

Syllabus for Classical Theory, Undergraduate*
Sociology 475, section 2. Spring 2007
Monday, Wednesday 2:30-3:45
6101 Sewell Social Sciences Building
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Description: This class attempts to present key contributions to sociological theory (as it is understood today) as part of a historical development that begins with political philosophy. Basic questions about what it means to be free, to be an individual, to live in a society, inspired a tradition of thought that ultimately led to sociology (among other things). These questions are still as interesting today as they ever were (I heard that!), but beginning with them also helps us make sense of why sociological theory focused upon what it did. Our themes, then, will be freedom, will, good, individuality, and (social) law. We'll find these to be the themes of sociological theory too! In tracing how different theorists grappled with these themes, we will see the different ways they conceived of society, and its relation to the individual.

Requirements

There are four main requirements to this course. 1) You must keep up with the reading. WE ARE READING EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TEXTS IN THE ORIGINAL, and this will take some practice. However, we are only reading small sections, and I will be there to work through the tough parts. 2) You must attend class. You won't be able to make much of the readings otherwise. And you'll miss the quizzes. 3) You must come to an in-class midterm and in-class final.

The readings are all (one exception noted below) placed on electronic reserve at the Social Sciences Library. You may also get them as a reader at Bob's Copy Shop. If you don't want to buy one, you can rent a used one from me. (Since bookstores won't buy back readers, I found it more efficient to buy them back from students myself.) There is one required book, quite inexpensive, which will be at the University Bookstore. This is the *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* by Rousseau. When the reading is from Durkheim's books I indicate pages to be read in case you already have the book from some other classes. An asterisk indicates that the reading is in the reader.

There is an in-class midterm **on Wednesday March 14** and an in-class final on the regular final day, 02:45 P.M. **Tuesday, May 15!** Grades are computed as follows: 50% final; 35% midterm; 10% attendance; 5% quizzes. Numerical grades (as opposed to letters) are used to compose the average: your attendance contribution is the percentage of classes you have attended.

*. This course is closely based on one created by Jim Stockinger of the University of California at Berkeley/UC Child Care. I wish to thank him for allowing the additional use of his lectures and other printed materials.

Sort of Recommended book: I have not assigned a secondary source, but I have examined some, and conclude that Irving Zeitlin's Ideology and the Development of Sociological Theory would probably be the best, in terms of putting sociological theory in the context of the questions first raised in the enlightenment. It's probably no easier than the lectures, but might repay the time.

Week 1 (Monday, January 22, Wednesday, January 24): **Introduction**

Sociological Theory starts with a substantive hunch that something bigger than us exists. This question had already been raised by political philosophers. They drew conclusions from this that the sociological theorists didn't always like. I'll trace this path, and hopefully demonstrate how it spawned some core sociological theories. But I'll also make a side trip, so that we can cover the thought of Karl Marx, who is so influential later that we need to learn about him, even though he's not really a sociological theorist.

Week 2 (Monday, January 29, Wednesday, January 31): **Hobbes**

Required Reading: Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, selections*

We begin with the Hobbesian problem of order—given scarce resources, desiring personalities, how is chaos averted? Hobbes's answer: Live Unfree or Die. The social contract, yet the beginning of a sense of society as an organism.

Week 3 (Monday, February 5, Wednesday, February 7): **Smith-Rousseau**

Required Reading: Adam Smith, The Wealth of Nations, selections*, begin Rousseau, Discourse on the Origin of Inequality (if you are reading from the book, read the main text—that means you do not need to read any preface or introduction, nor do you need to read the notes, although both the introduction and the notes are pretty interesting. You just read part I and part II.)

We look at Smith's focus on interdependence, and how Rousseau also locates interdependence as the key to society—but we also see Rousseau proposing a more fundamental socialization of the personality. The replacement of the freedom of the state of nature with an unfreedom of interdependence, but a moral freedom elevating us above the animals. We can be good, if we act socially, that is, generally.

Week 4 (Monday, February 12, Wednesday, February 14): **Rousseau-Kant**

Required Reading: Finish Rousseau, Discourse on the Origin of Inequality; Rousseau, Social Contract, selections* **Note**: Kant is so tough I didn't assign any. If you wanted a single thing to read that has the most important parts of this discussion, it would be the short Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals.

