

University of Toronto – Sociology  
SOC6001H: Classical Sociological Theory  
Winter 2021, Fridays, 3-5:00 PM EST (online synchronous)  
Course Zoom Meeting ID: 841 0268 3986

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Course web site: Quercus

### **Course Description**

This course explores the development of sociological theory and the discipline of sociology, which took its modern form in the “classical era” of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Our focus will be on the original works of Karl Marx, W.E.B. Du Bois, Emile Durkheim, Harriet Martineau, Max Weber, and Georg Simmel. We will examine their lives, times, and most influential ideas.

### **Class/Seminar Format**

Our synchronous class time will be spent on Zoom, the videoconferencing platform. You must have a University of Toronto Zoom Pro Account to access the class. UofT currently has a campus agreement with Zoom that provides a licensed Pro account for all students, staff, and faculty. To access your account, follow these steps:

1. Go to <https://utoronto.zoom.us>
2. Click the **Sign in** button.
3. You will be transferred to the U of T weblogin page. Enter your UTORid and password and click the **Log in**.
4. Once logged in, you will be in your Zoom account's profile.

If you have a Zoom account that was created on the main Zoom website (zoom.us), the university strongly encourages that you change the email on those accounts to a personal one and then follow the steps above for signing in using your UTORid and password. In the event that you do not make this change ahead of signing up for the UofT provided Zoom account, it can take 48-72 hours for the license structure to change over to the UofT license.

For more information on using Zoom, see the link below for a knowledge library on Zoom. This list will be updated periodically as I&ITS staff curates and publishes additional articles:

[https://uoft.service-now.com/utm\\_iits?id=kb\\_article\\_view&sys\\_kb\\_id=61d9aaeadbb15c90d5a1d7795e96195e](https://uoft.service-now.com/utm_iits?id=kb_article_view&sys_kb_id=61d9aaeadbb15c90d5a1d7795e96195e)

I have taught graduate classical sociological theory many times at two different universities over the last decade. This, however, will be my first online graduate seminar. It will take a bit of time and practice to fine tune the various components of our class. We will have to be adaptable and

flexible as we get used to a different modality of teaching and learning. I hope that you can help me with this process by offering regular feedback and advice on what works well and what can be improved. Please be prepared to check email and/or course announcements via Quercus once or more every day of the week.

I will occasionally deliver what I call “table setting” lectures to provide a little overview and background for each theorist. The bulk of each meeting, however, will consist of collaborative and largely open-ended discussion of the work assigned for that day. You will serve as a discussion leader for at least one class session, sometimes but not always with fellow discussion leader. In addition to briefly summarizing the assigned material, your responsibility as a discussion leader will be to guide our discussions of the material. How you go about leading our discussions will largely be up to you and your partner, although the emphasis should be placed on class engagement and collaboration. You can draw on the discussion board for questions and discussion topics. Feel free to use the “break out group” function in Zoom to create opportunities for small group discussion.

Everyone is expected to actively engage in class. Do not rely solely on the discussion leader, or me, to provide comprehensive learning material. Your active participation in each of our meetings is the most important ingredient to pulling off an effective graduate seminar, online or in person. Please come to each class fully prepared to engage closely and carefully with the material we are covering. You will be able to use the “raise hand” function on Zoom to ask questions during our discussions. You will also be able to type questions or comments into the chat box function, which I will do my best to monitor during and after class. I encourage everyone to actively engage in class discussion and break out groups, even if the distance technology might make some of our interactions a little awkward.

I hope that you can find some comfort in the idea that your engagement does not require you to be correct. In fact, learning involves making mistakes. As the economist Kenneth Boulding once said, “Nothing fails like success because we don’t learn from it. We learn only from failure.” Unfortunately, too much of the educational system is oriented to memorization. Although recall is a key part of learning, it is a fairly superficial one. Rather than “learning all the facts” in order to arrive at the “correct” interpretation, I suggest you work toward facts to build up portable insights that make better sense of social worlds. Building anew involves making mistakes along the way, but it forges critical thinking skills essential to contemporary sociology.

### **Goals and Outcomes (in three parts)**

The main goal for this course can be divided into three parts. The first goal is that you come to appreciate how the classical tradition in sociology can engender a rich understanding of the ways that personal history connects to shared history. Second, since theory goes to heart of what professional sociologists are supposed to be doing, everyone needs some baseline fluency. These first two parts, by and large, hold for most graduate seminars. So while they are genuine and important, they are also pretty dull.

