

SOAN 330: Sociological Thought and Theory

Department of Sociology and Anthropology
Carleton College
Fall 2014

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Office hours: MW 3-4pm; F 10am-12pm, or by appointment if necessary

Class meets MWF, 5a (1:50pm-3pm MW; 2:20pm-3:20pm F) in Leighton 330

Course description

Social theory offers a diverse set of conceptual tools for understanding modern society and social interaction. In other sociology classes, you have begun to explore the “sociological imagination,” a way of seeing the world through the lens of sociology. In this class we will delve into the historical heart of this perspective and explore it from different angles. We are all products of our social environment; how can we think about the relationship between the individual and her social world? How have others conceptualized this relationship?

This course is designed to explore some of the foundational concepts of sociological theory. We will do this from both an historical and a theoretical perspective. Because of the unique way in which the discipline of sociology has been constructed, we will be focusing on some of the “big names” of sociological theory (Marx, Weber, Durkheim), but we will also explore the ideas of others (and thinking about why some texts and authors are canonized and some are not). The course is also designed to help you achieve an understanding the practice of *theorizing*—what it means and how to do it.

The course is structured around close readings of *primary* texts—that is, we’ll be focused on the actual writings of the theorists we’re studying. As these are often difficult, we will be discussing and practicing ways to approach them. The course requires your active, ongoing, participation in the form of spending considerable time outside of class studying texts, and writing about them.

This syllabus is necessarily tentative; I may choose to make changes based upon the interests and needs of course participants.

Course objectives

Upon completion of this course, students should:

- have a good understanding the primary theoretical, sociological approaches to the study of the social world
- have a greatly expanded vocabulary of sociological concepts
- understand what theory is, and the role it plays in the discipline of sociology
- be capable of understanding and interpreting aspects of their social world through various theoretical perspectives

- have improved their skills of critical reading, thinking, and communication

Student learning outcomes

Learning outcomes are specified at the department level. The relevant outcomes for this course are the following:

- Connect information about historical and contemporary socio-cultural phenomena.
- Formulate appropriate sociological and/or anthropological research questions about socio-cultural phenomena.
- Apply sociological and anthropological theory to analyze socio-cultural phenomena.
- Draw upon your understanding of historical and contemporary socio-cultural phenomena to engage the world.

Course Materials

There are seven required books for the course, which are available at the Carleton bookstore. In addition to these texts, there will occasionally be required readings available on the course website.

- Du Bois, W.E.B. (2007) *The Souls of Black Folk*. NY: Oxford University Press.
- Durkheim, Émile (1995) *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Trans. Karen Fields. Free Press.
- Durkheim Émile (2014) *The Division of Labor in Society*. Trans. Karen Fields. Free Press.
- Marx, Karl (2000) *Selected Writings*. 2nd edition. Ed. David McLellan. NY: Oxford University Press.
- Mead, George Herbert (1967) *Mind, Self, and Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Weber, Max (2002) *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism: And Other Writings*. Trans. And ed. Peter Baehr and Gordon C. Wells. NY: Penguin.
- Whimster, Sam (ed.) (2003) *The Essential Max Weber*. NY: Routledge.

Approach, expectations, suggestions

The course will be conducted as a discussion-based seminar, although I may lecture from time to time. I view my professorial role to be one of facilitation, rather than knowledge dissemination. My goal is to create a context and structure to help you develop your critical intellectual skills and your knowledge of sociological theoretical approaches. The success of the course will depend upon the continued preparation, engagement and participation of all members.

Reading

In many ways, this is a seminar in reading. The reading load will be substantial, and the texts, old as they are, may initially seem alien and obtuse. My goal is to help you develop your theoretical acumen, and critical reading ability goes hand-in-hand with this. There are many different styles and strategies of reading. In this course, we're reading primary texts closely—paying attention to the development of concepts, the structure of arguments, and other rhetorical moves that the authors are making.

I certainly don't expect you to find the meanings in these readings transparent; if they were, they would most likely not be “classics” of sociological thought. They are rich and sophisticated enough to support multiple interpretations; however, there is a tension between the attempt to understand an author on her or his own terms, and the interpretation of their theories, concepts, or texts in a particular contemporary

context. Part of reading theory is learning strategies for negotiating this tension. Fortunately or unfortunately, there is no shortcut here.

