

---

# SOC 212: CLASSICAL SOCIAL THEORY – SMITH, MARX, WEBER, DURKHEIM

**DR. RICHARD WESTERMAN**

*Fall 2015; Tues & Thurs, 11.00am to 12.20pm; Education 164*

*Office Hours: Weds 12.00 to 2.00pm*

*Email: [rwesterm@ualberta.ca](mailto:rwesterm@ualberta.ca)*

*Teaching Asst: Burcu Ozdemir, [burcu@ualberta.ca](mailto:burcu@ualberta.ca)*

---

## CONTENTS

|                                       |           |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Course Outline</b> .....           | <b>2</b>  |
| Course Objectives .....               | 2         |
| Course Format .....                   | 3         |
| Reading Material .....                | 3         |
| Workload .....                        | 3         |
| Additional Instruction .....          | 3         |
| <b>Reading Schedule</b> .....         | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>Course Policies</b> .....          | <b>7</b>  |
| Grade Components .....                | 7         |
| Grading Scheme .....                  | 7         |
| Penalty Policies .....                | 8         |
| Mandatory Notices & Regulations ..... | 9         |
| <b>Paper Topics</b> .....             | <b>11</b> |
| <b>Bibliography</b> .....             | <b>17</b> |

---

# COURSE OUTLINE

Sociology shows us how individual experiences are shaped by the social and historical context we live in. It helps develop what C. Wright Mills called ‘the sociological imagination’ – our ability to understand our lives and problems in the context of broader social structures. Social Theorists try to bring together all the many insights of different areas of sociology into a coherent explanation of these structures. This course provides an introduction to social theory through the systematic work of four foundational thinkers in the field. **Adam Smith** (1723-90) is seen as the founder of modern economics, deriving his social theory from the idea of an individual’s rational self-interest. **Karl Marx** (1818-83) criticized Smith for his lack of historical perspective; for Marx, human behaviour is shaped by the logic of specific social relationships, not some transhistorical essence. **Max Weber** (1864-1920) falls between Smith and Marx, recognizing the importance of history and social relationships, but returning to a focus on understanding the social action of individuals. Finally, **Émile Durkheim** (1858-1917) presents a radical challenge to Smith, Marx, and Weber, by asking how society as a whole was able to maintain itself on the analogy of a biological organism. These four thinkers have shaped contemporary debates on social, economic, and political policies; understanding their contribution will help you make more sense of the modern world.

## Course Objectives

‘Classical Social Theory’ is a *required* course for Sociology majors, and is a prerequisite for higher-level social theory courses offered by the department. The skills and knowledge we aim to develop in this course will provide a solid foundation for other Sociology courses; for those who are not Sociology majors, these skills may be useful in other contexts. There are three main types of objective:

### 1. Specific Knowledge:

We will introduce you to the basic concepts, methods, arguments, and conclusions of four theorists who are considered foundational in shaping the way we think about the social sciences: Smith is seen as the founder of modern economic theory, whilst Marx, Weber, and Durkheim shaped the way modern sociologists think about the world. All four are treated as points of reference by subsequent writers on society. Understanding their claims and the way they developed an interpretation of society will give you insights into the origins of contemporary debates about social and economic policies, and explore the origins of the modern world. It is just as important to understand the ideas of those you disagree with as it is to understand those you like.

### 2. Theoretical Methods:

Our four theorists are all distinguished by specific methodological innovations: each starts from unique premises and builds an argument in his own way. Their conclusions are the logical consequence of their starting points. By unpacking their logic and methods, you will develop your ability to make a coherent and consistent argument about society, and therefore be able to present your own opinion about contemporary problems in a more rigorous and convincing way.

### 3. Critical & Creative Skills:

The texts we read are dense and complicated; they are not always easy to understand. You will be expected to puzzle out the meaning of specific concepts, or identify the logical stages of the arguments made in these texts, as well as building your own claims in extended written papers that interpret these texts. These skills will be useful in any course involving paper-writing. Beyond this, the ability to express yourself clearly, concisely, and persuasively is essential in your life after graduation. In addition, these skills are tested directly in entrance exams for graduate studies and professional schools, such as the GRE, LSAT, MCAT, and GMAT. If you are considering such courses, some of the exercises we practice in seminars will help prepare for such examinations, and are modelled on the sort of tasks found in them.

---

## Course Format

This course includes a combination of lectures and seminars. **Both lectures and classes will be organised around a series of primary-text readings, which are available as pdfs on eClass.** Powerpoint slides from class will be made available at the end of each week on eClass. You are expected to **read the set texts in advance of class:** if you do not, you will not be able to follow the lecture properly. Normally Thursday classes are lectures, and Tuesday classes are seminars; this is reversed in the final week of classes.

- **Lectures** will give you a general overview of the material we cover: the goal of lectures is to give you a core foundation of knowledge about the theorists we read, which you can draw on when writing your papers. Assigned readings may be a little longer, but easier to skim.
- **Seminars** give you chance to practice reading, analysis, and critical thinking. Substantial evidence shows that active learning (in which students work things out for themselves) is much more effective than passive learning. You will be working in groups to answer questions on a short extract taken from the assigned reading. **Even if you read nothing else, please be sure to look at this extract in advance:** if you are properly prepared, you'll gain more from in-class work.

## Reading Material

The course will be centred on **readings from primary texts**, i.e. extracts from the writings of Smith, Marx, Weber, and Durkheim. Learning about these theorists from their own works ensures that you get the most accurate possible picture of their work, as well as developing your reading skills through having to puzzle out their meaning for yourselves. These **texts will be available as pdfs on the course eClass website;** you will also find a full bibliography later in this syllabus, should you wish to purchase the books for yourself. We will **not be working from a textbook**, but if you want one, I recommend *The Making of Social Theory* by **Anthony Thomson** (Oxford University Press) as an **optional extra**.

