

Lingnan University
Department of Sociology and Social Policy
SOC201 Classical Sociological Theory
1st Term, 2008-2009

Instructors: Professor Peter Baehr

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and

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Recommended Study Year	: 2
No. of Credits/ Term	: 3
Mode of Tuition	: Lecture-Tutorial
Class Contact Hours	: Three hours per week
Category in Major Prog	: Stream Elective
Discipline	: Sociology
Prerequisite(s)	: (a) SOC101 Introduction to Sociology, or (b) Grade D or above in AL Sociology, or (c) CUS106 The Marking of Modern Culture
Co-requisite(s)	: None
Exclusion(s)	: None
Exemption Requirements(s)	: None

Brief Course Description

This course introduces you to three major thinkers - Karl Marx, Max Weber and Emile Durkheim - and the traditions of social thought they helped to establish. These authors are typically regarded as classical thinkers because they helped establish the key coordinates of sociology as a discipline. Sociological classics are not timeless, nor are they an authoritative guide to many modern problems. Nonetheless, they do provide some vital intellectual resources for the student of society; people who think that they can dispense with the classics would be best advised to understand them first. Reinventing the wheel is as common in sociology as it is elsewhere. I will suggest that each of these thinkers offer complementary insights into modern society, and into the methods with which it is best studied.

Aims

This course has four chief aims. First, it will be *historical*, locating the classical authors in the events and movements of their time. Second, it will be *comparative*; the thought of the classics authors on specific issues will be analyzed and similarities and differences traced. Third, the course will be *applied*, examining the classics' pertinence for contemporary social problems. Finally, it will attempt to reveal salient *continuities* between classical and modern social theory.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students

1. Will be able to identify the foundational theories of sociology
2. Will be able speak and write clearly on the three major theorists covered in this course
3. Will be able to recognize and evaluate the variety of sociological approaches to social life and acknowledge the potential of these approaches to shed light on enduring issues of social integration and social cleavage.

Assessment of Learning Outcomes

The above learning outcomes will be assessed, respectively, by

1. Requiring students to write a term paper (30%) on at least one of the classical sociological authors, and write an examination (40%) that encompasses all three of them
2. Tutorial group presentations (20%), preceded by an advisory pre-tutorial meeting with the instructor to ensure that the key issues are understood. Class participation, measured by the instructors' notes on attendees, will earn up to a further 10%
3. Regular instructor feed-back sessions throughout the term to gauge student comprehension.

Hence: Continuous Assessment (tutorial presentation, class participation, term paper)
= 60%

Examination = 40%

Good Practices

1. The instructors will be regularly available to see students, talk to them by phone and communicate with them through email
2. The instructor will return all student work within two weeks of its submission
3. Students will attend all classes of this course and do so on time
4. Students will produce the work that is required of them on the day that it is required
5. Students and the instructor will create a respectful atmosphere in which plural and contrasting views can be expressed

Indicative Content

A) Introduction

1. Origins of Sociology; the nature and purpose of classical sociological theory

B) Karl Marx

2. Marx's Life and Times; Theory of Alienation
3. The Materialist Conception of History
4. Classes and Revolution
5. Marx's Legacy

C) Max Weber

6. Weber's Life and Times; Theory of the origins and nature of modern capitalism
7. Class, Status Groups, Parties
8. The Three Types of Rulership
9. Sociological Method; Weber's Legacy

D) Emile Durkheim

10. Durkheim's Life and Times; Sociology as a Science
11. Types of solidarity and the division of labour
12. Suicide
13. The religion of society; Durkheim's Legacy

E) Conclusions

14. The Nature of Classicality
15. Continuities: Modern Sociological Theory

Required Reading:

Marx, Karl, *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, (ed. David McLellan) Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1977. (**Hereafter referred to as 'K. Marx, Selected Writings'.**)

Weber, Max, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (eds. H.H. Gerth and C.W. Mills), London: Routledge, 1977. (**Hereafter referred to as 'Gerth and Mills'.**)

Durkheim, E. Durkheim, *Emile Durkheim: Selected Writings* (ed. A. Giddens), Cambridge University Press.

Giddens, Anthony, *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981. (**Hereafter referred to as 'Giddens'**)

Morrison, Ken, *Marx, Durkheim, Weber: Formations of Modern Social Thought*, London: Sage, 1995. (**Hereafter referred to as 'Morrison'**)

Recommended/ Supplementary Readings

Aron, Raymond, *Main Currents in Sociological Thought*, Vol.1 & 2, Hammondsworth: Penguin, 1967.