Since our readings are “classic,” there are multiple versions and translations to be found of each of them. I'm open in principle to your using other sources for the texts besides the course texts; however, you should in all cases make sure that you have the same translation as the one I have chosen. We will be referring to the texts all the time in class, and so you should always have yours with you. *I strongly discourage using ereaders*, as they (in my opinion), make active engagement with the text more difficult. Readings available on Moodle should be printed out and brought to class.

Technology

My approach to teaching and learning is centered around discussion, engagement, community and collaboration. I have found that this approach is best facilitated by keeping technology, for the most part, out of the classroom. I expect all phones and laptops to be turned off and put away before coming into the classroom. If you have a circumstance which merits an exception to this policy, please see me about it.

Attendance

Class attendance is mandatory. If you need to be absent for a legitimate reason, please talk to me ahead of time. You may have one unexcused absence during the term. Any additional unexcused absences will result in deductions from your final grade for the course.

Communication and office hours

I am available for discussion and/or assistance outside of class, and I welcome student feedback, discussion, and questions. If you have any questions or concerns throughout the term, we can chat about them. *If you find yourself struggling with the course or some aspect of it, come and see me before it gets too stressful or too late to remedy.*

Course requirements

Your course grade will be calculated according to the following breakdown:

- Participation 25%
- Critical reading response papers 30%
- Discussion leadership assignment 15%
- Final paper (in stages) 30%

Participation Your success in the course (as well as the overall success of the course) will depend upon your active and sustained engagement. I expect everyone to participate at a high level; however, we all don't have the same aptitudes and learning styles, so you should think about participation flexibly. While it includes asking questions and participating in discussions, it also includes *active* listening, having your text open (and reading along), annotating and notetaking, and participation in small-group work.

Active participation also involves making comments that show how you have substantially engaged with the text on your own time, and are making connections between different texts and themes that we've covered, as well as connections to other courses or everyday life.

Another part of your participation grade for the course will be based upon reading questions which you will submit via Moodle. For each of the readings we complete, you should pose a couple of questions to the course website. These should be posted by midnight on the evening before our class session. This requirement is designed to help you practice focusing and articulating your engagement with the text, as

well as to develop critical questioning skills.

Critical reading response papers In addition to posing questions, you will write informal responses to the readings, in which you can develop your understanding of the texts and theories.

Discussion leadership assignment You will have the opportunity to lead the class discussion on a day and topic of your choosing.

Final paper In the final paper, you will explore a topic which you will develop in consultation with me. The paper will develop in stages.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Carleton College is committed to providing reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodations should contact the Coordinator of Disability Services, Andy Christensen, at 222-4464 or anchrist@carleton.edu, to begin the process. Carleton faculty are strongly encouraged to wait for official notification of accommodations before modifying course requirements for students.

Academic support

Carleton has a wealth of resources for students who want to improve their academic skills. Take advantage of them!

Library research

Ask a librarian for help with your research in this class. You can drop by the library's Research/IT desk to ask any question you have, at any point in your process. Librarians help students find and evaluate articles, books, websites, statistics, data, government documents, and more. For more information on hours and librarians, visit the library's website: <http://go.carleton.edu/library>.

Public Speaking and Class Presentations

The Speakeasy is a student-staffed resource designed to assist you with class presentations, comps talks, and other speech-related events. Groups and individuals are welcome at our location in the Libe (room 314). A Speakeasy coach, Chad Stevenson or Diana Fraser, can also meet you at other mutually convenient times. Just email them at stevensonc@carleton.edu or fraserd@carleton.edu. For days and times when the Speakeasy is open, visit go.carleton.edu/speakeasy.

Time Management, Study Skills, and Test-Prep Strategies

Chavonna Savage (csavage@carleton.edu), a Hall Director who also works in the Academic Support Center, can work with you to improve your time management and academic skills. Her goals are to heighten your awareness of your personal strengths and skills, and to offer different ways you can approach your academic work so you're more efficient and effective. Chavonna meets students during her regular drop-in office hours, which are listed on the Academic Skills Coaching website. You can also email her to set up a meeting outside her office hours.

The Writing Center

The Writing Center, located in 420 4th Libe, has peer writing consultants who can work with you during any stage of the writing process (brainstorming to final proofreading). Hours are listed here: <https://apps.carleton.edu/campus/asc/writingcenter/>. You can reserve specific times for conferences in 420 4th Libe by using their online appointment system: <https://writingcenter.carleton.edu/>. Walk-ins are

welcome in 420 4th Libe, though writers with appointments have priority.