## Workload

Because of the amount and difficulty of the reading, the amount of writing, and the importance of class participation, this course has a **relatively heavy workload for a 200-level course**. In a typical week, you will read **40-50 pages of primary text** from Smith, Marx, Weber, or Durkheim; this may be slightly more or less in some weeks. You will **write 11-16 pages** in total for the **four papers** (2-3 pages for the first three and 5-7 pages for the take-home exam) in the course, and complete **one reading comprehension assignment**, which should take you **2-3 hours** to complete. (Similar tasks in professional-school exams are allotted 35-45 minutes for slightly more questions, but you won't be under exam conditions.)

You should therefore **consider seriously whether or not you are willing to put in the work required for a good grade**. If you are a non-sociology major looking to add some general-interest sociology courses, the department offers a number of large-class courses at 100 and 200 level; contact Pam Minty (pminty@ualberta.ca), our undergrad coordinator, for details. If you are a sociology major required to take this course, it is also offered by other professors: you may find their approaches more amenable. If you are simply looking for a relatively-light course, this is probably not the class for you; however, if you're willing to put in the effort, I hope you'll find your reading, writing, and critical thinking abilities will develop through this.

## Additional Instruction

I am here to help: whether you're having difficulty understanding a concept, figuring out what's required for an assignment, or just want general advice, feel free to drop by my office hours (**Tory 6-22, Weds 12-2**) or make an appointment to see me or our TA if you can't come by on those days. You can also **email with questions**. I may not be able to respond to emails immediately; therefore, if you have questions regarding your papers, you should email at least **48 hours before the deadline** to be sure of a response in time to be useful. Please note that **I do not normally answer emails over the weekend**. I organize **peer-review workshops** shortly before each paper is due. In these workshops, you'll be put in small groups to read and advise on one another's papers. I'll provide details on these when making arrangements for them.

---

## READING SCHEDULE

You should submit **hard copies of your papers in class**, with the exception of the take-home final exam, which should be submitted to the Sociology Department office in Tory 5-21 by **1 p.m.** on Weds 9<sup>th</sup> Dec.

**Thurs 24<sup>th</sup> Sept:** Writing Assignment 1 – Smith: Logic.  
**Thurs 15<sup>th</sup> Oct:** Reading Comprehension: Smith & Marx.  
**Thurs 29<sup>th</sup> Oct:** Writing Assignment 2 – Marx: Concepts.  
**Thurs 19<sup>th</sup> Nov:** Writing Assignment 3 – Weber: Debates.  
**Weds 9<sup>th</sup> Dec:** Writing Assignment 4: Take-Home Final

### Adam Smith

Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* is usually seen as the founding text of modern economic theory. Smith starts from the assumption that he can predict what individuals are going to do in specific circumstances – they will usually act according to their rational self-interest. We'll be analysing his account to see how he uses his method to explain the growth of the division of labour, the division of society into certain classes, and the economic progress of a nation. However, Smith was not just an economist: his first major work, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, uses a similar individualistic method to explain how we are socialised, and what role morals have in society. We'll read some passages from this to get a complete picture of Smith's social theory.

- Tues 1<sup>st</sup> Sep:**                   **Introduction (Lec):**  
Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, I.1-4.
- Thurs 3<sup>rd</sup> Sep:**               **The Price of Everything and the Value of Nothing (Lec):**  
Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, I.7-20; 32-34; 53-65; 351-2.
- Tues 8<sup>th</sup> Sep:**               **Class Conflict (Sem):**  
Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, I.; 72-77; 88-90; 132-3; 136-40; 152-8; 275-8.
- Thurs 10<sup>th</sup> Sep:**           **Bringing up Baby (Lec):**  
Adam Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 9-19; 78-81; 109-116; 127-32; 158-61; 212-6;
- Tues 15<sup>th</sup> Sep:**           **The Moral Economy (Sem):**  
Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations* I.367; I.477-80; II.301-9; *Theory of Moral Sentiments* 82-6; 181-5; 231-4.
- Thurs 17<sup>th</sup> Sep:**           **Writing Class #1:**  
See worksheet on eClass.

### Karl Marx

Karl Marx's thought is particularly difficult to summarize: he combined German philosophy, French socialism, and British political economy. Marx's thought has been enormously influential: the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China both looked to his work, and he has inspired countless revolutions over the past century. We'll focus on the substance of his social theory, looking at his theory of history and social development, then his analysis of contemporary society, and concluding with his arguments for revolution.

- Tues 22<sup>nd</sup> Sep:**           **Selling Your Soul? (Sem):**  
Marx, 'Economic & Philosophical Manuscripts' in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings* 83-95.

**WRITING ASSIGNMENT I - SMITH: SUBMIT IN CLASS, THURS 24<sup>TH</sup> SEP**

- 
- Thurs 24<sup>th</sup> Sep:**           **The Riddle of History Solved (Lec):**  
Marx, ‘The German Ideology,’ in *KMSW* 175-84; 187-90; 192-5; ‘Preface to a Critique of Political Economy,’ in *KMSW* 424-7; *Capital*, 667-73; 676-81; 685.
- Tues 29<sup>th</sup> Sept:**           **Consumer Society (Sem):**  
Marx, *Capital* I.43-8; 76-87.
- Thurs 1<sup>st</sup> Oct:**           **The Exploitation of the Workers (Lec):**  
Marx, *Capital*, I.145-53; 164-72; 180-90; 296-99.
- Tues 6<sup>th</sup> Oct:**           **Class Conflict (Sem):**  
Marx, ‘Communist Manifesto’ in *KMSW* 245-55; *Capital* 318-20; 334-7; 339-41.
- Thurs 8<sup>th</sup> Oct:**           **The Collapse of Capitalism (Lec):**  
Marx, *Capital* I.300-4; 372-5; 380-5; 574-6; 589-604; 713-5.
- Tues 13<sup>th</sup> Oct:**           **Necessity or Utopia? (Sem):**  
Marx, ‘Communist Manifesto’ in *KMSW* 255-71; ‘18<sup>th</sup> Brumaire’ in *KMSW* 329-32.

