

**Lingnan University**  
**Department of Sociology and Social Policy**  
**SOC201 Classical Sociological Theory**  
**1st Term, 2009-2010**

**Instructors: Professor Peter Baehr**

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**and**

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<b>Recommended Study Year</b>	: 2
<b>No. of Credits/ Term</b>	: 3
<b>Mode of Tuition</b>	: Lecture-Tutorial
<b>Class Contact Hours</b>	: Three hours per week
<b>Category in Major Prog</b>	: Stream Elective
<b>Discipline</b>	: Sociology
<b>Prerequisite(s)</b>	: (a) SOC101 Introduction to Sociology, or (b) Grade D or above in AL Sociology, or (c) CUS106 The Marking of Modern Culture
<b>Co-requisite(s)</b>	: None
<b>Exclusion(s)</b>	: None
<b>Exemption Requirements(s)</b>	: 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 the variety of sociological approaches to social life and assess their potential (or lack of it) 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%). 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.

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.

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## DETAILED COURSE DESCRIPTION

**Lecture of September 4:** Introduction: Origins and distinctiveness of sociology.

**Lecture of September 11:** 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*.

### ***Tutorials beginning the week of September 7***

Dr Lucia Siu to discuss study skills, productive work habits, and time management

### **Lecture of September 18:**

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.)

### ***Tutorials beginning the week of September 14 (for sources, see Reading under Lecture of September 11)***

Questions: Do some research on factory/shop/office work in Hong Kong. From what you can understand, do you think Marx was correct, mistaken or simplistic to believe that modern work is “alienating”? Feel free to draw on your own experiences – but connect these to the Reading.

**Lecture of September 25:** 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.

***Tutorials beginning the week of September 21 (for sources, see Reading under Lecture of September 18)***

Questions: Marx argued that political life (government, parliament and the state more generally) was determined by economic relations. What did he mean by that and do you agree with his argument?

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**Lecture of October 2:** 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; Frank Parkin, *Marxism and Class Theory: A Bourgeois Critique* (chapters 4, 5 and 6 deal with “social closure”); Edward G. Grabb, *Theories of Social Inequality*, chapter 3 and 155-163; 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.

***Tutorials beginning the week of September 28 (for sources, see Reading under Lecture of September 25)***

Question: Today it is commonplace to say that Hong Kong and the world more generally is experiencing a “financial tsunami”. Imagine that Marx was alive today. How would he have interpreted the current economic crisis?

**Lecture of October 9:** Rationalisation, Protestantism and the uniqueness of the west.

Reading

Giddens, chap. 9; Morrison, 243-255; M. Weber, ‘Author’s Introduction’ to *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; F. Parkin, *Max Weber*, chap. 2; Randall Collins, ‘Weber’s Last Theory of Capitalism’ in Collins’ *Weberian Sociological Theory*, chapter 2; Jack Goody, ‘The East in the West,’ *Archives européennes de sociologie*, 38:2 (1997), 171-183; David S. Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations. Why Some are So Rich and Some So Poor*, especially chaps 2 (‘Answers To Geography: Europe and China’), and 28 (‘Winners and Losers’).

***Tutorials beginning the week of October 5 (for sources, see Reading under Lecture of October 2)***

Question: Examine the various dimensions of “social closure”. Some believe that this concept enables Weberians to provide a better theory of social inequality than Marxists. What is your view?

**Lecture of October 16:** 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.

***Tutorials beginning the week of October 12 (for sources, see Reading under Lecture of October 9)***

Questions: In what ways, according to Max Weber, was Western development unique? Is it still unique?

**Lecture of October 23:** 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; Aron Gerth and Mills, chap. 5 (‘Science as a vocation’); Raymond Aron, *Main Currents in Sociological Thought* Vol. 2, chapter on Max Weber – Chinese version under the French title *Les étapes de la pensée sociologique*.

***Week beginning October 19. There are no tutorials this week. Use the time to plan and start writing your term paper. Peter Baehr and Lucia Siu can be contacted for advice.***

**Lecture of October 30:** 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, chapter on Weber (Chinese version under the French title *Les étapes de la pensée sociologique*); *Emile Durkheim: Selected Writings*, pp. 51-77; Emile Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method* (read it all; the text is short); 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].