Kant realizes the problem with Rousseau's answer—there must be a universal reason in which we all participate to determine what the good is. To act good is to act universally. In this, we have a moment of freedom, or at least no one can deny that we do.

Week 5 (Monday, February 19, Wednesday, February 21): **Hegel**

OPTIONAL Reading: G. W. F. Hegel, Philosophy of Right, annotated selections*; Smidgens from Hegel, Phenomenology, Feuerbach, Critique of Hegel, and The Essence of Christianity, Stirner, The Ego and His Own. **Note**: this reading is so difficult that very few people would have a go at it; I have put it in your reader for you to follow in lecture if you so desire. Other folks should use this pause to make sure they are caught up on previous reading.

Hegel can't stand the limitations Kant puts on the human spirit's freedom—it's wholly "formal". Hegel says that our freedom isn't in doing what's timelessly universal, but keepin' in step with the development of human spirit throughout world history. Feuerbach suggests that all the fancy-schmancy stuff Hegel's talking about ("spirit" like it's some kind of god, or God too, for that matter) is really our selves, and Hegel's got it all backwards. Marx and Engels then run Hegel's history upside-down, producing the theory of dialectical materialism. Note: We'll probably get a half-week behind here, but will catch up with week 8 being a half-week. Does that make sense?

Week 6 (Monday, February 26, Wednesday, February 28): **Marx—dialectical materialism**

Required Reading: Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, The German Ideology, selections.*

Any explanation must start from real material needs, and the way those needs are satisfied. The social organization of how we go about satisfying those needs is the most important thing going on, and from that develop all our ideas.

Week 7 (Monday, March 5; Wednesday, March 7): **Marx—the relations of production; productive force**

Required Reading: Marx, Preface to the contribution to the critique*

Not only that, but there's a specific logic to the development of this social organization—it follows a "dialectic" just like Hegel thought that the development of spirit followed a dialectic. But this one, say Marx and Engels, is real.

Week 8 (Monday, March 12): **End Marx, back to Kant AND MIDTERM!**

This fundamentally historical approach to society is sure different from Kant's, huh? But it is like Hegel. As you might guess, social thinkers have to make a choice—stand with Kant and ponder the timeless questions of freedom, or stand with Hegel (and Marx) and assume that there is no one question of freedom. Durkheim will try to have it both ways, but when push comes to shove, he's throws in his lot with Kant. Today will also serve as a review for the midterm.

!!! DANGER DANGER MIDTERM MIDTERM DANGER DANGER !!!

Wednesday, March 14: **In class midterm. Be there or be ...**

Week 9 (Monday, March 19; Wednesday, March 21): **Durkheim: Dependence and the Division of Labor**

Required Reading: Emile Durkheim, The Division of Labor.*

If you are using the book, read 1-7, 11-12 (till section I begins), 16 (begin with section II)-17 (end when he starts talking about marital relationships), 21 (begin first full paragraph)-24 (end where III begins), 38f (start at the bottom of the page and read the long paragraph that runs over to page 39). Now turn to page 60. Durkheim describes the “mechanical” solidarity of simple societies where “everyone is the same” (because there’s no division of labor). Read the paragraph at the bottom of page 60 and carrying over to the next page. Now turn to 83. Durkheim here starts discussing the other type of solidarity (organic solidarity) that you find in a “modern” society with a high division of labor. Start reading where section IV begins, and read to the end of the chapter on page 86. Read from the last paragraph on page 122 till the end of the next page. Read 126-127; stop near the bottom of 127 where Durkheim writes “What is more, they sustain...”. Read 132-133, stop after “The history of these two types...”. Read 149-155 (stop after the first two lines on 155), read from “summing up (middle of page 162) to the middle of 163 (end with “upset in another”). Read 173 (start with the third line and ignore “Consequently”) to the end of 174, 291-292 (stop where I begins), read 301 (start with III) – 305 (just the first three lines) (and note on page 304 that when Durkheim says “these examples”, he means examples of nasty, exploitative division of labor, like hereditary slavery). Read 306 (From “The foregoing...”) to the end of 308, 323-328, 331-337 (end where III begins).