**READING COMPREHENSION: SUBMIT IN CLASS, THURS 15<sup>TH</sup> OCT**

**Max Weber**

With Max Weber, we return from Marx’s focus on economic social structures to the realm of individual action. However, Weber goes beyond Smith’s single variable of individual self-interest, and suggests that other motives – including cultural and religious values – might be behind our action. An interpretive sociology that tries to explain these motives will give us insights into the overall structures of any given society. We’ll combine discussions of Weber’s methods with some of the studies he did (such as *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*) that show his method in action. We will conclude by looking at his rationalization hypothesis – his claim that modern society has become increasingly rationalized, and his definition of this.

- Thurs 15<sup>th</sup> Oct:**           **Interpretive Sociology (Lec):**  
Weber, *Economy & Society*, 3-13; 19-26; Weber, *Protestant Ethic & The Spirit of Capitalism*, 39-43; 53-56; 69-73.
- Tues 20<sup>th</sup> Oct:**           **Actions and their Consequences (Sem):**  
Weber, *Protestant Ethic*, 13-19; 36-38; 102-9; 120-5.
- Thurs 22<sup>nd</sup> Oct:**           **Class, Status, Power (Lec):**  
Weber, *Economy & Society* 921-39.
- Tues 27<sup>th</sup> Oct:**           **Power & Domination (Sem):**  
Weber, *Economy & Society* 53; 212-20; 241-5.
- Thurs 29<sup>th</sup> Oct:**           **Rationalization & Modernity (Lec):**  
Weber, *Economy & Society* 71-2; 85-9; 118-20; 136-8; 654-8; 956-8; 973-5 *Protestant Ethic* xxviii-xxxiii.

**WRITING ASSIGNMENT 2 –MARX: SUBMIT IN CLASS, THURS 29<sup>TH</sup> OCT**

- Tues 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov:**           **The Ethics of Reason (Sem):**  
Weber, *Politics as Vocation*, 309-13; 352-69; *Science as Vocation*, 138-41; 143-45; 155-6.

---

**Thurs 5<sup>th</sup> Nov:**           **Writing Class #2:**  
See worksheet on eClass.

**Tues 10<sup>th</sup> Nov:**           **Reading Week: No class**

**Thurs 12<sup>th</sup> Nov:**           **Reading Week: No class**

### **Émile Durkheim**

Like Weber, our final theorist, Émile Durkheim, noticed a statistical difference between Protestants and Catholics – but where Weber had argued that Protestantism led to wealth, Durkheim point out that it also entailed significantly higher rates of suicide. Durkheim sought to explain this by looking to society as a whole: his method starts from the assumption that we should try to understand the system of society as a complete and integrated totality, in which every part has a function.

**Tues 17<sup>th</sup> Nov:**           **The Social Aspects of an Individual Act (Lec):**  
Durkheim, *Suicide*, 46-51; 152-6; 168-70; 217-21; 241-3; 254-8; 278-87

**Thurs 19<sup>th</sup> Nov:**           **Individual & Society (Sem):**  
Durkheim, *Suicide*, 208-213; 306-20

#### **WRITING ASSIGNMENT 3 –WEBER: SUBMIT IN CLASS, THURS 19<sup>TH</sup> NOV**

**Tues 24<sup>th</sup> Nov:**           **Supporting the Team (Lec):**  
Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, 33-39; 208-225; 303-4; 313-6; 330-1; 390-1

**Thurs 26<sup>th</sup> Nov:**           **The Functional Analysis of Society (Lec):**  
Durkheim, *Division of Labour in Society*, 11-16; 31-34; 38-43; 60-64; 68-71; 83-86; 101-5; 126-8; 132; 200-5.

**Tues 1<sup>st</sup> Dec:**           **The Sickness of Society (Sem):**  
Durkheim, *Division of Labour in Society*, 291-4; 301-8; 310-13; 318-26.

**Thurs 3<sup>rd</sup> Dec:**           **Conclusion (Lec):**  
Durkheim, *Division of Labour in Society*, xxv-xlvi.

#### **WRITING ASSIGNMENT 4 –TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAM SUBMIT TO SOC DEPT OFFICE TORY 5/21 BY 1 P.M. ON WEDS 9<sup>TH</sup> DEC**

---

# COURSE POLICIES

## Grade Components

There will be **no in-class examinations, either midterm or final**. Instead, your final grade will be composed of *Reading* (20%), *Writing* (70%), and *Class Participation* (10%) as follows:

- **10% Seminar Participation:** Attendance at Thursday seminars is **obligatory**. To get a good grade for participation, however, requires more than just attendance. You will need to speak out in group discussions in a way that shows you have read and thought about the texts. Don't be afraid to speak if you're unsure of an answer: participation is graded on *effort*, not just accuracy. You should **treat the opinions of others with respect**: disagree, but do so constructively and thoughtfully.
- **20% Reading Comprehension:** You will answer 40 questions on extracts from Smith & Marx, requiring close analysis of arguments and ideas. The passages may or may not be taken from those we discuss in class. This assignment will be released on eClass the week before the deadline. Your numerical score will be converted to a letter grade; the **provisional grade boundaries** are as follows (with the caveat that they may be tweaked to reflect the class curve):

| <i>Percentage</i> | <i>Grade</i> |
|-------------------|--------------|
| 95-100%           | A+           |
| 90-94%            | A            |
| 85-89%            | A-           |
| 80-84%            | B+           |
| 75-79%            | B            |
| 70-74%            | B-           |
| 65-69%            | C+           |
| 60-64%            | C            |
| 55-59%            | C-           |
| 50-54%            | D+           |
| 45-49%            | D            |
| 0-44%             | F            |