Baehr, Peter, *Founders, Classics, Canons*, New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 2002.

Baehr, Peter, *Caesarism, Charisma and Fate: Historical Sources and Modern Resonances in the Thought of Max Weber*, New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 2008.

Calhoun, Craig (ed.), *The Classical Sociological Theory*, Malden, Mass: Blackwell Pub. 2002.

Collins, Randall, *Four Sociological Traditions*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Frisby, David, *Sociological Impressionism: A Reassessment of Georg Simmel's Social Theory*, London: Routledge, 1992.

Mouzelis, N.P., *Back to Sociological Theory: The Construction of Social Orders*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991.

Parkin, Frank. *Durkheim*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Parkin, Frank. *Max Weber*, London: Tavistock, 1982

Ritzer, George, *Classical Sociological Theory*, 2nd ed., N.Y.: McGraw-Hill, 1996.

Scott, John, *Sociological Theory: Contemporary Debates*, London: Aldershot, 1995.

Stones, Rob (ed.), *Key Sociological Thinkers*, London: Macmillan Press, 1998.

Turner, Jonathan, *The Structure of Sociological Theory*, N.Y.: Wadsworth Company, 1986.

Turner, Jonathan, Leonard Beeghley & Charles H. Powers, *The Emergence of Sociological Theory*, 6th ed., Singapore: Thomson Wadsworth, 2007.

DETAILED COURSE DESCRIPTION

Lecture of September 2: Introduction: Origins and distinctiveness of sociology.

Lecture of September 9: Karl Marx (1818 –1883): the context of his life and thought. Marx’s early writings: labour, alienation and praxis.

Reading

Giddens, chap. 1: Morrison, pp. 88-98; *K. Marx, Selected Writings*, Part I, esp. Chap. 8.; S. Avineri, *Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx*, chaps. 1-5; and D. McLellan, *Marx Before Marxism*, esp. chaps. 4-8; Bertell Ollman, *Alienation..*

Tutorial of September 8 (Monday) and September 10 (Wednesday)

Questions: Would Marx have found modern Hong Kong an “alienated” society? How convincing do you find Marx’s analysis of alienation?

Lecture of September 16:

The historical materialist conception of history; the general schema of development; the base-superstructure model; the class theory of the state. Addendum: Louis Althusser on the ‘ideological’ and ‘repressive’ state apparatuses; Antonio Gramsci on ‘hegemony’.

Reading (on the Marxian theory of history and class)

Giddens, chaps. 2 and 3; Morrison, pp. 34-54; Edward G. Grabb, *Theories of Social Inequality*, chap. 2; *K. Marx, Selected Writings*, Part III, chap. 18, Part IV, chap. 30; G. de Ste. Croix, *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World*, Chap. 2, sections i, ii and iii, and G. de Ste. Croix, ‘Class in Marx’s conception of history; ancient and modern’, *New Left Review* 146 July/August 1984, pp. 94-111.)

Tutorial of September 22 (Monday) and September 17 (Wednesday)

September 15 is the Mid-Autumn holiday. The Monday tutorial is postponed to September 22.

Questions: What are the main causes of class conflict, in Marx’s view? Can you imagine living in a society without classes? And do you think that modern China, which still calls itself a Marxist state, can avoid the formation of classes in Marx’s sense?

Lecture of September 23: Capital: Marx’s mature investigations into the structure and dynamic of the capitalist mode of production; exploitation and the theory of surplus-value; contradiction, crisis-tendencies and the emergence of communism.

Reading

Giddens, chap. 4; Morrison, pp. 54-98; *K. Marx, Selected Writings*, Part IV, chap. 32.

Tutorial of September 29 (Monday) and September 24 (Wednesday)

Marx Re-cap. (No student paper.)

Lecture of September 30

Max Weber (1864-1920): the context of his life and thought. Class, status-groups and parties; the theory of 'social closure'.

Reading

Giddens, chap. 11; Morrison, pp. 232-243; Gerth and Mills, Introduction and chap. 7; F. Parkin, *Max Weber*, chap. 4; Edward G. Grabb, *Theories of Social Inequality*, chapter 3; R. Collins, *Four Sociological Traditions*, pp. 81-120; H. Stuart Hughes: *Consciousness and Society*, esp. chap. 8; L. Scaff. *Fleeing the Iron Cage*, esp. chaps. 1-3; R. Aron, *Main Currents in Sociological Thought* Vol. 2, pp. 185-258.

