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

DR. RICHARD WESTERMAN

Winter 2017; Tues & Thurs, 12.30-1.50pm; Tory 1-91

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1. 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 broad social structures. Social Theorists bring together insights from 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. **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 the others 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 theory courses. The skills and knowledge we aim to develop in this course will provide a solid foundation for other Sociology courses and are useful in other contexts. There are three kinds of skill we will develop:

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 the way they interpreted 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 distinguished by their methodological innovations: each starts from unique premises and builds a coherent argument thereon. Their conclusions follow logically from their starting points. By unpacking their logic and methods, you will develop your ability to make a coherent, consistent argument about society, and so present your opinion on contemporary issues in a more rigorous and convincing way.

3. Critical & Creative Skills:

The texts we read are dense, complicated, and often hard to understand. You are expected to puzzle out the meaning of specific concepts or identify the logical stages of the arguments they make, as well as building your own claims in written papers that interpret these texts. The ability to express yourself clearly, concisely, and persuasively is essential in life after graduation. In addition, these skills are tested directly in entrance exams for 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 combines lectures and seminars about a series of primary-text readings, available as PDFs on eClass. You should **read the texts before class** in order to follow the lecture properly. Powerpoint slides from class will be available at the end of each week on eClass – but you must **sign in to class in order to get access. Attendance is mandatory: if you miss five or more seminars without a documented excuse, you may receive an F for the entire course.**

- **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.

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- **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.

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. 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.

Bearing in mind this workload, you should **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 Kristy Lynn (socundergrad@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 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.

Suggested Level of English

Given the amount of difficult reading and writing, **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*; they are meant to help you make an informed decision on whether to take the course.

Additional Instruction

We cover a lot of difficult material in a technical way: if you're having trouble with any aspect of the class (workload, comprehension, writing etc), please don't be afraid to ask for help. There are three main sources:

- **Ask me:** you can drop by my **office hours (Weds 10-12, Tory 6-22)**, make an appointment to see me, or **email with questions**. I may not respond to emails immediately; 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**.
- **Ask the TA:** make an appointment with our teaching assistant to ask for clarification on any issue.
- **Visit a writing tutor:** The university's **Centre for Writers** (c4w.ualberta.ca) provides free weekly tuition to all students. They can help with all aspects of work, including reading, note-taking, planning, and writing. Their tutors are also trained to help students for whom English is a second language. You can sign up online at their website up to three weeks in advance. You can also **earn extra credit for regularly attending sessions with them** (see below under Course Policies, p.7).

Finally, I organize **peer-review workshops** before each paper. In these workshops, you'll work in small groups to read and advise on one another's papers. I'll provide details on these when arranging them.

2. Reading schedule

You should submit **hard copies of your papers in class**, with the exception of the final assignment, which should be submitted to the Sociology Department office in Tory 5-21 by **1 p.m.** on Thurs 20th Apr.

Tues 7th Feb:	Writing Assignment 1 – Smith: Logic.
Tues 28th Feb:	Reading Comprehension: Smith & Marx.
Tues 14th Mar:	Writing Assignment 2 – Marx: Concepts.
Tues 4th Apr:	Writing Assignment 3 – Weber: Debates.
Thurs 20th Apr:	Writing Assignment 4 - Final Term Paper

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 10th Jan:	Introduction (Lec): Adam Smith, <i>Wealth of Nations</i> , I.1-4.
Thurs 12th Jan:	The Price of Everything and the Value of Nothing (Lec): Adam Smith, <i>Wealth of Nations</i> , I.7-20; 32-34; 53-65; 351-2.
Tues 17th Jan:	Class Conflict (Sem): Adam Smith, <i>Wealth of Nations</i> , I.; 72-77; 88-90; 132-3; 136-40; 152-8; 275-8.
Thurs 19th Jan:	Bringing up Baby (Lec): Adam Smith, <i>Theory of Moral Sentiments</i> , 9-19; 78-81; 109-116; 127-32; 158-61; 212-6;
Tues 24th Jan:	The Moral Economy (Sem): Adam Smith, <i>Wealth of Nations</i> I.367; I.477-80; II.301-9; <i>Theory of Moral Sentiments</i> 82-6; 181-5; 231-4.
Thurs 26th Jan:	Writing Class #1: Logical Coherence 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 31st Jan:	Selling Your Soul? (Sem): Marx, 'Economic & Philosophical Manuscripts' in <i>Karl Marx: Selected Writings</i> 83-95.
Thurs 2nd Feb:	The Riddle of History Solved (Lec): Marx, 'The German Ideology,' in <i>KMSW</i> 175-84; 187-90; 192-5; 'Preface to a Critique of Political Economy,' in <i>KMSW</i> 424-7; <i>Capital</i> , 667-73; 676-81; 685.

