

Sociology 500: Classical Social Theory
Spring, 2006

Office hours:

Wednesdays: 10:30-11:30 a.m. in Hokona-Zuni #401 277-1117

Wednesdays: 2:00 - 3:00 p.m. in SSCI #1078 phone 277-3945

Richard L. Wood
Associate Professor
Department of Sociology
University of New Mexico
rlwood@unm.edu

CLASSICAL SOCIAL THEORY

Course goals:

This course emphasizes theory as an active part of the working toolbox of social scientists. In studying the ideas of classical theorists, we will be interested in how those theories help orient social scientists' interests, and can help interpret and analyze the social world.

The course attempts to do several things at once: provide an advanced introduction to classic sociological theory (Marx, Durkheim, Simmel, Gramsci, and Weber); give students experience in systematic theoretical analysis (separating assumptions from theoretical claims, levels and units of analysis, etc.); help students see how contrasting traditions of classical theory shape complementary approaches to current research questions; and explore some extensions of classical theory within contemporary theory, methodology, and empirical research.

Course format and structure:

The course will proceed in a seminar format. Students are expected to prepare the readings carefully each week, and email to me a one-page (no more!), single-spaced précis by 9 p.m. the night before each class. The précis is not simply a summary; rather, it is a brief overview of the core ideas presented in the reading, followed by the students critical/appreciative reaction to those ideas and the author's analytic orientation. Students will be expected to bring their own ideas, understanding of the readings, intellectual interests, and research orientations to bear on the discussion every week. The reading load will be significant, and students will be expected to come to class with the readings fully digested and having put real thought into their comments and questions. That is, do not be misled by the informality of the seminar format and the instructor's style. That informality is to allow each student to bring his/her interests to bear on the learning process, but you are expected to do so within a rigorous process of learning and thinking seriously about social theory, even as you are adapting classical sociological ideas to your current interests.

Thus, come to class with readings *prepared*, **not** just cursorily read. But "prepared" can include skimming sections of readings — indeed, you'll be best prepared if you read quickly, skim some, return to important sections, *and then take time to really think through the reading* before writing your précis. Then, come ready to learn from others even as you argue for your own point of view, with me and with other students. Simply lose whatever shyness you have about disagreeing publicly; that's how we all learn. At the same time, lose whatever inclination toward a one-dimensional, knee-jerk "critical thinking" stance common in academe: simply finding weaknesses in others' work and trashing it. In place of that cheap-and-easy-and-fashionable stance, let's all work to develop a more authentically critical tone in the class: appreciative of what an author does well and how it offers partial insight into societal dynamics, critical of what an author does poorly and how it obscures other important societal dynamics.

Once during the semester, each student will help frame and advance the seminar discussion, as described below. This will require a greater level of preparation of the readings *a week ahead of time*, including writing some generative questions or themes that will help deepen the discussion. Note: at the end of each class session, the student responsible for the following

week's readings will have five minutes or so to *introduce the reading, suggest themes worth paying attention to*, and *suggest three or so generative questions* about which students should be thinking while they do the reading. These should be presented verbally at the end of class *and* the themes/questions should be emailed to myself and all seminar students immediately thereafter.

The structure of the course will generally proceed as follows: a week or two covering the key writing of a particular classical social theorist (always some of their original work; often some additional material), followed by a week or two covering contemporary sociological or other social scientific work broadly within the tradition of the preceding classical theorist. At a couple of points during the semester, we'll pause to consider broader questions about the role of theory in social inquiry.

Each class session will proceed roughly as follows: I will moderate the first hour or hour-plus of class. To some extent, in order to bring some structure into the discussion, I will focus our attention on themes such as the following:

- What's the fundamental thing this author is trying to explain?
- At what level of analysis does this author operate – whole societies? Organizational level? Individual-level?
- For this author, what are the core dynamics of society – the place to pay attention if you want to understand societal life?
- How does this author's analytic perspective compare and contrast with others we have read?
- More broadly, but importantly: how does this author think about the world? How does his/her mind see the dynamic flow of societal life; how can that help us think about our own world?
- What is of value here for your own interests and research? How would taking this author's perspective seriously shift your attention to different aspects of the things in which you are interested?