To synchronize class times and holidays, the tutorials accompanying this lecture are postponed to October 13 (Monday) and October 15 (Wednesday).

October 1 is the National Day. There is no Wednesday tutorial.

October 7 is the Chung Yung Festival so there is no lecture on this day.

Tutorial of October 6 and October 8.

Rationalisation, Protestantism and the uniqueness of the west.

(No student presentation)

Reading

Giddens, chap. 9; Morrison, 243-255; M. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the 'Spirit' of Capitalism*; M. Weber, *General Economic History*, Part 4; M. Weber, 'The Protestant sects and the spirit of capitalism', in *Gerth and Mills*, chap. 12; H. Lehmann and G. Roth, *Weber's Protestant Ethic: Origins, Evidence, Contexts*; F. Parkin, *Max Weber*, chap. 2; J. Freund, *The Sociology of Max Weber*, chapter 1 and pp. 176-217; G. Poggi, *Calvinism and the Capitalist Spirit*; G. Marshall, *In Search of the Spirit of Capitalism*.

Question to think about: "Max Weber believed that the origin of capitalism lay in Protestantism". Is that a true description of what Weber believed? Why did Weber think that modern humanity was in danger of finding itself trapped in an 'iron cage' ("shell as hard as steel")?

Tutorial of October 13 (Monday) and October 15 (Wednesday)

This tutorial echoes the lecture on September 30.

Questions: What are the main differences, according to Weber, between 'classes' and 'status-groups'? In what respects does Weber's concept of class differ from Marx's? What do you understand by the notion of 'social closure'?

Lecture of October 14: Weber's political sociology: the three types of 'legitimate domination'; politics and ethics.

Reading

Giddens, chap. 11; Morrison, pp. 282-304; Gerth and Mills, chaps. 4 ('Politics as a vocation'), 8 and 9; M. Weber, *Economy and Society* Vol. I, chap 3, Vol. II, chaps. 10, 11, 14 and Appendix II ('Parliament and government in a reconstructed Germany'; W. J. Mommsen, *The Age of Bureaucracy*, esp. pp. 72-94; F. Parkin, *Max Weber*, chap. 3; L.A. Scaff. *Fleeing the Iron Cage*, chap. 5.

Tutorial of October 20 (Monday) and October 22 (Wednesday)

Questions: Define what Weber meant by charisma and examine the features which distinguish it from traditional and rational-legal modes of domination. Who do you think are the most charismatic figures of modern society and why?

October 21 is Congregation so there is no lecture on this day

Lecture of October 28: Weber's 'interpretive' sociology; the ideal-type; science and its limitations; modernity, conflict and 'life-spheres'; eroticism as an escape from rationalization.

Reading

Giddens, chaps. 10 and 11; Morrison, pp. 255-282; Gerth and Mills, chap. 5 ('Science as a vocation').

Tutorial of October 27 (Monday) and October 29 (Wednesday)

Weber Re-Cap (No student paper.)

Lecture of November 4: Emile Durkheim (1858-1917): the context of his life and thought. The rules of sociological method.

Reading

Giddens, chaps. 5 and 6; Morrison, pp. 151-163; R. Aron, *Main Currents in Sociological Thought 2*, pp. 68-107; *Emile Durkheim: Selected Writings*, pp. 51-77; F. Parkin, *Durkheim*, chap. 1; K. Thompson, *Emile Durkheim*, pp. 48-70, 92-108;

and R. Bendix, 'Two sociological traditions', in R. Bendix and G. Roth, *Scholarship and Partisanship* [Bendix's essay contrasts Weber and Durkheim].

Tutorial of November 3 (Monday) and November 5 (Wednesday)

Questions: In what ways, according to Durkheim, is sociology a scientific discipline? What are the differences between Weber's 'interpretive' and Durkheim's 'social fact' approaches to sociology? Can these approaches be reconciled?

Lecture of November 11: Durkheim on integration and conflict: from mechanical to organic solidarity; the forced division of labour

Reading

Giddens, chap. 5; Morrison, 128-151; *Emile Durkheim: Selected Writings*, pp. 123-154; F. Parkin, Durkheim, chap. 1; and K. Thompson, *Emile Durkheim*, pp. 70-92; S. Lukes, *Emile Durkheim: His Life and Work*, chap. 7; Raymond Aron, *Main Currents in Sociological Thought 2*, pp. 21-33.

