

SOC 103: Sociological Theory

Tufts University Department of Sociology



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*Syllabus updated 1-20-2018

When: Mondays & Wednesdays, 3:00-4:15
Where: 312 Anderson Hall
Instructor: Assistant Professor Freeden Blume Oeur
Grader: Laura Adler, Sociology Ph.D. student, Harvard University
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Office Hours: Drop-in Tuesdays 2-3:30 & Thursdays 10-11:30; and by appointment

WELCOME

The Greek root of theory is *theorein*, or “to look at.” Sociological theories are therefore visions, or ways of seeing and interpreting the social world. Some lenses have a wide aperture and seek to explain macro level social developments and historical change. The “searchlight” (to borrow Alfred Whitehead’s term) for other theories could be narrower, but their beams may offer greater clarity for things within their view. All theories have blind spots. This course introduces you to an array of visions on issues of enduring importance for sociology, such as alienation and emancipation, solidarity and integration, domination and violence, epistemology, secularization and rationalization, and social transformation and social reproduction. This course will highlight important

theories that have not been part of the sociological “canon,” while also introducing you to more classical theories. Mixed in are a few poignant case studies. We’ll also discuss the (captivating, overlooked, even misguided) origins of modern sociology. I hope you enjoy engaging with sociological theory as much as I do. I think it’s the *sweetest thing*. We’ll discuss why at the first class.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Gain in-depth understanding of a range of sociological visions of the social world.
- Engage, interpret, critique, and synthesize classical and contemporary theories.
- Sharpen your ability to ask important sociological questions and answer them with a range of theoretically-informed responses.

REQUIREMENTS

Respect. Please engage respectfully with me and your classmates. Beyond basic matters of civility (e.g. raising your hand, not interrupting others when they’re speaking), this means respectful intellectual engagement.

Required Course Materials. One course reader is available for purchase at Gnomon Copy Center at 348 Boston Avenue. You’ll need this for class starting Monday, February 5. I’ll let you know when it’s ready for purchase. Copies of the first few readings will be distributed in class and uploaded to Trunk. The course reader and required text will be on reserve at Tisch Library. Please see me if securing this reader poses a financial burden, and we’ll work something out.

Assignments. There are 5 components to your grade:

- [20%] Attendance and Participation. Come to class having completed the readings, and ready to ask questions and contribute to class discussion. The reading is frequently difficult and even dense, but I’ve kept the amount of reading to an absolute minimum. You may miss 1 class meeting without penalty. Each additional absence is a penalty of 3 points of your overall course grade.
- [60%] Three exams, worth 20% each, on February 19, March 26, and April 23.
- [20%] Final Paper. An 8-page paper due electronically on Wednesday, May 9 at 5pm.

Grading Scale. A+ (100), A (94-99), A- (90-93), B+ (87-89), B (84-86), B- (80-83), C+ (77-79), C (74-76) . . .

Academic Honesty. Our course will abide strictly by the guidelines laid out in the Tufts Statement of Academic Integrity, available at:

- <http://ase.tufts.edu/biology/bguides/classes/tahonesty.htm>

A comprehensive review of university policies is available at:

- <http://uss.tufts.edu/studentaffairs/publicationsandwebsites/AcademicIntegrity.pdf>

This requires you to cite appropriately, understand what constitutes plagiarism, and consult me before submitting the same paper for this class and another (past or current) class. Possible violations of the policies outlined in the Statement of Academic Honesty will be reported to the Office of the Dean of Students.

Student Accessibility. Please reach out to me if you require any accommodations.

Emergencies and Illnesses. As a general rule, contact me if something comes up and you expect to miss class. Sports games, missed alarm clocks, and the like are not legitimate reasons for missing class. If you're sick, fill out the short-term illness notification on SIS. For extended absences (missing two or more consecutive classes), you must also provide medical documentation through the Health Center. In these instances, I'll consider giving you the option of completing make-up work for the course. For these and other major concerns, I encourage you to reach out to your academic dean and to have him or her contact me.

Contacting Freedom. Feel free to email me, but check first if the information you need is on this syllabus. So your email doesn't get lost, make sure to include a subject in the subject line and the course number (Soc 103).

Electronics. While you're free to use your laptop if you prefer to type up your class notes, I expect that you will not use class time to browse the internet (unless you're doing so for class purposes). Electronics are distracting. As for phones, *you may not have them out at any time during class*, unless, again, they're for class purposes. Using electronics out of compliance will harm your participation grade.

RESOURCES

Basic Needs Security. I urge you to contact Dean Robert Mack with the Office of Student Success and Advising, your academic dean, or another campus official you trust, if you're having difficulty securing stable housing and sufficient food to eat, and especially if these difficulties are interfering with your academic performance. Please also feel free to reach out to me if I can help secure resources or put you in touch with others who can help.

Trunk. This will have everything pertinent to the course including announcements and course materials. Make sure you can access it, and that you're set up to receive emails and other announcements from me via Trunk.