But more generally, these will be relatively open discussions revolving around what you find interesting, compelling, and/or problematic in the readings.

After a short break, we will reconvene (if students would like to self-organize to take turns bringing refreshments for the break, feel free). At this point, we will step back and together consider what important matter we have so far missed in our discussion: major themes, important concepts, particular insights, major holes, etc. The student especially responsible for that week's readings will initiate this discussion with her/his insights into "what else matters?", then I will moderate some further discussion (including major points I still want to get on the table). Occasionally during the semester, I will also save some time for us all to step back still further and jointly evaluate the flow of the course and seminar discussions. Finally, the last ten minutes of class will be given over to preparing for the following week's readings. *Be prepared, with notes to do so.*

Course requirements include:

1. Read all required materials and participating actively in class discussions; taking primary responsibility for readings and helping to moderate one class session; writing a précis each week.
2. Complete a series of three short exercises, due on the following Fridays: March 31, April 14, and April 21. In these exercises, you will: a) define a phenomenon or problem or question of analytical interest and argue for why it is important (no more than one page, single spaced); b) construct at least two plausible, alternative theoretical causal explanations of that phenomenon (no more than four pages, plus a one-page “causal model” – a flow-chart depicting the logic of your potential explanations; and c) refine and tighten those causal arguments, and suggest how one might empirically differentiate those competing theories – i.e. study which one is right (no more than six pages, plus a flow-chart).
3. During the second half of the course, write a term paper either systematically examining a central theoretical controversy in a substantive field, applying ideas from classical social theory to a research question, or analyzing a problem treated by one or more of the theorists we have read in the course. Feel free to propose a paper that dovetails with other grad program requirements: part of a dissertation or thesis proposal, the theory section of an article draft, etc.

Your grade will be based on your performance in three areas:

1. Quality of précis work (one-sixth of grade).
2. Quality of work on a series of three short written assignments (one-sixth of grade; see #2 above).
3. Class participation (one-sixth of grade): instructor’s assessment of the *quality* of your intervention in class discussion. Do you bring insight to bear in class discussion? Do you help provoke fruitful disagreement and/or identify areas of emerging clarity in discussion? Do you show respect for others’ views, and do you disagree with them frankly and directly and constructively? Does your class participation reflect having done the readings and prepared thoughtfully for class? Do you help draw contrasts between various theoretical approaches, highlight particular strengths/weaknesses of them, show how they might contribute to empirical areas of sociological inquiry? i.e. the quality of participation is much more important than quantity, though of course if you almost never participate, it’s hard to call that high quality.
4. Term paper (half of grade): On any topic related to classical social theory that you choose (in consultation with instructor); possible approaches suggested in #3 above. See also the “Memo on Good Papers” I will distribute a few weeks into the course. Topic paragraph due Friday, March 24; final paper due Wednesday May 3.

Required books:

Giddens, Anthony. *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory*, Cambridge University Press any edition

Tucker, Robert C. *The Marx-Engels Reader*, any edition

Bellah, Robert N. *Emile Durkheim on Morality and Society*, 1973

H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills. *From Max Weber*, any edition

Flyvbjerg, Bent. *Making Social Science Matter: Why Social Inquiry Fails and How it Can Succeed Again*. Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Course Outline and Readings:

Notes: I provide here the initial readings; on first day of class, we will discuss student interests in some detail and I will subsequently provide the readings for later class sessions: select examples of theoretical or strongly theory-driven empirical articles from within major traditions of social theory.

Throughout: You may wish to read Randall Collins' Four Sociological Traditions (New York: Oxford University Press Books, 1994) as an accompanying text for the course, but this is not required.

Week 1: Wednesday, January 18, 2006:

INTRODUCTION: THEORY AS FRAMEWORK, THEORY AS TOOL
No readings

Week 2: Wednesday, January 25, 2006:

THE USES OF SOCIAL THEORY:

Reading: Arthur L. Stinchcombe, "Should Sociologists Forget Their Mothers and Fathers," American Sociologist 17 (February 1982): 2-11.**

KARL MARX: SOCIETY AS TOTALITY

Reading: Giddens: Preface, Introduction, and Chapters 1 & 2

Marx, The German Ideology [written 1845-6, published 1932], Part I, Sec. A and Sec. B, subpart 3 [pp. 147-175 and 189-200] in Tucker (ed.).