- **70% Writing:** You will write four papers, one on each writer:
  - **Smith & Logic (2-3 pages, 15% of grade):** describes the logical structure of Smith's theory, in order to test your ability to reconstruct and explain the stages of an argument.
  - **Marx & Concepts (2-3 pages, 15% of final grade):** outlines the meaning of *one* of Marx's concepts; tests your ability to explain an idea in depth, identifying its nuances.
  - **Weber & Debates (2-3 pages, 15% of final grade):** compares Weber's ideas with those of Marx and Smith; tests ability to identify key differences in an analytically-rigorous framework.
  - **Take-Home Exam: Durkheim (5-7 pages, 25% of final grade):** asks you to explain *either* the overall theory of a single theorist, *or* to compare two of the writers on a single core idea.

## Grading Scheme

Written papers will be graded on a letter scale, because the idea of **using percentages to assess writing is too stupid to merit further consideration**. In general, I grade on the premise that it should not be too difficult to achieve a grade in the B range (B-, B, B+), provided you have done the reading and attended classes; a grade in the A range, however, requires a little more original insight, or especially attentive reading and argument. The general boundaries are as follows, but **grading papers is not an exact science**:

- **A range:** Paper goes beyond summary and makes an original interpretative or argumentative claim, and/or concentrates on underlying themes in the texts, and/or manages to draw together an author's claim as a whole by focusing on (for example) methodological, logical, philosophical, or rhetorical aspects of an argument. It relies on close reading of important textual quotations to support its case.
- **B range:** Paper provides a competent, accurate, and comprehensive summary of the main points of the topic, with few relevant mistakes, supported by direct quotation from the text. The paper does enough to give a decent account of the general approach of the writers we are studying. At the top end of the range (B+), it will be very well organized, with plenty of textual evidence; it will make no significant errors.
- **C range:** Paper makes some effort to deal with the material at hand, but may (amongst other flaws) omit sections, fail to support its claims, fail to use direct evidence from the primary texts, fail to connect its paragraphs together, or make significant errors.
- **D range:** Paper makes little effort to connect claims to text, or relies on generalizations about the text without specific evidence, or makes numerous superficial and incorrect statements about authors. It will be disjointed, and shows no real engagement with the ideas we discuss.

## Penalty Policies

It is important that everyone be graded according to the same standards, and that no student is able to gain an advantage by unfair practices.

- **Assignments submitted after the deadline** will be penalized  $\frac{1}{3}$  **grade for every day past the deadline** (i.e. an A falls to an A- after one day, to a B+ after two days etc.)
- **Plagiarism will not be tolerated.** If you are caught plagiarizing, you may be summarily failed. I am required to write a report on any plagiarism for the Registrar's Office, and to direct you to the university's Code of Student Behaviour (<http://tinyurl.com/8dq67cy>).
- **Attendance at seminars is mandatory.** You will lose one-twelfth of a grade for each seminar you miss. If you miss seven or more seminars without good reason, you may be failed.
- Details on specific penalties applied to papers can be found on the **Paper Formatting Guide** on eClass.

However, all human life is struggle and despair: sometimes our best-laid plans come to naught, and problems arise. Therefore, you have **one 48-hour extension** to use at your discretion. You may use this for whichever assignment you choose, but you can't split it up (it must be used only on one assignment), and once it's gone, it's gone. Simply email me by **9 a.m. the day the assignment is due** to let me know. If you have not already used it, you do not need permission to activate it, nor do you need to explain why you're using it: it is entirely at your discretion, to help you take responsibility for organizing your own work. This is a writing extension only; I cannot give guidance on your paper after the regular deadline has passed.

Use a **free, automatic backup service** such as **Dropbox** ([www.dropbox.com](http://www.dropbox.com)) or **Google Drive**. Used correctly, these services will automatically backup your paper as you write and save it. **I will not accept computer crashes as an excuse for late submission:** you should use backup services such as this.

If you are still unable to submit work on time, then **please provide documentation for any excuse**. If you cannot provide such evidence, you will be subject to the usual penalties. For example, you might provide an accident report if you have a car accident, or a note from religious leader in the event of a conflict of religious conscience. **Plan your paper in detail beforehand:** if you can show that you had been working carefully on your paper before disaster struck, I am more likely to believe that any delay is not your fault. **Medical absences and lateness** can be excused in the following ways:

- *University of Alberta Medical Statement* signed by a doctor (this cannot be required, but must be accepted if provided in lieu of other documents), available at <http://goo.gl/n2g7jL>
- *Medical Declaration Form for Students* (for Faculty of Arts students), available at <http://goo.gl/j7EGFZ>
- *Statutory Declaration* (for students in Faculties other than Arts, to be obtained from home Faculty or Office of the Registrar)

---

## **Mandatory Notices & Regulations**

In its infinite wisdom, the University decrees that the following regulatory notices be included in every syllabus and course outline. Common sense might suggest that the University distribute a single copy of these notices to every student at the start of the year, rather than insisting they be duplicated on every syllabus. As we will learn when studying Weber on bureaucracy and Durkheim on abnormal forms of the division of labour, however, administrations such as those in charge of these matters operate on unthinking conformity to regulation, and are often so starved of important and productive tasks that they fill time writing needlessly-specific regulations that get in the way of actual learning. With that in mind, please note the following:

### ***Required Notes:***

Policy about course outlines can be found in Section 23.4(2) of the University Calendar.