- <https://trunk.tufts.edu/xsl-portal>

WebEx. In the event of extreme weather or if the university officially cancels classes, we *may* hold class on WebEx. This is preferable to skipping class and relying on rescheduled classes. I'll let you know as soon as possible if we'll be meeting on WebEx, and will send you the access code to join my "personal room." Your responsibility *before the class* is to make sure you're able to access WebEx. You'll need to download a plug-in. Check to make sure your video, sound, muting, chat, etc. works. While there are limitations, we'll plan to treat a WebEx session as a normal class: you'll be able to make comments and ask questions, etc., and I can easily share PowerPoint slides and other media. Or I may plan to videotape a lecture you can watch later.

- <https://it.tufts.edu/webex>

Office Hours. Students who make use of office hours tend to do better in class. Feel free to stop by with a classmate. The time will be more productive if you come prepared with specific concerns and questions. Office hours held before an assignment is due may require an online sign-up. Send me an email if you can't make my drop-in hours so we can schedule another time to meet.

Reading Theory. This is frequently hard. Use the separate "reading theory" document as a guide.

Annotating. This is the process of engaging actively with a text by marking it up. Use whatever annotation system works best for you. A helpful online annotation guide is available at:

- <http://guides.hcl.harvard.edu/sixreadinghabits>

Writing. There are many excellent writing resources available. As a general rule, I won't read drafts of written assignments. However, I'm happy to discuss outlines or written brainstorming in office hours, if you send me these in advance. Check out Purdue University's excellent Online Writing Lab (OWL), which covers all dimensions of writing. It has a great overview of ASA formatting and style, which you should use for papers in this class.

- <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>

Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein have excellent suggestions for writers. Check out their templates for basic rhetorical devices in writing:

- <http://www.csub.edu/eap-riap/theysay.pdf>

Writing Tutoring. Take advantage of the writing tutoring available through the Academic Resource Center:

- <http://uss.tufts.edu/arc/writingtutoring>

Citing and Referencing. Use the American Sociological Association’s style guide in your papers:

- <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/583/01/>

HISTORICAL MATERIALISM	
M 1/22	Welcome!
W 1/24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Craig Calhoun et al., “Introduction to Part III (The Sociological Theory of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels).” ▪ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, “The German Ideology.” (1845) [Handout]
M 1/29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Karl Marx, “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844.” [Handout] ▪ James Rizzi, “Invisible Labor.” (2016) [Handout]

CAPITAL	
W 1/31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Karl Marx, “Wage-Labour and Capital.” (1847) [Handout]
M 2/5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Karl Marx, “The Fetishism of the Commodities and the Secret Thereof.” (1867) [First reading in course reader]

MARXIST EXTENSIONS	
W 2/7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Heidi Hartmann, “The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism.” (1979)
M 2/12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Catharine MacKinnon, “Feminism, Marxism, Method, and the State.” (1982)
W 2/14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ W.E.B. Du Bois, “Black Reconstruction and the Racial Wage.” (1935)

***No class on Monday 2/19**

***Wednesday 2/21: Exam 1**

SOLIDARITY AND INTEGRATION	
Th 2/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Craig Calhoun et al., “Introduction to Part IV (The Sociological Theory of Emile Durkheim).” ▪ Emile Durkheim, <i>The Division of Labor in Society</i>: “The Problem” and “The Function of the Division of Labor.” (1893) <p>*Monday’s schedule today</p>
M 2/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Emile Durkheim, <i>The Division of Labor in Society</i>: “Mechanical Solidarity” and Organic Solidarity.”
W 2/28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Emile Durkheim, <i>Suicide</i>: “Introduction” and “Anomic Suicide.” (1897)
M 3/5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Anna Mueller and Seth Abrutyn, “Adolescents Under Pressure.” (2016)

SECULARIZATION AND RATIONALIZATION	
W 3/7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Craig Calhoun et al., “Introduction to Part V (The Sociological Theory of Max Weber).” ▪ Max Weber, <i>The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism</i>: “Religious Affiliation and Social Stratification” and “The Spirit of Capitalism.” (1905)
M 3/12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Max Weber, <i>The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism</i>: “Luther’s Conception of the Calling” and “The Religious Foundations of Worldly Asceticism.”
W 3/14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Max Weber, <i>The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism</i>: “Asceticism and the Spirit of Capitalism.”

***No class Monday 3/19 and Wednesday 3/21: Enjoy your spring break!**

***Monday 3/26: Exam 2**

DOMINATION AND VIOLENCE	
W 3/28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Max Weber, <i>The Theory of Social and Economic Domination</i>: “The Types of Legitimate Domination.” (1922)
M 4/2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Michel Foucault, “Discipline and Punish.” (1975)
W 4/4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Raymond Williams, <i>Marxism and Literature</i>: “Hegemony.” (1977)
M 4/9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pierre Bourdieu, “Social Space and Symbolic Power.” (1989)

RACE, GENDER, AND EPISTEMOLOGY	
W 4/11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ W.E.B. Du Bois, <i>The Souls of Black Folk</i>: “Of Our Spiritual Strivings.” (1903) <p>*No class on Monday 4/16: Patriots’ Day</p>
W 4/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Patricia Hill Collins, “The Outsider-Within.” (1986)
M 4/23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gloria Anzaldúa, <i>Borderlands</i>: “La Conciencia de la Mestiza.” (1987)

***No class on Wednesday 4/25**

***Monday 4/30: Exam 3**

***Final Paper due electronically on Wednesday, May 9 at 5pm**