I review Comte and Spencer and the development of the organismic metaphor, which leads to a new take on the division of labor. Durkheim picks up from here, and revisits the Kantian question of autonomy. All the Rousseauian critics think that modern society, via the dependence produced by the division of labor, has made us unfree, immoral, and unhappy. Durkheim sets out to prove them wrong! Yay, society! Back to the organismic metaphor.

Week 10 (Monday, March 26; Wednesday, March 28): **Durkheim: Social constraint**

Required Reading: Durkheim, Moral Education, Chapter 1.* Durkheim then asks, what is morality? It involves rules, he says, but he dismisses the idea that there has to be **one** formula for how to generate these rules, like Kant’s categorical imperative.

Pick him up page 26, second full paragraph, “Thus, it is not necessary...” and read till end of chapter (p. 32). The next chapter begins with Durkheim reviewing what came before, I strongly suggest you read this beginning, but you may also skip to page 37 and pick up there with “In the first place” and read to end of the chapter (46). Start with “In sum, “ on page 54 (1st full paragraph) and read to page 69, stopping at the end of the first full paragraph (end with “out behavior”). Read 71 (from third line) to the end of 73 (stop at “Up to this point”); then read from the last paragraph on page 85 (“We have just shown”) to the first line on page 87 (end with “social product”). (I suggest you read to the middle of page 90, but you don’t have to. Similarly, you might want to take a look at Durkheim’s discussion of Kant 108-110.) Then read 111-122 (stop where there’s a break in the text). You’re done!

Having saved society’s rep, Durkheim answers Kant’s basic question—yes, we’re free only so long as we’re not animal-free, but society-free... which sounds a lot like being unfree. Hobbes without the cynicism.

Week 11 (Monday, April 9; Wednesday, April 11): **Durkheim: What brings us together and what happens when it ain’t there.**

Required Reading: Durkheim, Suicide*.

First of all, we start after Durkheim defines suicide (guess what—it's when you kill yourself). Pick him up on page 46, section II, read to page 53. Then Durky finds that religion can lower the suicide rate. Now read 171-173, but just the first paragraph on page 173. Then 179-189 (stop at III), 197 (start at IV)-202 (stop at V). Then Emile examines national crises (we skip this), now pick up at "These facts" on page 208, and read to 216. Then 241-257. The next section is hard and a bit tricky, but have a go anyway...it's interesting. That's 321-325. Now read 378 (start at III)-384. You're done!

Okay, maybe it doesn't sound too convincing, that we're free when society bosses us around, but think about what happens when society doesn't boss us around! It's even worse, isn't it!

NOTE THAT SPRING BREAK CRUELLY DISRUPTS THE NEXT WEEK!

SPRING BREAK MARCH 31-APRIL 8

Week 12 (Monday, April 16; Wednesday, April 18): **Weber: Politics/Science as a vocation**

Required Reading: Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," selections*

Weber's stuck with the same problem, but he doesn't have to prove society is god, so he can emphasize the rigorous discipline and constraint required by the modern ethical dude with no illusions. This is a guy who liked to march by himself.

Week 13 (Monday, April 23; Wednesday, April 25): **Weber: Types of orientations and their conflicts**

Required Reading: Max Weber, start "Religious Rejections of the World," selections, in From Max Weber*.

Okay, but maybe the rest of the world was marching with him—off into separate corners. The separation and purification of spheres of value—an irreversible change in modern history... "rationalization!" We use this to get at Weber's way of conceiving of social institutions as if they were designed to carry out some ideal type of action, or motivation.

Week 14 (Monday, April 30; Wednesday, May 2): **Weber and conclusion to the project of theory.**

Required Reading: finish Max Weber, "Religious Rejections," read Economy and Society, selections*. From this orientation to the individual actor, Weber derives an approach to sociology; indeed, the same basic patterns that describe individual action can be used to describe important aspects of huge groups. Coincidence? Pattern?Mur-der? You be the judge.

Week 15 (Monday, May 7; Wednesday, May 9): **The Future and the Past.** Here we draw the threads together and see to what extent a coherent sociological project had been established. We also will review for the final exam.