### ***Academic Integrity:***

The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Code of Student Behaviour (see <http://tinyurl.com/8dq67cy>) and avoid any behaviour that could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from University.

### ***Learning and working environment:***

The Faculty of Arts is committed to ensuring that all students, faculty and staff are able to work and study in an environment that is safe and free from discrimination and harassment. It does not tolerate behaviour that undermines that environment. The department urges anyone who feels that this policy is being violated to:

- Discuss the matter with the person whose behaviour is causing concern; or
- If that discussion is unsatisfactory, or there is concern that direct discussion is inappropriate or threatening, discuss it with the Chair of the Department.

For additional advice or assistance regarding this policy you may contact the student ombudservice: (<http://www.ombudservice.ualberta.ca/>). Information about the University of Alberta Discrimination and Harassment Policy and Procedures can be found in the GFC Policy Manual, section 44 available at <http://gfcpolicymanual.ualberta.ca/>.

### ***Recording of Lectures:***

Audio or video recording of lectures, labs, seminars or any other teaching environment by students is allowed only with the prior written consent of the instructor or as a part of an approved accommodation plan. Recorded material is to be used solely for personal study, and is not to be used or distributed for any other purpose without prior written consent from the instructor.

### ***Plagiarism and Cheating:***

**All students** should consult the “Truth-In-Education” handbook (<http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/TIE/>) regarding the definitions of **plagiarism** and its consequences when detected. **Students involved in language courses and translation courses** should be aware that on-line “translation engines” produce very dubious and unreliable “translations.” **Students in language courses** should be aware that, while seeking the advice of native or expert speakers is often helpful, **excessive editorial and creative help** in assignments is considered a form of “cheating” that violates the code of student conduct with dire consequences. An instructor or coordinator who is convinced that a student has handed in work that he or she could not possibly reproduce without outside assistance is obliged, out of consideration of fairness to other students, to report the case to the Associate Dean of the Faculty. Before unpleasantness occurs consult <http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/TIE/> ; also discuss this matter with any tutor(s) and with your instructor.

---

### **Dealing with problems**

Of course, sometimes everything comes tumbling down at once. You have four midterms, you fall sick, and your boyfriend or girlfriend leaves you for your best friend. If this happens, it's better to **let me know as soon as possible**. I'm happy to help you get back on your feet and make allowances, provided you can show me that the problems are genuine, not just the result of too many late nights on Whyte Avenue. Therefore, **please provide documentation** for any illnesses or other external problems. If your problems are more general, such as a lack of organisation or an inability to concentrate, then I'll want evidence that you are developing a strategy to overcome these problems. You should also **consult the Student Counselling service** (<http://www.uhc.ualberta.ca/StudentCounsellingServices.aspx>), who have lots of experience in helping people get things in order. At any rate, whatever the issue, it's much easier to deal with it when it arises, rather than leaving it until three weeks after the term ends.

---

# PAPER TOPICS

## Overview

Written papers serve two purposes. Firstly, they are meant to **show me you've understood and thought about the material we cover in class**. Secondly, they practice and develop your ability to **express yourself in a clear, concise, persuasive way**: in this sense, writing papers is a learning exercise as much as a test of what you can already do. The four assignments are designed to build on one another so as to develop your writing abilities step-by-step, and to prepare less-confident writers for tackling longer tasks.

To this end, each task is quite narrowly defined. You should **focus on interpretation and analysis of the theories we read**: you will be explaining the ways each theory fits together, and how its premises lead to its conclusions within an overall system. You **do not have to develop an original theory**, and you should **emphatically not use the papers to pontificate in general terms about society**. Before each paper, I will explain in class what is expected of the assignment; you should also see the various paper planning guides on eClass. In brief, however, this is how the goals of the assignments fit together:

**Paper 1: Smith's Logic** – you will explain the basic **logical deductions** Smith makes from **basic premises of sympathy or self-interest**. Focus on explaining why he is so certain of his conclusions.

**Paper 2: Marx's Concepts** – you will explain the **meaning and importance** of one of Marx's complex concepts, by showing **what consequences must logically follow** from the way he defines it. You will use the same skills of logical analysis as in paper 1, but with more difficult ideas from Marx.

**Paper 3: Weber & Debates** – you will **explain (not merely describe) differences** between Weber and *either* Smith *or* Marx, by showing how their different basic concepts or methods must **logically lead them to different conclusions**.

**Paper 4 (Take-Home Exam): Durkheim & Final Paper** – your final assignment asks you to step back for a broader perspective, and consider the **overall logic of their systems**, or the **implications for a grand theory of society**. However, you will still be expected to remain focused on the **logical deductions** in each writer's case: show how their theories fit together as a whole.

I will provide detailed advice on writing papers during the semester, but here are brief guidelines:

- **Write the question at the top of the paper.** You must answer the questions assigned; you cannot invent your own question.
- There's a **Paper Formatting Guide** on eClass, along with Word doc templates for your paper. In brief, use **1.5 or double line spacing** and **11 or 12 point standard font**, with margins of **2.5 cm all round**. Don't forget to use **direct quotations from primary texts**: this is the evidence to support your claim.
- Use plenty of relevant quotes from the texts we read. Full publication details are in the **Bibliography**.
- **Don't quote from my Powerpoint slides, secondary literature or outside sources** (e.g. Thompson). This is not relevant to the sort of skills I want us to develop in this course: you should be reading the texts we study as closely as possible, and trying to explain them on their own terms.
- **Late papers** will be penalized **one-third of a grade for every day overdue** – thus, an A- would become a B+ on the first day late, then a B on the second day late. Papers more than three days late will receive only a grade and a single line of comments. Papers more than a week late will not be accepted. Remember, you have **one 48-hour extension** to use at your discretion; just let me know the paper will come in late, and submit to either **Tory 5-21** or **email it to me**.