WRITING ASSIGNMENT I - SMITH: SUBMIT IN CLASS, TUES 7TH FEB

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- Tues 7th Feb:** **Consumer Society (Sem):**
Marx, *Capital* I.43-8; 76-87.
- Thurs 9th Feb:** **The Exploitation of the Workers (Lec):**
Marx, *Capital*, I.145-53; 164-72; 180-90; 296-99.
- Tues 14th Feb:** **Class Conflict (Sem):**
Marx, 'Communist Manifesto' in *KMSW* 245-55; *Capital* 318-20; 334-7; 339-41.
- Thurs 16th Feb:** **The Collapse of Capitalism (Lec):**
Marx, *Capital* I.300-4; 372-5; 380-5; 574-6; 589-604; 713-5.
- Tues 21st Feb:** **Reading Week: No Class**
- Thurs 23rd Feb:** **Reading Week: No Class**

READING COMPREHENSION: SUBMIT IN CLASS, TUES 28TH FEB

- Tues 28th Feb:** **Necessity or Utopia? (Sem):**
Marx, 'Communist Manifesto' in *KMSW* 255-71; '18th Brumaire' in *KMSW* 329-32

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 2nd Mar:** **Interpretive Sociology (Lec):**
Weber, *Economy & Society*, 3-13; 19-26; Weber, *Protestant Ethic & The Spirit of Capitalism*, 39-43; 53-56; 69-73.
- Tues 7th Mar:** **Actions and their Consequences (Sem):**
Weber, *Protestant Ethic*, 13-19; 36-38; 102-9; 120-5
- Thurs 9th Mar:** **Class, Status, Power (Lec):**
Weber, *Economy & Society* 921-39.

WRITING ASSIGNMENT 2 –MARX: SUBMIT IN CLASS, TUES 14TH MAR

- Tues 14th Mar:** **Power & Domination (Sem):**
Weber, *Economy & Society* 53; 212-20; 241-5.
- Thurs 16th Mar:** **Rationalization & Modernity (Lec):**
Weber, *Economy & Society* 71-2; 85-9; 118-20; 136-8; 654-8; 956-8; 973-5 *Protestant Ethic* xxviii-xxxiii.
- Tues 21st Mar:** **The Ethics of Reason (Sem):**
Weber, *Politics as Vocation*, 309-13; 352-69; *Science as Vocation*, 138-41; 143-45; 155-6.

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.

Thurs 23rd Mar: **Writing Class #2: Developing a Thesis**

See worksheet on eClass.

Tues 28th Mar: **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 30th Mar: **Individual & Society (Sem):**

Durkheim, *Suicide*, 208-213; 306-20

WRITING ASSIGNMENT 3 –WEBER: SUBMIT IN CLASS, TUES 4TH APR

Tues 4th Apr: **Supporting the Team (Lec):**

Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, 33-39; 208-225; 303-4; 313-6; 330-1; 390-1

Thurs 6th Apr: **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 11th Apr: **The Sickness of Society (Sem):**

Durkheim, *Division of Labour in Society*, 291-4; 301-8; 310-13; 318-26.

Thurs 13th Apr: **Conclusion (Lec):**

Durkheim, *Division of Labour in Society*, xxv-xlvi.

**WRITING ASSIGNMENT 4 –FINAL ASSIGNMENT
SUBMIT TO SOC DEPT OFFICE TORY 5/21 BY 1 P.M. ON THURS 20TH APR**

3. 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%), *Class Participation* (10%), and up to 10% *Extra Credit* as follows:

- **10% Seminar Participation:** Attendance at seminars is **obligatory**. **If you miss more than five classes without documented excuses, you may receive an F for the entire course.** 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. **I encourage you to collaborate with classmates in checking your answers for this assignment.** 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 informal 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.
- **10% Extra Credit:** You can earn up to 10% additional credit (a 'boost' of up to 0.4 grade points to your final grade) for the course with free meetings with a tutor at the Centre for Writers (c4w.ualberta.ca), depending on how often you attend. Please obtain confirmation of your appointment from the writing tutor you meet: **print out the form from eClass and ask them to sign and stamp it** when you visit.