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Manifesto of the Communist Party [1848], Sections I and II, pp. 473-491 in Tucker (ed.).

Other recommended readings:

Moishe Postone, Time, Labor and Social Domination: A Reinterpretation of Marx's Critical Theory (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

Arthur L. Stinchcombe, Constructing Social Theories, (Chicago: University of Chicago), most of pp. 3-56 (except some missing pages, as indicated).**

Week 3: Wednesday, February 1, 2006:

KARL MARX: HISTORICAL DETERMINISM

Reading: Giddens: Chapters 3 & 4

Marx, "Wage Labour and Capital" [1849], pp. 203-217 in Tucker (ed.).

Marx, Capital [1867], Part IV, Chs. 12-13 and 15; Part V, Chs. 16 and 25; and Part VIII (403-438) in Tucker (ed.).

Week 4: Wednesday, February 8, 2006:

GEORGE SIMMEL AND HIS DESCENDENTS: SOCIAL NETWORKS

Reading: Selections from Georg Simmel, On Individuality and Social Forms, edited by Donald N. Levine (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1971): Introduction plus “The Stranger” and “The Metropolis and Mental Life” (pp. ix-lxv, 143-149, and 324-340)

Mark Granovetter, "The Strength of Weak Ties," American Journal of Sociology 78 (May 1973):1360-1380.**

Week 5 Wednesday, February 15, 2006:

DURKHEIM: SOCIETY AS REAL

Reading: Giddens 5 & 6

Emile Durkheim, The Elementary Forms of Religious Life [1912] (New York: Free Press, 1995). As found in pp. 167-224 in Emile Durkheim on Morality and Society (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973).

Recommended: Thomas Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), entire.

Imre Lakatos, "Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes," pp. 91-196 in Lakatos and Alan Musgrave (eds.), Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

Week 6: Wednesday, February 22, 2006:

DURKHEIM: THE POWER OF SYMBOLISM IN HUMAN LIFE

Reading: Giddens, Chapters 7 & 8

Durkheim, "The Dualism of Human Nature and Its Social Conditions" [1914], pp. 149-163 in R.N. Bellah (ed.), Emile Durkheim on Morality and Society (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973).

R.N. Bellah, "Introduction" to Emile Durkheim on Morality and Society, pp. ix-lv.

Week 7: Wednesday, March 1, 2006:

MAX WEBER: FORMS OF HISTORICAL EXPLANATION

Reading: Giddens, Chapters 9 & 10

Weber, “The Protestant Sects and the Spirit of Capitalism”, pp. 301-322 in H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (eds.), From Max Weber (New York: Oxford, 1946).

Weber, "The Social Psychology of the World Religions" [1915], pp. 267-301 in H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (eds.), From Max Weber (New York: Oxford, 1946).

Recommended: Weber, Max. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Los Angeles: Roxbury, 1998).

Week 8: Wednesday, March 8, 2006:

MAX WEBER: FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS, IDEAL TYPES, TYPOLOGIES, AND MODELS

Reading: Giddens, Chapters 11 & 12

Max Weber, Economy and Society [1914-15] (Berkeley: University Press, 1968), Vol. 1, on Social Action (pp. 4-12; 22-36); Ch. 3 "The Types of Legitimate Domination," (pp. 212-254); Vol. 2, Ch. IX, Sec. 6, "The Distribution of Power within the Political Community: Class, Status, and Party" (pp. 926-939); and Ch. XI "Bureaucracy" (pp. 956-989). [In Dept Reading Room, photocopied]**

Week 9: Wednesday, March 15, 2006: SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS

Week 10: Wednesday, March 22, 2006:

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL SCIENCE IN SOCIETY

Bent Flyvbjerg, Making Social Science Matter: Why Social Inquiry Fails and How it Can Succeed Again. (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

Week 11: Wednesday, March 29, 2006: NO CLASS?