The third part of the goal is more particular to a first-year seminar in classical sociological theory. I would like for everyone develop what Max Weber referred to as “musicality” with social theory. Developing a sense of musicality pushes beyond baseline expectations and into

developing a skill set that will improve your teaching and scholarship. It is, however, a bit intangible as a learning outcome. For example, if you want an answer to the question, “What is sociological theory?,” I am afraid that you will leave class disappointed week after week. This question, innocent enough, assumes that theory is a discrete object that can be exchanged or shared among people. It assumes that theory is a signifier with a stable referent “out there,” in an objective world beyond words – that it is clearly definable. I think it is much more productive to think of theory as an assemblage of diverse activities and patterns of reasoning that are oriented toward marking out the patterning of social action. Theory, in this sense of the term, can be understood more as an ongoing process than a bounded object that can be “found” or “understood.”

The project of theorizing, more so than any other area of sociological scholarship that I can think of, is neither neatly organized nor ever finished. Think of this class as an invitation to join a loosely organized conversation focused on identifying the assumptions that often go unnoticed in social research as well as developing portable insights into a wide array of social structures, institutions, and interactions. I can formulate my goal as a test. We will have failed the test if, at the end of the semester, you answer the question, “What did you learn?” with something to the effect of “In Hoffman’s seminar I learned what sociological theory is.” We will have succeeded if you respond, “In Hoffman’s seminar, we learn how to theorize.”

**Rubric:**

<i>Graduate</i>	
Truncated Refined Letter Grade Scale	Numerical Scale of Marks
A+	90 - 100%
A	85 - 89%
A-	80 - 84%
B+	77 - 79%
B	73 - 76%
B-	70 - 72%
FZ**	0 - 69%

### Evaluation Components and Grading Policies

COMPONENT (ESSAY, TEST, PRESENTATION)	DESCRIPTION (PAGE-LENGTH, TIME REQUIREMENTS, CONTENT)	DATE DUE	RELATIVE WEIGHT
1. Class Participation	Engage with course content, assigned discussion leadership role, group discussions, class exercises, and active listening.	Ongoing - each week	15%
2. Position Paper and Discussion Leadership	Write and present a brief position paper on the week's reading and lead discussion for that day's class.	Ongoing – Friday, 11:59 PM, for the week you are assigned	15%
4. Discussion Questions	Post a discussion question and a response to a peer's question based on each week's assigned readings.	Ongoing - each Thursday, 11:59 PM	20%
5. Synthetic paper #1	Application essay on Marx, Du Bois, and Durkheim	Friday, Feb. 19, 2021, 11:59 PM	25%
6. Synthetic paper #2	Application essay on Martineau, Weber, and Simmel	Friday, March 26, 2021, 11:59 PM	25%

### **Grading:**

#### **I. Class Participation (15 pts.)**

This is a graduate seminar, so your attendance each week is, of course, essential to our collective success. Please come promptly and prepared. Make sure you do the readings before class and be ready to grapple with them in a constructive fashion during class.

#### **II. Position Paper and Discussion Leadership (15 pts.)**

Everyone will write and then present at least one position paper in class. The same week that you present your position paper, you will serve as the discussion leader. We will make assignments for position papers, presentations, and discussion leadership in the first week of the seminar. A position paper should be about 1000 words. Please post a copy of your essay to Quercus by 11:59 PM the evening of class you are assigned (this gives you a bit of time to revise the text, if you choose to, based on our discussion of it).

The essay can briefly summarize the week's readings. This summary work, however, should stake out a broader argument, position, or critical appraisal of the readings and the issues they raise. You can craft an argument by drawing connections across other theoretical frameworks, by posing thematic convergence, divergences, and blinders, pointing toward consequential silences in the texts and their relevance for classical and/or contemporary sociology, or by raising

promising lines of inquiry that might require further elaboration. Consider reading a few articles from the *Journal of Classical Sociology* for models of this type of essay.

