

Sociology 212-A3
Classical Social Theory
T R 9:00AM – 11:50AM
HC 2 11

Instructor: Randi Nixon

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Office hours: By appointment

Course Description:

This course will provide an introduction to the life and work of theorists who are considered foundational to the discipline of sociology. In addition to learning the key themes and concepts of each thinker, we will analyze each of their methodological approaches to theory-building, as well as the social phenomena or problems that they sought to better understand or mitigate. Throughout the course we will continually be asking critical questions about the applicability (or not) of this work to contemporary social issues. Special emphasis will be put on the work of Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Emile Durkheim. Students will leave the course with a grasp on foundational sociological concepts and a strong understanding of how these concepts emerge from specific methodological and, at times, normative commitments.

Texts

- All course readings will be available on eClass, online, or through the University of Alberta library database.

Evaluation:

- Exams (2 X 30): 60%
- In-Class Participation: 15%
- Paper (5-6 pages): 25%

Additional Course Information:

1. *Reading Material:* In this course you will mostly be reading primary-texts, available as PDF's on eClass. Primary texts are difficult, but will give you the best sense of the authors we will be covering and will improve your reading skills. You should read the texts before class in order to follow the lecture and to participate in the discussions.
2. *Workload:* Given the amount and difficulty of the reading, the workload in this course may be experienced as heavy compared to other 200-level courses. The heaviness of the course will be compounded given that we are condensing an entire semester's worth of material into a 6-week period. There will be two written exams, ongoing participation assignments, and a final paper. Please seriously consider whether or not you are willing and able to put in the work required to get a good grade in this course. If you are not a Sociology major who is choosing

this as a general-interest or light Spring elective, this may not be the right course for you (however, there are many other Sociology courses that would be more appropriate – please contact me if you would like some guidance).

3. *Suggested Level of English:* Since we will be reading primary texts and writing expectations of the course, the suggested minimum level of English proficiency for non-fluent speakers is an IELTS score of *no lower than 7.0* in any component, a paper-based TOEFL score of *at least 600* (with at least 5.5 in the Test of Written English), or internet-based TOEFL score of *at least 110* with at least 24 in Reading and in Writing, a CAE score of A, or a CPE score of *at least B*. These scores are not prerequisites, but are meant to help you make an informed decision on whether to take the course.

Exams (May 24th & June 14th):

There will be two exams, each worth 30% of your total grade. The first exam will be on the material covered in Units I & II ('Foundations' & Marx) and the second exam will be on Units III & IV (Weber & Durkheim). The exact format of each exam will be discussed in class; however, it will be a combination of multiple choice, short answer, long answer, and vocabulary. Sample exam questions will be provided.

Paper (May 17th or May 29th or June 7th):

Students are to write a 5-6 page paper on **one** of the first three course units ('Foundations,' Marx, Weber). Papers are due, in hard copy, in class, one week following the end of the unit (check reading schedule for details). Instructions:

- Choose an author covered in class and explain what social issues or problems they sought to examine and how they approached social theorizing (methodology).
Note: For the 'Foundations' unit you may choose to write on Comte, Martineau, or Du Bois).
- Next, through the application of their work to a contemporary social issue or problem, argue whether or not you think that this thinker's work is useful to deepening understandings of contemporary social problems (remember: do not just argue 'yes' or 'no' but show me precisely 'how' and 'why').
- Your paper must have a clear thesis.
- Do not take on too much; describe the work of your thinker broadly and then focus on a particular idea or concept (e.g. do not just argue that Marx is still applicable in general, but use the concept of commodity fetishism specifically to make your argument).
- You will be evaluated on a) your demonstrated understanding of the work of the theorist you chose; b) the detail with which you apply concepts to your contemporary social issue or problem, and c) the readability of your paper (argumentative and structural clarity, grammar, syntax, etc.).

Formatting, Style and Content Requirements for Papers:

- Place your name, date, course title, and pagination at the top right-hand corner of every page.
- Do not include a separate title page.

- Use font Times New Roman, size 12.
- Double-space your work.
- Use 1-inch margins all around.
- Feel free to write in the first person.
- Do not use contractions or colloquial language.
- Aim for concision and clarity in your writing.
- Avoid using long quotations. Instead, summarize the author's point in your own words.
- A high quality of writing is expected. This includes grammar, sentence structure, paragraph organization, clarity and concision.
- Proof-read your work carefully. Editing your work several times is good writing practice and is the best way to improve your writing skills. Excessive spelling and grammatical errors will lower your grade.
- Your paper must demonstrate honest and serious engagement with, and firm grasp of, course readings, concepts and discussions.
- Define all concepts. Using examples to further demonstrate your understanding of the concept will be rewarded.
- You are welcome to make informed critical comments, but note that this is different from opinion. Do justice to the author and demonstrate your understanding of their work before criticizing them.