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. You can find a **full, comprehensive grading rubric on eClass**. The general boundaries are as follows, but **grading papers is not an exact science**:

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- **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 more than four seminars without good reason, **you may be failed for the entire course.**
- 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) 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.

Excuses for Missed Work

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. **Do not wait for me to ask for documentation: either provide it right away, or tell me when I can expect it.** If you do not provide documentation for your excuse, you will be penalised as normal. 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:

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- *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. Indeed, for the 2015-16 academic year, these overpaid jobsworths spent their time changing a single word in this legalese, wasting professorial time that would be better spent improving teaching and creating needless labour for the overworked support staff who check syllabi for conformity. I encourage you petition the University to remove all this nonsense, and to support any Student Union candidate who seeks to get rid of it. 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, 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)

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 you are finding trouble adjusting to the workload in university, in finding the most effective way to plan your studies, or more generally in developing your study skills, you might want to consult the Student Success Centre (<http://www.studentsuccess.ualberta.ca>). The Centre for Writers (<http://c4w.ualberta.ca>) can help you with reading, note-taking, writing, and English language difficulties; you can also earn extra credit by scheduling appointments with them (see p.7). I am also happy to help you with this: feel free to stop by my office hours. If you're having persistent problems with organization or deadlines, I'll want evidence that you are developing a strategy to overcome these difficulties before making allowances in grading your work; the Student Success Centre can help you develop such a plan.

There is also help available for more serious issues. If you're feeling a sense of meaninglessness, if you're always tired and low-energy, constantly restless, anxious, or overwhelmed, or if you're feeling worthless, helpless, or hopeless, then you may be depressed. Mental health issues affect a large proportion of the population, including a number of prominent individuals such as Winston Churchill and Max Weber; please do not feel ashamed if you find yourself suffering such feelings. I am able to provide a sympathetic ear if you want to stop by, but you may also want to consult people with professional training. The Student Union's Peer Support Centre offers a 'free, confidential, and non-judgemental place to talk to someone for support,' where you can speak to another student about your difficulties (<http://www.studentsuccess.ualberta.ca>). The University provides trained counsellors at the Student Counselling Service, who can work with you to help overcome your problems (<https://uofa.ualberta.ca/current-students/counselling>). If you are concerned about a friend, you can call Protective Services (780 492 5050, <http://www.protectiveservices.ualberta.ca>).

University should be a place of trust, in which we feel safe among familiar friends. Unfortunately, there are too many people who take advantage of that atmosphere of trust. The Sexual Assault Centre can provide free, confidential guidance in such circumstances: they will support you and help connect you with other services. They can be found at <https://uofa.ualberta.ca/current-students/sexual-assault-centre> (tel 780-492-9771).

Finally, please remember to look out yourselves and for one another. Don't forget to take a break for coffee, or to spend time with friends. If your friend seems a bit too drunk, keep an eye on him or her. If someone on your corridor seems withdrawn or isolated, introduce yourself and take them out for a drink. As Durkheim teaches us, strong social bonds are important to all of us as individuals; it's up to all of us to foster them.

4. 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: Durkheim & Big Ideas – 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.
- You will receive **one free and indivisible 48 hour extension** to use on one single assignment of your choice during the semester; email me to let me know you will be using it, and submit your paper in class two days later. (I will not acknowledge your email, as I receive too many to do so.) Apart from this, the **price of an extension is one-third of a grade for every day past the deadline** – i.e. an A- would become a B+ if you submit one day late, a B the next day etc. 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.

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, Tues 7th Feb

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 Option A or Option B**, and write a single **two to three page** paper. (In the past, **students have found Option B to be harder, but you will not be given extra credit** for attempting a more difficult task.)

Either Option A: Smith's Narrative (more straightforward)

Outline the **logical steps** by which **Smith explains one of the following**. (Use the idea you choose as your title, e.g. 'Morality.')

Start with the basic premise of Smith's argument, either Self-Interest or Sympathy. Show how this premise leads him to predict certain actions taken by individuals, then how he aggregates these actions to posit broader social laws, and finally what he infers about the overall operation of society. Emphasise the logic at each stage of his argument: what makes him so sure of his deductions? How does each successive point build on earlier ones? What overall method is he using to explain 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 Option B: Applying Smith's Logic (more challenging)

Deduce, from his premises, **what policies Smith would advise** for one of these contemporary issues, and **outline the logical steps** of the deduction, **referring to parallel examples in the text**. (Use the example you choose as your title, e.g. 'Immigration.')