In addition to presenting a position paper, the discussion leader(s) will structure and facilitate the day's coverage of the material. Therefore, your position paper should outline and set our discussion up. Please be responsive to discussions and issues raised by the rest of the class, however, which may or may not correspond closely to those raised in your position paper. How you structure the day's class is largely up to the discussion leader or leaders (a couple of weeks will involve more than one discussion leader). Emphasis should be on facilitating an engaging and lively discussion that deepens our understanding and appreciation for the texts at hand, their broader contexts, their blind spots, and how they remain relevant to contemporary sociological practice.

If you are not a discussion leader, your role is to come prepared to discuss the material, help formulate or re-formulate class discussion questions, speculate on answers, and in general be an active, engaged, and constructive participant in our seminar. Please keep in mind that crystalline understanding of the material is not an expectation for participation, but a willingness to learn is.

Please conduct yourself in a professional and attentive fashion. Please respect your peers and your instructor. In the spirit of perhaps the most famously misattributed quote in all the humanities (was it Plato? Philo of Alexandria? Rev. John Watson? Ian MacLaren?), "Be kind to one another, for most of us are fighting a hard battle."

### **III. Discussion Questions (20 pts.)**

Everyone will submit at least one (1) discussion board question and one (1) response to a peer's question to Quercus each week. Please post a discussion question no later than 11:59 PM on the Thursday before our Friday meetings. To avoid last minute technical glitches, posting ahead of time is always a good idea. Consider making a back-up copy of what you write in case it does not upload properly.

Discussion questions are a good way to raise issues that you find puzzling, would like to discuss more in class, try out a bit of analysis based on the readings, raise applications or extensions, or in general provide content that can help to structure our open discussions in class. Answers are a good place to offer some analysis to a peer's question. These questions and answers will help to structure our weekly conversations. We will not be able to cover every discussion question of course, so if there is an issue raised in your discussion question that you want addressed be proactive in bringing it up during our meetings.

**TIP:** Try to avoid discussion questions that can be answered with a simple "yes" or "no." Questions that begin with the adverbs "how" or "why" (e.g. "How do new information technologies shape interpersonal communication?") are usually better than questions that start with "have" or "do" (e.g. "Do new information technologies impact interpersonal communication?").

#### **IV. Synthetic Paper #1 (25 pts.)**

In the first paper, you will write a synthetic theoretical analysis of a contemporary social problem of your choice. This paper should be between 2300-2600 words in length. You will focus on the theoretical perspectives and key concepts of Marx, Du Bois, and Durkheim. The paper should move beyond summary by making its own theoretical argument or contribution. You might consider organizing the argument around which theorist provides a more enlightening framework or set of analytic concepts for analyzing the social problem at hand. Or consider which aspects of each theorist's work best captures certain aspects of the problem. You might also consider frameworks and/or concepts can be synthesized so to better capture important or illuminating features of the social problem.

Paper #1 is due on or before *Friday, February 19, by 11:59 PM* to Quercus. Please upload a version in Word (.docx) through the course web site.

#### **V. Synthetic Paper #2 (25 pts.)**

In the second paper, you will write a synthetic theoretical analysis of a contemporary social problem of your choice. This paper should be between 2300-2600 words in length. You will focus on the theoretical perspectives and key concepts of Martineau, Weber, and Simmel. The case of social problem should be distinct from what you wrote about in the first paper. Move beyond summary by making its own theoretical argument or contribution. You might consider organizing the argument around which theorist provides a more enlightening framework or set of analytic concepts for analyzing the social problem at hand. Or consider which aspects of each theorist's work best captures certain aspects of the problem. You might also consider frameworks and/or concepts can be synthesized so to better capture important or illuminating features of the social problem.

Paper #2 is due on or before *Friday, March 26, by 11:59 PM*. Please provide a hardcopy in my mailbox and upload a version in Word (.doc or .docx) it through the course web site.

#### General Guidelines for Papers:

- 12 point font, double spaced.
- At least 1" margins on all sides.
- Check spelling and read your work before turning it in.
- Use proper citation conventions.
- Avoid totalizing terms such as "always," "never," "totally," and "completely," or phrases like "since the beginning of time...", which lead to weak theorizing because they oversimplify the human condition.

#### **PENALTIES FOR LATENESS:**

In cases where there are legitimate and documented reasons beyond a student's control, there will be no penalty for turning in assignments late.