Evaluation Criteria:

The papers will be evaluated on the basis of several criteria appropriate to students at the second year level. The first concerns whether the required (technical and practical) components of the paper have been addressed in a satisfactory way. Second, you will be assessed on the quality and accuracy of your interpretations of required course readings. Third, you are assessed on the quality of writing. The fourth criterion concerns the degree of insight, creativity and critical engagement with the material to advance an understanding beyond what can be taken from a solid understanding of course material. To achieve an "A-" or above, your response must be very good to excellent on all measures.

In-Class Participation Assignments (15%):

Each class, there will be an in-class participation assignment (e.g. free write exercise, pop quiz, group discussion). Some of these assignments will be given full marks based on completion, while others will be graded on accuracy. Class participation assignments must be completed in class, and will not be accepted before or after class, or via email. *If you do not attend class there is no way to make up these assignments.*

Access to Instructor:

Email will be answered during normal business hours of the University. While an effort will be made to respond in a timely manner, please allow 1-2 days for a reply. I will be available by appointment, which can be set up either via email or in person before or after class.

Classroom Environment:

A healthy and productive classroom environment depends on everyone participating in creating a space where we can speak and hear one another without fear of hostility or judgment. I expect everyone, including myself, to do their best to ensure that, in spite of personal opinions and clashes, we will stay focused on the content of the material as it relates to the social world in a sensitive and humble manner. There will be **zero tolerance** for discriminatory or abusive language of any sort.

Penalties for Late Assignments:

Late assignments will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade per day, for up to six days. Late assignments may be submitted via email to be time stamped, however, a hard copy must be submitted the following class. *Assignments will not be accepted by email without permission. Emailed assignments will not be graded.*

Policy on MISSED exams:

Neither absence from class nor travel plans will be accepted as legitimate reasons for failure to attend an exam. An unexcused absence will result in a grade of zero for that exam. Should a student miss a mid-term, they must contact the Instructor via e-mail within two working days of the originally scheduled exam, or as soon as the student is able, having regard to the circumstances underlying the absence. Please note that depending upon the circumstances, appropriate documentation may be required (e.g., “Medical Declaration Form for Students,” “Statutory Declaration,” police report, death notice, court documents). Students with an excused absence must write the missed exam rather than shift the weight of that exam to other course requirements. Should a student miss a final exam, they must apply for a deferred exam at their own Faculty Undergraduate Student Services office within two days of the missed exam, or as soon as able, in regards to the circumstance.

Required Notes:

“Policy about course outlines can be found in the [“Evaluation Procedures and Grading System”](#) section of the University Calendar.”

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 [Office of the Student Ombuds](#) . Information about the [University of Alberta Discrimination and Harassment Policy and Procedures](#) is described in [UAPPOL](#).

Plagiarism and Cheating:

All students should consult the Academic Integrity Undergraduate Handbook available on the Student Conduct and Accountability website regarding the definitions of **plagiarism** and its consequences when detected. 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.

Academic Honesty:

All students should consult the information provided by the [Office of Judicial Affairs](#) regarding avoiding cheating and plagiarism in particular and academic dishonesty in general (see the [Academic Integrity Undergraduate Handbook](#) and [Information for Students](#)). If in doubt about what is permitted in this class, ask the instructor.

Academic Integrity:

“I didn’t know” is not an excuse! It is your job to learn what plagiarism is. **All** instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Office of the Dean of Students.

“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 (online at www.governance.ualberta.ca) 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 the University.”

Recording of Lectures:

Audio or video recording, digital or otherwise, 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. Student or instructor content, digital or otherwise, created and/or used within the context of the course 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 content author(s).

Attendance, Absences, and Missed Grade Components:

Regular attendance is essential for optimal performance in any course. In cases of potentially excusable absences due to illness or domestic affliction, notify your instructor by e-mail within two days. Regarding absences that may be excusable and procedures for addressing course components missed as a result, consult the Calendar regarding [Attendance](#) and [Examinations](#) sections of the University Calendar. Be aware that unexcused absences will result in partial or total loss of the grade for the “attendance and participation” component(s) of a course, as well as for any assignments that are not handed-in or completed as a result.