Show how Smith would use either Self-Interest or Sympathy to predict the effects of government intervention in each case. Start by outlining the relevant premise. Deduce what would happen in the absence of government intervention, relating it a specific example Smith gives in his own time. Furthermore, show what the impact of certain policies would be, again deducing the effects from self-interest or sympathy. Proceed step-by-step, showing how he first predicts individual actions and then moves to broader social consequences and an overall opinion on government intervention in society. Remember to emphasise the logical deductions that make Smith so sure of his conclusions.

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 14th Mar

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 is it defined within Marx's overall system, and what role does it play in his argument for replacing capitalism with communism? Start by **explaining Marx's basic premise**, the materialist conception of history, and show how this approach leads him to a basic definition of your concept. Then show how this concept is manifest in capitalist societies: **what are its immediate consequences**? Next, show **how it develops over time**, producing problems in capitalism. Finally, show how Marx uses this concept to deduce the **logical necessity of a transition to communism** as a change in the structure of society. Remember at each stage to emphasise the *logical deductions* that Marx uses to underpin his claims.

In the past, students have typically found **questions marked with an asterisk to be more difficult**, but you will **not be given extra credit** for attempting a harder task.

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 'fetishism,' and why does Marx apply this term to commodities? How does the capitalist mode of production lead to a focus on the Value of a commodity, rather than its use value? What are Value and use value? How does this focus on Value drive capitalism as M-C-M'? What are the effects of this focus on Value for the way society operates as a whole? What would be different in communism, such that it would avoid commodity fetishism?

2. Capitalism

How does capitalist society compare to earlier modes of production, such as feudalism? What is the difference between M-C-M' and C-M-C? What does the basic structure of capitalism involve as a form of social organization? What classes does it contain? How does it shape individual actions? What longer-term tendencies do these structures produce? What will its dynamism and innovativeness produce? Why can't capitalism's problems be solved without a total transformation of society?

3. *Surplus Value

What forms of value does Marx identify? How does Value fit in to the capitalist mode of production as M-C-M'? How is the capitalist able to extract surplus value from the labourer? Could the capitalist choose not to exploit the workers for surplus value? What methods does the capitalist use to increase surplus value? What are the longer-term consequences of introducing these measures? How would communism avoid this problem?

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 are both bourgeoisie and proletariat essential to capitalism (and why does Marx dismiss other classes as unimportant)? What's the relation between bourgeoisie and proletariat? How and why do the bourgeoisie exploit the proletariat? How far does class predict an individual's interest? What does the class structure of capitalism mean for the overall system? What would the class structure of communism be? How would this resolve the problem?

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 Tues 4th Apr

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 logically to their different conclusions**. Start by comparing their basic theoretical paradigms. Show how these fundamental premises produce contrasting basic definitions of these concepts. Then explain how each writer explains how this concept is most simply manifest in society. Next, show what this means for the way society develops over time, or for broader social structures. Finally, what overall conclusions do they draw for society as a whole?

In the past, students have typically found **questions marked with an *asterisk to be more difficult**, but you will **not be given extra credit** for attempting a harder task.

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? How do we determine what class an individual belongs to? What does class tell us about the interests or actions of individuals, or what they will do? What relations are there between different classes – and will these relations produce conflict? Why does Weber add status and political party to his account of stratification – and why don't Smith and Marx? How important is class for the structure of society as a whole, and could we remove its problematic effects?

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

What motivates individual actions according to each writer – instincts, beliefs, or social structures? How many different types of motive are there? How predictable are individual actions? How might this be related to the sorts of motives they identify? What is the relation between individual actions and social structures? Do predictable laws of society emerge naturally, or do we need to institutionalise them? How do these writers evaluate a modern, ordered, predictable capitalist society?

4. *Power & Authority

What is the difference between power and authority? Why are some people in charge while others obey? Why do those lower down the social hierarchy obey those on top? Do those lower down obey because they have to, or because they believe it's right to do so? How far is it possible to resist the effects of power and authority? What would be necessary to change existing power structures? How far is power just a feature of the structure of society, and how far is it the result of open social struggles?

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: Final Paper, 5-7 pages: due Thurs 20th Apr,
Hand in at Sociology Dept Office, Tory 5-21**

For your final assignment, you should write a **5-7 page paper, which you will submit to the dropbox at the Sociology Department office**. 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 Option A or Option B, and write a 5-7 page paper.** (In the past, students have usually found Option B to be more challenging, but you will not receive extra credit for choosing the more difficult choice.)

Option 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. How does Durkheim balance the competing interests of individual and 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.]

Option 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?

5. Bibliography

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