#### **Academic Integrity**

The University of Toronto is committed to the values of independent inquiry and to the free and open exchange of ideas. Academic integrity underpins these values and is a core part of the University's commitment to intellectual life. Copying, plagiarizing, falsifying medical certificates, or other forms of academic misconduct will not be tolerated. Any student caught

engaging in such activities will be referred to the Dean's office for adjudication. Any student abetting or otherwise assisting in such misconduct will also be subject to academic penalties. Students are expected to cite sources in all written work and presentations. See this link for tips for how to use sources well: (<http://advice.writing.utoronto.ca/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize>).

According to Section B.I.1.(e) of the *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* it is an offence "to submit, without the knowledge and approval of the instructor to whom it is submitted, any academic work for which credit has previously been obtained or is being sought in another course or program of study in the University or elsewhere."

By enrolling in this course, you agree to abide by the university's rules regarding academic conduct, as outlined in the Calendar. You are expected to be familiar with the *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* (<http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/osai/The-rules/code/the-code-of-behaviour-on-academic-matters>) and *Code of Student Conduct* (<http://www.viceprovoststudents.utoronto.ca/publicationsandpolicies/codeofstudentconduct.htm>) which spell out your rights, your duties and provide all the details on grading regulations and academic offences at the University of Toronto.

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to Turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site.

### **Accessibility Services**

Please see the University of Toronto Governing Council "Statement of Commitment Regarding Persons with Disabilities" at <http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/Assets/Governing+Council+Digital+Assets/Policies/PDF/ppnov012004.pdf>. It is the University of Toronto's goal to create a community that is inclusive of all persons and treats all members of the community in an equitable manner. In creating such a community, the University aims to foster a climate of understanding and mutual respect for the dignity and worth of all persons.

In working toward this goal, the University will strive to provide support for, and facilitate the accommodation of individuals with disabilities so that all may share the same level of access to opportunities, participate in the full range of activities that the University offers, and achieve their full potential as members of the University community. We take seriously our obligation to make this course as welcoming and accessible as feasible for students with diverse needs. We also understand that disabilities can change over time and will do our best to accommodate you.

Students seeking support must have an intake interview with a disability advisor to discuss their individual needs. In many instances it is easier to arrange certain accommodations with more advance notice, so we strongly encourage you to act as quickly as possible. To schedule a registration appointment with a disability advisor, please visit Accessibility Services at <http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as>, call at 416-978-8060, or email at:

[accessibility.services@utoronto.ca](mailto:accessibility.services@utoronto.ca). The office is located at 455 Spadina Avenue, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Suite 400.

Additional student resources for distressed or emergency situations can be located at [distressedstudent.utoronto.ca](mailto:distressedstudent.utoronto.ca); Health & Wellness Centre, 416-978-8030, <http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/hwc>, or Student Crisis Response, 416-946-7111.

### **Equity and Diversity**

The University of Toronto is committed to equity and respect for diversity. All members of the learning environment in this course should strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect. As a course instructor, I will neither condone nor tolerate behaviour that undermines the dignity or self-esteem of any individual in this course and wish to be alerted to any attempt to create an intimidating or hostile environment. It is our collective responsibility to create a space that is inclusive and welcomes discussion. Discrimination, harassment and hate speech will not be tolerated.

Additional information and reports on Equity and Diversity at the University of Toronto is available at <http://equity.hrandequity.utoronto.ca>.



**Required Readings** (any edition is fine unless specifically noted. The University of Toronto St. George Bookstore, 214 College St., 416.640.7900, should have some copies of the books available. I asked that they provide used copies where possible to help keep costs down.):

1. Quercus posted reading material
2. Tucker, Robert C. 1978 [1972]. *The Marx-Engels Reader. Second Edition*. New York City, NY: W.W. Norton & Company.
3. Du Bois, W.E.B. 1903. *The Souls of Black Folk*.
4. Du Bois, W.E.B. 1940. *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay Toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept*.
5. Martineau, Harriet. 1838. *How to Observe Morals and Manners*.
6. Weber, Max. 1905. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.
7. Weber, Max. 1958. *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. Translated, edited and with an introduction by H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills
8. Simmel, Georg. 1972. *On Individuality and Social Forms*. Edited by D. Levine. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