Writing Assistance for Students Whose First Language Is Not English

If you are a second language writer and believe you might benefit from working individually with a writing consultant on a regular basis this term, email Renata Fitzpatrick, Second-Language Writing Coordinator, call her at x5998, or stop by her office in 420D 4th Libe. She can arrange once- or twice-a-week meetings between you and a specific writing consultant throughout the term.

Course outline

Week one: Introduction

- Sept 15 Greetings and introduction
- Sept 17 Tom Kemple, "Founders, classics, canons in the formation of social theory," in Gerard Delanty (ed.) *Handbook of Contemporary European Social Theory*, Routledge, 2006, pp. 3-13
- Sept 19 Immanuel Kant "What is Enlightenment?"

Week two: Karl Marx

- Sept. 22 "Letter to his Father" (pp. 9-14)
"A Correspondence of 1843" (pp. 43-45)
"Towards a Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*: Introduction" (pp. 71-82)
- Sept. 24 "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts" (pp. 83-104 only)
- Sept. 26 "Theses on Feuerbach" (pp. 171-174)
The German Ideology (pp. 175-208)

Week three: Karl Marx

- Sept. 29 *The Communist Manifesto* (pp. 245-271)
The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte (pp. 329-355)
- Oct. 1 "Preface to *A Critique of Political Economy*" (pp. 424-428)
Grundrisse (pp. 379-423)
- Oct. 3 *Capital* (pp. 452-508 only)

Week four: Emile Durkheim

- Oct. 6 "What is a Social Fact?" in *The Rules of Sociological Method* (pp. 50-59) (on Moodle)
The Division of Labor in Society, Prefaces and Introduction (pp. 3-38)
- Oct. 8 *The Division of Labor in Society*, Book 1, Chapters 1-3 (pp. 41-104)
- Oct. 10 *The Division of Labor in Society*, Book 2, Chapters 1-3 (pp. 183-238); Book 3, Chapter 1 (pp. 277-292)

Week five: Emile Durkheim

- Oct. 13 *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Introduction, Book 1, Chapters 1 and 4 (pp. 1-44; 84-98)
- Oct. 15 *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Book 2, Chapters 1, 2, 6, 7 (pp. 99-140; 190-241)

Oct. 17 *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Book 3, Chapters 1 and 4, Conclusion (pp. 303-329; 392-448)

Week 6: Max Weber

Oct. 20 **Midterm break: no class**

Oct. 22 *The Protestant Ethic and the "Spirit" of Capitalism*, Part one (pp. 1-42)

Oct. 24 *The Protestant Ethic and the "Spirit" of Capitalism*, Part two (pp. 67-127)

Week 7: Max Weber

Oct. 27 "Politics and the State" (pp. 131-2)
"The three types of legitimate rule" (pp. 133-145)
"The nation" (pp. 146-149)
"Status groups and classes" (pp. 176-181)
"The distribution of power in society: classes, status groups, and parties" (pp. 182-194)

Oct. 29 "Intermediate Reflection on the economic ethics of the world religions" (pp. 214-244)
"Bureaucracy" (pp. 245-249)
"Formal and substantive rationalization: theocratic and secular law" (pp. 250-256)

Oct. 31 "The vocation of politics" (pp. 257-269)
"The vocation of science" (pp. 270-287)

Week 8: George Herbert Mead

Nov. 3 *Mind, Self, and Society*, chapters TBA

Nov. 5 *Mind, Self, and Society*, chapters TBA

Nov. 7 *Mind, Self, and Society*, chapters TBA

Week 9: Disrupting the canon: Race and Gender

Nov. 10 W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, chapters 1-7

Nov. 12 W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, chapters 7-14

Nov. 14 Harriet Martineau, "On Marriage," from *How to Observe Morals and Manners* (1838) (Moodle)
Anna Julia Cooper, "The Status of Woman in America," from *A Voice from the South* (1892)
Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "Primary Motives in Clothing;" "The force called fashion", from *The Dress of Women* (1915) (Moodle)

Week 10: Conclusions?

Nov. 17 Marianne Weber, "Authority and autonomy in marriage" (1912) (Moodle)
Simone De Beauvoir, "Woman as other," from *The Second Sex* (1949) (Moodle)

Nov. 19 Course wrap up