***The week beginning October 26 (for sources, see Reading under Lecture of October 23)***

Question: Read Weber's "Science as a Vocation". What, according to Weber, are the possibilities and limits of science? Assess his view that today modern humans live in a polytheistic world of conflicting values.

### **Lecture of November 6: 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. (Look in the Library catalogue under the subject of Suicide; you will find a lot of contemporary material, including books on suicide terrorism.)

***Tutorial beginning the week of November 2 (for sources, see Reading under Lecture of October 30)***

Questions: What was Durkheim's argument in *The Rules of Sociological Method*? How does it differ from Max Weber's view of sociology?

**Lecture of November 13:** 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.

***Tutorials beginning the week of November 9 (for sources, see Reading under Lecture of November 6)***

Question: Find statistics of suicide in Hong Kong over the past 20 years. From what can you see, do they fit Durkheim's analysis of the causes of suicide? If Durkheim were alive today, what advice would he give to the Hong Kong government to reduce the number of suicides in our society?

**Lecture of November 20:** Durkheim's political sociology: the state, occupational

groupings and individual liberty. Durkheim's theory of religion.

### Reading

Giddens, pp. 95-118; *Emile Durkheim: Selected Writings*, pp. 155-202, 219-246; Emile Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, chap. 7; F. Parkin, Durkheim, chaps. 3 and 4; and K. Thompson, *Emile Durkheim*, pp. 121-166; S. Lukes, *Emile Durkheim: His Life and Work*, chaps. 11, 13 and 23.

*Tutorials beginning the week of November 16.*

### Revision

**Lecture of November 27: REVISION**

**EXAM ON DECEMBER 4 (STUDENTS WILL DO THE EXAM IN THE LAST LECTURE OF TERM)**

## 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 instructor), 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 27** 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. **This means that you must note the sources of quotations, data and general information in the essay. These sources/references should appear in alphabetical order in your list of references/bibliography.**

**Please note:** According to LINGAN University and Social Sciences Programme policy, plagiarism is "**presentation of another person's work without proper acknowledgment of the source**". **Plagiarism** (unattributed copying) will be heavily penalised and may attract a zero mark and disciplinary action.

Students shall be aware of the University regulations about dishonest practice in course work and the possible consequences as stipulated in the Regulations Governing University Examinations.

End of Term Exam = 40%

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

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Peter Baehr and Lucia Siu, September 2009

**SOC201 Classical Sociological Theory      Course Schedule**

<b>Week</b>	<b>Tutorial - Wednesday</b> (9.30-10.20am SO103) (11.30am-12.20pm SO103)	<b>Lecture - Friday</b> (3.30-5.30pm SO102)
1	---	4 Sep: Introduction
2	9 Sep: Study skills	11 Sep: Marx 1 (early writings)
3	16 Sep: Marx 1 (alienation)	18 Sep: Marx 2 (historical materialist, class theory of state)
4	23 Sep: Marx 2 (political /econ life)	25 Sep: Marx 3 (Capital)
5	30 Sep: Marx 3 (financial crisis)	2 Oct: Weber 1 (status groups, closure)
6	7 Oct: Weber 1 (closure)	9 Oct: Weber 2 (Rationalisation, Protestantism)
7	14 Oct: Weber 2 (uniqueness of the West)	16 Oct: Weber 3 (political sociology, domination)
8	No tutorial	23 Oct: Weber 4 (interpretive sociology, science, modernity, eroticism)
9	28 Oct: Weber 4 (science as a vocation)	30 Oct: Durkheim 1 (context, sociological method)
10	4 Nov: Weber vs. Durkheim (sociological method)	6 Nov: Durkheim 2 (suicide)
11	11 Nov: Durkheim 2 (suicide in HK)	13 Nov: Durkheim 3 (solidarity)
12	18 Nov: Revision	20 Nov: Durkheim 4 (political sociology, religion)
13	No tutorial	<b>27 Nov: Revision</b> <b>Essay deadline (5.00pm)</b>
14	No tutorial	<b>4 Dec: Final Exam</b>