**Additional Resources (not required, but these can be helpful for background and supplemental explanation):**

Summary treatments of classical sociological theory

- Collins, Randall. 1994. *Four Sociological Traditions*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Coser, Lewis. 1977. *Masters of Sociological Thought*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich.
- Laura Desfor Edles and Scott Appelrouth. 2021. *Sociological Theory in the Classical Era: Text and Readings. Fourth Edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Ritzer, George. *Classical Sociological Theory*. (Latest Edition). McGraw Hill.
- Zeitlin, Irving. 2000. *Ideology and the Development of Sociological Theory 7<sup>th</sup> Edition*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Major journals in sociological theory:

- *Journal of Classical Sociology*
- *Sociological Theory*
- *Theory and Society*
- *Theory, Culture, and Society*

## SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND READINGS

Week 1, Jan. 8:           **Introductions and Orientation**

OPTIONAL/SUPPLEMENTAL:

- Abend, G. 2008. "The meaning of 'theory'." *Sociological Theory*, 26(2), 173-199.
- Hall, Oswald. 2003 [1963]. "Some Recollections of Sociology in Two Universities: McGill and the University of Toronto." Pp. 41-52 in *Forty Years, 1963-2003: Department of Sociology, University of Toronto*. Toronto: Canadian Scholar's Press.

Week 2, Jan. 15:       **Karl Marx**

from *The Marx-Engels Reader, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*:

- Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844
- Theses on Feuerbach
- The German Ideology, Pt. I
- The Manifesto of the Communist Party

Week 3, Jan. 22:       **Karl Marx**

from *The Marx-Engels Reader, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*:

- *Capital, Volume One*, pgs. 294-361; 436-438
- *Capital, Volume Three*, pgs. 439-442

OPTIONAL/SUPPLEMENTAL:

- Manza, Jeff and M.A. McCarthy. 2011. "The Neo-Marxist Legacy in American Sociology." *Annual Review of Sociology* 37:155-183.

Week 4, Jan. 29:       **W.E.B. Du Bois**

- *The Souls of Black Folk*

OPTIONAL/SUPPLEMENTAL:

- *A Scholar Denied* (excerpts posted to Blackboard)
- Collins, Patricia Hill. 2005. "Black Public Intellectuals: From Du Bois to the Present," *Contexts*, 4: 22-27.

Week 5, Feb. 5: **W.E.B. Du Bois**

- *Dusk of Dawn*

OPTIONAL:

- Itzigsohn, Jose, and Karida Brown. 2015. "Sociology and the Theory of Double Consciousness." *Du Bois Review* 12(2): 231-48.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. 2005. "Black Public Intellectuals: From Du Bois to the Present," *Contexts*, 4: 22-27.

Week 6, Feb. 12: **Emile Durkheim**

- *Division of Labor in Society* (excerpts posted to Quercus)
- *Suicide* (excerpts posted to Quercus)
- *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (read Intro., Book I: Chs. 1-4, Book II: Chs. 5-7, Conclusion)

Week 7, Feb. 19: NO CLASS, UTSG READING WEEK

***Paper #1 due Friday, February 19, by 11:59 PM***

Week 8, Feb. 26: **Harriet Martineau**

- *How to Observe Morals and Manners*

Week 9, March 5: **Max Weber**

- *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*

OPTIONAL/SUPPLEMENTAL:

- Collins, Randall. 1994. Pp. 81-111 in *Four Sociological Traditions*. New York City, NY: Oxford University Press.

Week 10, March 12: **Max Weber**

- Science as a Vocation
- Class, Status, Party
- Bureaucracy
- The Social Psychology of the World Religions

Week 11, March 19: **Georg Simmel**

From *Individuality and Social Forms*:

- Ch. 3: The Problem of Sociology
- Ch. 5: Exchange
- Ch. 6: Conflict
- Ch. 10: The Stranger
- Ch. 18: Group Expansion and the Development of Individuality
- Ch. 19: Fashion
- Ch. 20: The Metropolis and Mental Life

Week 12, March 26: **Wrap up (or, why do we do this?)**

- Stinchcombe, Arthur. 1982. "Should Sociologists Forget Their Mothers and Fathers?" *American Sociologist* 17:2-11.
- Alexander, Jeffrey C. 1987. "The Centrality of the Classics." Pp. 11-57 in Anthony Giddens & Jonathan H. Turner (eds.), *Social Theory Today*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Go, Julian. 2013. "For a postcolonial sociology." *Theory and Society* 42:25-55.

***Paper #2 due Friday, March 26, 11:59 PM***