Feel free to stop by my office hours, or to email our TA for an appointment, if you'd like to talk about the papers. However, **we cannot and will not read complete drafts of your paper** – only plans. I will also arrange Peer Review Workshops before each paper; I'll send round details in due course. This will be your only opportunity to have someone look at a full draft.

---

## **Paper 1: Smith's Logic; 2-3 pages; submit in class, Thurs 24<sup>th</sup> Sept**

This assignment tests your ability to **reconstruct and explain** the logic behind an argument, by looking at the methods of argument that Smith uses to make his case. You should be sure to **highlight the logical deductions**: outline his *basic premises*, his *deductions*, and his *conclusions*, and perhaps suggest how this exemplifies his overall theory of society. Do not simply summarise details; show they fit together in a logical argument. A good paper will give your reader enough understanding of Smith's argument to be able to apply the same logic to different examples. **Choose either Task A or Task B**, and write a single **two to three page** paper.

### **Either Task A: Smith's Narrative**

Outline the **logical steps** by which **Smith explains one of the following**.

*Start with either Self-Interest or Sympathy. Show how these premises allow Smith to predict why each of these things emerges, and how it might develop, through step-by-step deductions. You might want to think about these questions when planning your paper, but they do not constitute an exact outline: What is it, how did it first emerge in society, and how does it operate now? How does it exemplify Smith's overall theory of society?*

1. The emergence of the division of labour.
2. Social conflict between classes or 'orders.'
3. Morality.
4. The growth of national wealth.
5. The psychology of the individual.

### **Or Task B: Applying Smith's Logic**

**Deduce**, from his premises, **what Smith would advise** for one of these contemporary issues, and **outline the logical steps** of the deduction, **referring to parallel examples in the text**.

*Show how Smith would use either Self-Interest or Sympathy to understand the effects of government intervention in each case. You might want to think about these questions when planning your paper, but they do not constitute an exact outline: what would self-interest or sympathy naturally produce? Why might people call for government regulation or other restrictions? How does Smith use self-interest or sympathy to explain the effects of such interventions? What overall conclusion does he come to?*

6. Unemployment Insurance & Welfare.
7. Professional Qualifications & Apprenticeships.
8. Protection of National Industries.
9. Immigration.
10. Infrastructure Development.

---

## Paper 2: Marx's Concepts; 2-3 pages; submit in class Thurs 29<sup>th</sup> Oct

This assignment tests your ability to **explain and analyse a single concept**, and to show **the role it plays in a larger theoretical system or methodological approach**. You will need to explain the **specific meaning of the concept you choose**: how does it differ from other, related ideas in Marx's system? Why does Marx decide to use a particular word for this idea? Is this concept a specialized instance of another, broader idea in his system? You should also **describe the nuances of the concept you choose**: what different aspects does Marx identify? Does he subdivide it at all? **How does Marx use this concept?** What role does it play in his overall system? Why is it important to him? How does he try to convince us of its importance?

**Choose one of the following concepts, and write 2-3 pages** describing the idea and its role in Marx's theory. **Define the concept** and show its **consequences in the broader system of capitalism**.

(Note: *italicised prompts* are to suggest possible things to consider only; **they are written deliberately so as not to constitute an exact plan, so you should not simply write answers to all of them.**)

### 1. Commodity Fetishism

*What is a commodity? How do use value, exchange value, and Value figure in its definition? How does Marx draw on Smith in the way he defines commodities? What is 'fetishism'? What is the effect of viewing commodities as representatives of Value? How does commodity fetishism affect relations between individuals? What causes commodity fetishism? Why is commodity fetishism so important in capitalist society in particular? What are the long-term effects of the pursuit of Value through commodity fetishism?*

### 2. Capitalism

*How does capitalist society compare to earlier forms, such as feudalism? How does Marx define and distinguish different modes of production? What are the key features of capitalism? How does Marx's definition of capitalism exemplify his materialist conception of history overall? In what ways is capitalism 'better' than earlier forms of society? What problems does Marx identify with capitalism, and why are they inherent to its very structure? In what sense does capitalism lead logically to communism?*

### 3. Surplus Value

*How does Marx's definition of value and price relate to Smith's? Why does Marx think surplus value is so important for capitalism in particular? How are capitalists able to make profits? What's the difference between necessary and surplus labour? What's the relation between surplus labour and surplus value? How do capitalists increase surplus value? Why are proletarians willing to work for longer than necessary? What is exploitation? How does the search for surplus value lead to technological progress? Why does Marx think capitalists will be unable to maintain high rates of surplus value and profit? How does competition affect rates of surplus value? What are the long-term consequences of this search for surplus value? How does it contribute to the economic crises of capitalism?*

### 4. Class

*How does Marx define classes in general, relative to a mode of production? What classes are there in capitalist society and in previous forms of society? Why does Marx think classes other than bourgeoisie and proletariat are unnecessary or unimportant in capitalism? What will happen to them? What's the relation between bourgeoisie and proletariat? What is exploitation? How do we identify what class an individual belongs to? How does Marx deduce the likelihood of class conflict? What would a 'classless' society look like?*

### 5. Consciousness

*How does Marx regard ideology? Why does he call language 'practical consciousness'? What is the division between mental and material labour? What relation is there between the ideological beliefs of a particular society and its underlying economic structure? What objects do our thoughts and ideas – e.g. freedom, God, love – represent? Where do we get our definitions of them? Is there any possibility of 'free' thought, independent of material circumstances? Why is it so important for the proletariat to be fully conscious of itself as a class, and what role does the Communist Party have in this?*

---

## Paper 3: Weber & Debates; 2-3 pages; submit in class Thurs 19<sup>th</sup> Nov

This assignment tests your ability to **compare different theories in a systematic way**, and to **distinguish between diverging approaches to the same idea**. You will compare Weber's approach to some of the social problems and phenomena we have encountered in the first half of the semester. **Don't just list the differences** between them; show how their **different methods** and starting-points **lead to their conclusions**. Remember to **highlight their similarities too**: this will set up your explanation of their differences. Try to find a structured way to explore their differences point by point. First, what do they *agree* on? Why? Are their differences due to their *varied methods*, their *basic assumptions*, the *logic* they use, or something else? How do their starting-points lead them to widely-differing conclusions about society?