Student Accessibility Services:

If you have special needs that could affect your performance in this class, please let me know during the first week of the term so that appropriate arrangements can be made. If you are not already registered with [Student Accessibility Services](#), contact their office immediately (1-80 SUB; Email sasrec@ualberta.ca; Email; phone 780-492-3381).

Additional Resources:

- *Counseling & Clinical Services*: 2-600 Students' Union Building (780-492-5205)
- *Peer Support Centre*: 2-707 SUB (780-492-HELP)
- *University of Alberta Sexual Assault Centre*: 2-705 SUB (780-492-7991)
- *Aboriginal Student Services*: 2-400 SUB (780-492-5667)
- *The Landing*: 0-68A Lower Level SUB (780-492-4949)
- *The Centre For Writers*: 1-42 Assiniboia Hall (780-492-2639)

Grading Scale

Description	Letter	Percentage	Grade Point
Excellent	A+	94-100	4.0
	A	88-93	4.0
	A-	82-87	3.7
Good	B+	78-81	3.3
	B	74-77	3.0
	B-	70-73	2.7
Satisfactory	C+	66-69	2.3
	C	62-65	2.0
	C-	58-61	1.7
Poor	D+	54-57	1.3
Minimal Pass	D	50-53	1.0
Fail	F	0-49	0

READING SCHEDULE**UNIT I. FOUNDERS & FOUNDATIONS****Tuesday, May 8th***Reading:*

- Adams, Bert N. & R.A. Sydie, "The Origins of Sociological Theory" (eClass)
- Pickering, Mary, "Auguste Comte" (eClass)

- Lemert, Charles, “W. E. B. Du Bois” (eClass)
- Hoecker-Drysdale, Susan, “Harriet Martineau” (eClass)

Thursday, May 10th

- *Writing Across the Curriculum Workshop*
- Film: *The Examined Life (2008)*
<http://putlockers.tf/watch/ovlpPwvP-examined-life.html>

UNIT II. KARL MARX

Tuesday, May 15th

Readings:

- Marx, ‘Economic & Philosophical Manuscripts’ in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings* 83-95.
- 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.

Thursday, May 17th

Readings:

- Marx, *Capital* I. 43-8; 76-87.
- Marx, *Capital*, I. 145-53; 164-72; 180-90; 296-99.

FOUNDATIONS PAPERS DUE

Tuesday, May 22nd

Readings:

- Marx, ‘Communist Manifesto’ in *KMSW* 245-55; *Capital* 318-20; 334-7; 339-41.
- Marx, *Capital* I.300-4; 372-5; 574-6; 589-604; 713-5.
- Marx, ‘Communist Manifesto’ in *KMSW* 255-71; ‘18th Brumaire’ in *KMSW* 329-32.

Thursday, May 24th

- Exam Review
- Unit I. & II. Exam

UNIT. III MAX WEBER

Tuesday, May 29th

Readings:

- Interpretive Sociology: Weber, *Economy & Society*, 3-13; 19-26.
- Actions and their Consequences: Weber, *Protestant Ethic & The Spirit of Capitalism* 39-43; 53-56; 69-73.
- Class, Status, Power: Weber, *Protestant Ethic*, 13-19; 36-38; 102-109; 120-5.

MARX PAPERS DUE

Thursday, May 31th

- Power & Domination: Weber, *Economy & Society* 53; 212-20; 241-5
- Rationalization & Modernity: Weber, *Economy & Society* 71-2; 85-9; 118-20; 136-8; 654-8; 956-8; 973-5; *Protestant Ethic* xxviii-xxxiii.
- The Ethics of Reason: Weber, *Politics as Vocation*, 309-13; 352-69; *Science as Vocation*, 138-41; 143-45; 155-6.

UNIT IV. EMILE DURKHEIM

Tuesday, June 5th

Reading:

- The Social Aspects of an Individual Act: Durkheim, *Suicide*, 46-51; 152-6; 168-70; 217-21; 241-3; 254-8; 278-87.
- Individual & Society: Durkheim, *Suicide* 208-213; 306-20

Thursday, June 7th

Reading:

- Supporting the Team: Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, 33-39; 208-225; 303-4; 313-6; 330-1; 390-1.
- The Functional Analysis of Society: 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.

WEBER PAPERS DUE

Tuesday, June 12th

- The Sickness of Society: Durkheim, *Division of Labour in Society*, 291-4; 301-8; 310-13; 318-26.
- Final exam review