12. Dec. 6 **Karl Mannheim and the Sociology of Knowledge**

Reading: Mannheim, Excerpts from *Ideology and Utopia* and *Conservative Thought* (4 pgs)

*** **Critical Reflection Commentary** *** [Quercus submission due Dec. 8]

Theory is only one moment of elucidation, and always lacunary and fragmentary.

Cornelius Castoriadis, *Crossroads in the Labyrinth*

Everything that can be thought at all can be thought clearly. Everything that can be said can be said clearly.

Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*

Octavio Paz, *Nocturno de San Ildefonso* (1976)

Eliot Weinberger trans.

*Nos arrastra
el viento del pensamiento,
el viento verbal,
el viento que juega con espejos,
señor de reflejos,
constructor de ciudades de aire,
geometrías
suspendidas del hilo de la razón.*

The wind of thought
carried us away,
the verbal wind.
the wind that plays with mirrors,
master of reflections,
builder of cities of air,
geometries
hung from the thread of reason.

Ashes denote that Fire was—

Emily Dickinson

*Description is revelation. It is not
The thing described, nor false facsimile.*

*It is an artificial thing that exists,
In its own seeming, plainly visible,
Yet not too closely the double of our lives,
Intenser than any actual life could be, ...*

Wallace Stevens, "Description without Place"

The aim of science is to seek the simplest explanations of complex facts. We are apt to fall into the error of thinking that the facts are simple because simplicity is the goal of our quest. The guiding motto in the life of every natural philosopher should be, "Seek simplicity and distrust it."

Alfred North Whitehead *The Concept of Nature* (1919)