Week 12: Wednesday, April 5, 2006:

CONTEMPORARY DESCENDANTS OF MARX: GRAMSCI AND MODERN POLITICAL ECONOMY

Week 13: Wednesday, April 12, 2006:

CONTEMPORARY DESCENDANTS OF DURKHEIM:

Week 14: Wednesday, April 19, 2006:

CONTEMPORARY DESCENDANTS OF WEBER

Week 15: Wednesday, April 26, 2006:

CONTEMPORARY THEORISTS

Week 16: Wednesday, May 3, 2006:

FINAL PAPERS DUE: CLASS PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSION? MORE CONTEMPORARY THEORISTS?

DURKHEIM'S DESCENDENTS: INSTITUTIONALIST THINKING

Ronald L. Jepperson, "Institutions, Institutional Effects, and Institutionalism," pp. 143-163 in Powell and DiMaggio (eds.), The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis.**

John W. Meyer and Brian Rowan, "Institutionalized Organizations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony," pp. 21-44 in Meyer and W.R. Scott, Organizational Environments: Ritual and Rationality (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1983).**

??RLW: Meyer on education? other? below?

Recommended:

John W. Meyer, John Boli, George M. Thomas, and Francisco O. Ramirez, "World Society and the Nation State," American Journal of Sociology 103, No. 1 (July 1997):144-181.

Paul J. DiMaggio and Walter W. Powell, "The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields," American Sociological Review 48 (April 1983):147-160 (reprinted in Powell and DiMaggio (eds.), The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis, pp. 63-82).

Paul J. DiMaggio and Walter W. Powell, "Introduction," pp. 1-38 in Powell and DiMaggio (eds.) The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

DESCENDENTS OF MARX: GRAMSCI

DESCENDENTS OF WEBER: RELIGION IN THE MODERN WORLD

Robert W. Hefner, "Public Islam and the Problem of Democratization" Sociology of Religion, 62:4 (Winter 2000), 491-514.** ??RLW: other on Islam

Other to be announced.**

Selection from: Elisabeth J. Wood, Forging Democracy from Below: Insurgent Transitions in South Africa and El Salvador. (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).**

RECENT THEORY: REPRODUCTION MODELS

Pierre Bourdieu, Outline of a Theory of Practice (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1977), Chs. 1-2 (pp. 1-95).

"Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction," pp. 487-511 in Jerome Karabel and A. H. Halsey (eds.), Power and Ideology in Education (New York: Oxford, 1977).**

Recommended:

Pierre Bourdieu and Loic Wacquant, An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

Anthony Giddens, New Rules of Sociological Method (New York: Basic Books, 1976).

Giddens, Central Problems in Social Theory (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).

Week 14 (April 24) LEVELS OF EXPLANATION: ANALYZING GENDER DIFFERENCE

Nancy Chodorow, "Oedipal Assymetries and Heterosexual Knots," Social Problems 23 (April 1976):454-68.**

Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex," pp. 157-210 in Rayna Reiter (ed.) Toward an Anthropology of Women (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975).**

Recommended:

Randall Collins, "The Microfoundations of Macrosociology," American Journal of Sociology 86 (March 1981):984-1014.

Nancy Chodorow, "Gender, Relation and Difference in Psychoanalytic Perspective," pp. 3-19 in Hester Eisenstein and Alice Jardine (eds.), The Future of Difference (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1985).

Week 15 (May 1): THEORY, PRAGMATISM, AND THE NEW CULTURAL ANALYSIS

Ann Swidler, *Talk of Love: How Culture Matters* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001)

Recommended:

Hans Joas, Pragmatism and Social Theory (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993).

Frederick Suppe, "Introduction" and "Afterword," pp. 3-232 and 617-728 in Frederick Suppe (ed.), The Structure of Scientific Theories, 2nd edition (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977).

Left out of syllabus, but recommended: On social theory: structure and agency:

*William Sewell, Jr., "A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency, and Transformation." American Journal of Sociology 98 (July 1992):1-29.

David Rubinstein, Culture, Structure & Agency: Toward a Truly Multidimensional Society, (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 2001).

Week 17: Final paper due

Students with disabilities:

Any student who, because of a disability, may require some special arrangements in order to meet course requirements should contact the instructor as soon as possible to make necessary accommodations. It is the responsibility of the student to request accommodation for individual learning needs. UNM will make every attempt to accommodate all qualified students with disabilities. For further information, contact Student Support Services at (505) 277_3506."