**Choose one** of the following topics, and **explain why Weber** comes to such **different conclusions** from **EITHER Smith OR Marx** about it, by identifying differences in their premises, methods, logic, use of evidence, or any other reason you can find.

(Note: *italicised prompts* are to suggest possible things to consider only; **they are written deliberately so as not to constitute an exact plan, so you should not simply write answers to all of them.**)

### 1. Class

*Are classes defined as objective positions in an economic structure, or by the amount of resources an individual possesses? Is economic class the only form of social stratification? Why does Weber include other forms? Why don't Smith and Marx include them? Are people likely to feel any shared unity with others in the same class? Are classes likely to act together? Can we use class to predict the interests of a particular group of people? Is class a major source of social conflict? How does each theorist's methodological starting-point lead to different interpretations of class? What are the strengths and weaknesses of each approach?*

### 2. Religion

*How seriously do these writers take religious belief? Do they themselves have religious faith of some sort? Can religious beliefs affect society more generally? Do these authors use other factors to explain religion, or do they instead use religion to explain other factors? What causes religious beliefs? How do religious beliefs affect the ways individuals act? How do they affect the organization of society as a whole? What connections are there between religion and the economy?*

### 3. Individual Action

*How predictable is individual action? How do these authors think we know what individuals will do? What sort of motives for action do they identify? What is a 'motive' in each case? How certain can we be that a particular motive is behind a given action? Where do the motives of individual action come from? How strong are our motives, and will they completely define our actions? How far do individual actions shape society, and how far does society shape individual actions? Do we have any inherent human nature that defines our motives? How free are we to set our own motives?*

### 4. Power & Authority

*Why are some people in charge while others obey? Why do those lower down the social hierarchy obey those on top? How far does power rely on brute force? How did the current ruling group get on top? Do the dominant groups deliberately seek to oppress those below them? How far is power just a feature of the structure of society, and how far is it the result of open social struggles? What sort of things give us power?*

### 5. Economy & Society

*What connections are there between the economy and the rest of society? How far do economic matters define individual actions? Why might a theorist decide to start with economics & production when analysing society? How rigidly-structured is the economy? How predictable is economic action? Is the rest of society as predictable as the economy? How useful are economic models for understanding the rest of society? What other factors might we observe in society at large? Do these theorists think the economy explains other parts of society? How do other factors (e.g. status, force) interact with the economy?*

---

## Paper 4: Take-Home Final Exam, 5-7 pages: Sample Questions; due Weds 9<sup>th</sup> Dec, in Sociology Dept Office, Tory 5-21

Your final assignment is a take-home exam; you will receive the questions in the final class of the course, and submit a 5-7 page paper by Weds 9<sup>th</sup> Dec to the Sociology Department office. To help you prepare for the exam, I have provided a sample set of questions that indicate the types of questions and overall themes you will be asked about. You will make a deeper analytic and interpretive argument about the theories we have read and the ideas we have discussed. You should **problematize** the concepts and theories you discuss: what apparent contradiction or new idea will you explain, and why is it more complex than it at first seems? You should build on the skills practiced in earlier assignments. Remember: your goal should be to find a single key idea that explains the issues you describe as a whole. Don't just list details or summarise a narrative; instead, try to find a central guiding thought that explains everything else. **Choose one question from either Task A or Task B, and write a 5-7 page paper.**

### Task A: Grand Theories

**Choose one question below and focus on a single writer.** Find a **central theme, concept, or motif that underlies their theory**: what *single* thing would explain all the details and logic of their theory? Go beyond narrative description, and look at things like their logic, their methods, or underlying assumptions. Your paper should **bring together their entire theory**, rather than just focusing on one book – **refer to a range of their texts**. (Note: *italicised prompts* are to suggest possible things to consider only; **they are written deliberately so as not to constitute an exact plan, so you should not simply write answers to all of them.**)

1. Why did Adam Smith write a *Theory of Moral Sentiments* instead of a "Theory of Morality"?

*Is Smith trying to describe the perfect system of morality, or how we acquire moral feelings? What method does he use to explain the way our morality developed? Is he more 'scientific' or 'philosophical' in describing morality? How does his account of the development of morality support his more general claims about society? What role does the moral philosophy of TMS have for the economy of 'Wealth of Nations'? What argumentative advantages does he get from this method of describing morality? How does morality make us fit for society? How does morality fit in to his overall picture of the way society functions?*

2. What, for Karl Marx, is wrong with capitalism?

*Is Marx making a morally-normative or a technically-descriptive critique of capitalism? How does Marx define capitalism? Why is the M-C-M' cycle inherent to it? Is Marx completely negative about capitalism? What is the historical role of capitalism, e.g. how does it compare to feudalism? Why must capitalists always search in vain for more surplus value? What are the effects on the workers? What are the causes and effects of technological development? What role does the Communist party have? Why is class conflict inherent to capitalism, and does Marx blame the rich? In what ways is communism a 'logical' solution for Marx?*

3. Why does Max Weber think rationalisation counts as progress?

*What forms of rationality does Weber identify? How does rationality explain different forms of action? What are the differences between instrumental rationality and value rationality? What's the difference between formal and substantive rationality? What will happen when a 'more rational' business competes with a 'less rational' one? What is rationalisation as a social phenomenon? How can it be observed in the economy, law, and the state? How is rationalisation at a social level the result of individual rational actions? What problems are there with rationalisation, e.g. in the bureaucracy? What does it mean to 'progress'? Does Weber think we could go back to earlier, 'less rational' forms of society? Is rationalization entirely beneficial?*