Tutorial of November 10 (Monday) and November 12 (Wednesday)

Questions: Define 'mechanical' and 'organic' solidarity, and outline the differences between them. What is 'anomie'? What causes anomie and how might it be reduced?

Lecture of November 18: Suicide.

Reading

Giddens, pp. 82-89; Morrison, pp. 163-188; E. Durkheim, *Suicide*; K. Thompson, *Emile Durkheim*, pp. 109-121; S. Lukes, *Emile Durkheim: His Life and Work*, chap. 9; Raymond Aron, *Main Currents in Sociological Thought 2*, pp. 33-45.

Tutorial of November 17 (Monday) and November 19 (Wednesday)

Question: Why, according to Durkheim, do people kill themselves?

Lecture of November 25: Durkheim's political sociology: the state, occupational groupings and individual liberty. Durkheim's theory of religion.

Tutorial of November 24 (Monday) and November 26 (Wednesday)

Durkheim Re-Cap; Course revision. (No student paper)

November 28 (Friday) 5:00pm: Student essay deadline

Week of December 1st 'Presentist' and 'historicist' approaches to the study of classic texts. From classical to contemporary sociology. Revision.

ASSESSMENT

A) Tutorial Presentations = 20%

Tutorial presentations should be clear, invite discussion and be between 25 and 30 minutes long. They should end with at least two questions posed to the tutorial group for discussion. Attendance in tutorials is **mandatory**; students who miss tutorials without good reason (explained to the instructors), will have marks deducted from the continuous assessment portion of their grade.

B) Participation = 10%

All students are expected to contribute to the tutorials by asking questions, by contributing ideas, all underpinned by reading for the course.

Term Paper = 30%

You can choose a title from the tutorial questions - students should ask me for extra reading but are expected to search for their own – or you can formulate your own question *provided it is first negotiated with me*. **Students are not allowed to choose, for the term paper, their tutorial question.** Term papers should be around 3000 words, typed, and double-spaced. The deadline is Friday November 28 at 5.00 pm. Term papers **must** be fully referenced either using footnotes or endnotes. A list of references on the final page of the paper is insufficient. Typically, a term paper will utilize at least eight references, so you must read more than the texts listed below (do your own research in the library!). Cite your sources (references) in detail – give the page numbers - and be careful to avoid plagiarism.

End of Term Exam = 40%

A comprehensive examination in three parts requiring you to answer questions on Marx, Durkheim and Weber.

Peter Baehr and Lucia Siu, September 2008

SOC201 Classical Sociological Theory Course Schedule

Lectures (Tuesdays SO102)		Monday Tutorials (11:30am SO113)			Wednesday Tutorials (5:30pm SO103)		
Date	Topic	Date	Topic	Presenter(s)	Date	Topic	Presenter(s)
2 Sep	Introduction	No Tutorial					
9 Sep	Marx 1	8 Sep	Marx 1	T1	10 Sep	Marx 1	T1
16 Sep	Marx 2	Mid Autumn Holiday			17 Sep	Marx 2	T2
23 Sep	Marx 3	22 Sep	Marx 2	T2	24 Sep	Marx recap	T3: No student paper
30 Sep	Weber 1	29 Sep	Marx recap	T3: No student paper	National Day		
7 Oct	Chung Yang	6 Oct*	Weber 2	T4: No student paper	8 Oct*	Weber 2	T4: No student paper
14 Oct	Weber 3	13 Oct	Weber 1	T5	15 Oct	Weber 1	T5
21 Oct	Congregation	20 Oct	Weber 3	T6	22 Oct	Weber 3	T6
28 Oct	Weber 4	27 Oct	Weber recap	T7: No student paper	29 Oct	Weber recap	T7: No student paper
4 Nov	Durkheim 1	3 Nov	Durkheim 1	T8	5 Nov	Durkheim 1	T8
11 Nov	Durkheim 2	10 Nov	Durkheim 2	T9	12 Nov	Durkheim 2	T9
18 Nov	Durkheim 3	17 Nov	Durkheim 3	T10	19 Nov*	Durkheim 3	T10
25 Nov	Durkheim 4	24 Nov	Durkheim recap	T11: No student paper	26 Nov	Durkheim recap	T11: No student paper
2 Dec	Presentist / Historicist	1 Dec	Revision		3 Dec	Revision	

28 Nov (Fri) 5:00pm: Essay deadline