4. For Émile Durkheim, why is the rise of individuality a good thing for society?

*Does Durkheim think individuality is a good thing in itself? Does he believe in individual rights for their own sake? What sort of societies foster individuality? What sort of problems might arise from excessive individualism? What does the evidence from 'Suicide' or 'Elementary Forms' suggest about the relation between individual and society? Why are societies of organic solidarity better than those held together by mechanical solidarity? Why did societies change from organic to mechanical solidarity? Why are the bonds of mechanical solidarity weaker than those of organic? Why is the division of labour such a good source of solidarity? Why is solidarity as such so important for him? What are social forces, and how does Durkheim argue for their existence?*

[Continued on next page.]

---

## **Task B: Concepts & Theories**

These tasks give you chance to consider some of the broader theoretical issues we have encountered throughout the semester, by comparing the different perspectives each type of theory has on these concepts. Try to **explain how a particular writer's understanding of each idea is shaped by the logic, assumptions, methods etc underlying their overall theory**; *explain* the differences between them by making **direct point-by-point comparisons**, rather than summarising each writer in separate sections. You **might instead take a stand of your own on the question**: if so, use the writers as your 'evidence,' and set up a debate between them. If so, **make clear which argument you find more persuasive**.

Choose **two writers, at least one of whom must be Weber or Durkheim**, and answer one of these questions. (Thus, you may write about Weber and Durkheim, or Durkheim and Smith, for example, but not Smith and Marx alone.)

(Note: *italicised prompts* are to suggest possible things to consider only; **they are written deliberately so as not to constitute an exact plan, so you should not simply write answers to all of them.**)

1. How do these writers know there's something 'wrong' with society?

*What's the difference between a descriptive and a normative approach to society? How far can a 'scientific' description of society show us problems? Is it just the case that the way we describe society is the way it is and should be? Or can we identify problems? How does Smith use the idea of 'natural' outcomes to criticise government intervention? How does Marx use the idea of immanent contradictions to predict the fall of capitalism? Why does too much rationalisation become a problem for Weber? In what ways can we talk about 'pathological' forms of the division of labour for Durkheim? Is it possible to develop a normative moral critique of society on a descriptive sociological analysis? What underlying moral commitments do they have?*

2. How far are we truly individual for these writers?

*Do we have any natural individuality? What sort of things develop our character? What is individuality? What sort of things guide or constrain our action? How far do cultural or religious motives affect choices we make? How do we develop things like conscience? What interest does society have in our individuality? How far can we analyse the actions of an individual only by reference to that individual, rather than to broader social context? What analytical advantages could we have from looking at individuals? What theoretical alternatives are there?*

3. What distinguishes the 'modern' world?

*How does each of these writers describe more 'primitive' societies? Why do they spend time describing 'primitive' societies? Are these earlier societies really worse places to live? What reasons do the writers offer to explain social change? How necessary was such change? Was it possible, according to their theories, to avoid 'modernisation'? What forces drove modernisation? What happened, in their view, to those who failed to modernise? What explains the success of societies that 'modernised'? How far do technological, economic, or intellectual developments explain modernization?*

4. Can ideas be effective forces in history?

*What sorts of things count as 'ideas'? How do these writers treat things like religion, ideology, political beliefs, or morality? Are these things causes or consequences of broader social forces? How do they relate to things like the economy? Can we explain individual actions by underlying social causes? How might motives change the way we act? How do these theorists use different ideas to explain the actions of people? Do ideas and beliefs operate most on individuals or at the level of society as a whole? What might be the effects of 'collective representations' or the collective conscience?*

5. Does society have its own logic, independent of the people who comprise it?

*What is the structure/agency debate? Where does each author sit on the structure/agency spectrum? What evidence is there for Durkheim's 'social forces' or social solidarity? What advantages might there be to Marx's analysis of the structural logic of capitalism? What does it help us explain? What cannot be explained by broader social features? Can everything be explained by reducing it to individual actions that are, in the final analysis, independent of society? How far are individuals shaped by society, and how far do they create it instead?*

---

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Durkheim, Émile (1979) *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*, trans. John A. Spaulding & George Simpson (New York: Free Press).
- Durkheim, Émile, (1984) *The Division of Labour in Society*, trans. W.D. Halls, (New York: Free Press).
- Durkheim, Émile, (1995), *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Karen E. Fields, (New York: Free Press).
- Marx, Karl, (2000a), 'Economic & Philosophical Manuscripts,' in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, ed. D. McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Marx, Karl, (2000b), 'The German Ideology,' in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, ed. D. McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Marx, Karl, (2000c), 'Manifesto of the Communist Party,' in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, ed. D. McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Marx, Karl, (2000d), 'Preface to a Critique of Political Economy,' in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, ed. D. McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Marx, Karl (1954) *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, vol 1, trans. S Moore & E Aveling (Moscow: Progress)
- Smith, Adam, (1976) *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, ed. Edwin Cannan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).
- Smith, Adam, (1982) *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. D.D Raphael & A.L. MacFie, (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund).
- Weber, Max, (1958), 'Science as a Vocation,' in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. H.H. Gerth & C. Wright Mills (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Weber, Max, (1978) *Economy & Society*, 2 vols. trans. G. Roth & C. Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press).
- Weber, Max (1992) *The Protestant Ethic & the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons, (London & New York: Routledge).
- Weber, Max, (1994), 'The Profession & Vocation of Politics' in *Political Writings*, ed. & trans. P. Lassman & R. Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).