Soc 580 Classical Sociological Theory

09/09/11 revised syllabus

Fall 2011, Course Meets Wednesdays, 2-5P, Sewall Hall 460

Instructor:
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COURSE OVERVIEW

This course examines the impact of classical sociological theory on modern day sociological projects and, by extension, its impact on other social science and humanistically-oriented disciplines, such as anthropology and religious studies. We will begin the course by examining why classical theory is considered “classical” and read the works of some of those who offer critique of classical sociological theory. The choice of which classical theorists to read and even which theorists are considered classical is somewhat arbitrary, although we will focus on the three main theorists: Marx, Weber, and Durkheim, the names that would immediately jump to mind for most sociologists if asked “who are the classical sociological theorists?” Furthermore, as we shall see in the writing of R.W. Connell, there are those who are opposed to the very idea of a set classical theory.

How a classical theorist becomes “classical” is a product of history and intellectual lineage but it is not arbitrary. These early sociologists were in some way pioneers in developing sociology. According to Berkeley sociologist, Michael Burawoy, “Their theories of society embraced an understanding of differences between and within nations. At the same the theories had to have a historical dimension, which, in turn, rendered the possibility of a future at odds with the present. They were, in some sense, utopians. Their theories had to be grounded in original empirical research, itself based on a sophisticated understanding of methodology and science. They were philosophers, researchers, and historians as well as theorists of society – its components, its integration, its perpetuation, its transformation.”

Different from some graduate courses in sociological theory, the emphasis in this course will be on figuring out how classical theory shaped and currently permeates the discipline of sociology (and other disciplines) as well as how classical theory might be utilized in your own research and thinking about the social sciences. To this end, we will spend
extensive time reading the works of the classical theorists, but also spend extensive time reading more current work from top sociological journals (American Journal of Sociology, Sociological Theory, Sociology of Religion, etc.) that utilize or challenge the works of these theorists.

**READINGS**

The following are required texts that are currently available at the Rice University bookstore:


DuBois, W.E.B. 2011 edition. The Souls of Black Folk. Create Space. Pp. 1-134. *This text can be purchased cheaply at amazon. Just make sure that you have purchased the most recent edition so that we are referring to the same page numbers.*


In addition there are quite a few articles from major sociological journals, which will be on the OWL-SPACE website for this course within the next week or so as well as available via JSTOR through the Rice University online system. There are a couple of articles that are not available electronically and that I will either scan and provide via OWL-SPACE or copy and hand out to the class.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

1) Three memos on weekly readings (time that these will be turned in selected at the end of the first session). These memos will be five pages in length (double-spaced, 12 pt font, 1-inch margins, Times New Roman font). They should be mailed to all seminar participants by 2p the day before class (or at least 24 hours before the class meets). (20% of final grade). A discussion of the requirements for the memos will occur during the first class. *Each student will be given 1 re-do thought paper, meaning that if you think a re-write will improve your grade and understanding of the material please go ahead and re-write. A re-write should be submitted one week after the original thought paper. Late papers will still receive a penalty for lateness. So do not think of a re-write as in lieu of turning in the original thought paper.*

2) Two class presentations: you will share the responsibility with one other graduate student for introducing key concepts and leading one weekly discussion (20% of
final grade, 10% for each discussion). An overview of the class discussion questions and their rationale should be handed to me 2 days before the class discussion that the student is leading. More detailed directions for leading discussion will be distributed at the end of the second class.

3) Final Paper Discussing the relationship of classical theory to your own research interests. This assignment will be broken into three different assignments. A three-page overview of the topic for your final paper is due at the beginning of class on September 28th (10% of final grade). An introduction to the paper and annotated outline of 8-10 pages is due on November 2nd (10% of final grade). During the last day of class each student will make a 10-minute presentation about their topic, which will count for 5% of the grade. The final paper, which will be between 20-30 pages is due December 10th (25% of final grade). More detailed information about the paper assignment will be provided during the third class period. All assignments with the exception of the December 10th paper are due at 8A the day the assignment is due and the final paper is due at 5P on December 14th.

4) Even when not leading a discussion or writing a memo on a given week’s reading students are expected to come to class having read the week’s readings and to actively participate in the class discussion (10% of final grade).

**ATTENDANCE AND LATE POLICY**

Missing class and coming to class late will influence your class participation grade (10% of final grade). Students may miss one class without penalty. All subsequent classes missed will result in a decrease of five percentage points removed from the overall class participation grade. All work submitted via email is NOT considered turned in until you receive an email from Dr. Ecklund that she has received it.

**STATEMENT ON DISABILITY**

Any student with a documented disability seeking academic adjustments or accommodations is requested to speak with me during the first two weeks of class. All such discussions will remain as confidential as possible. Students with disabilities will need to also contact Disability Support Services in the Allen Center.

**SUMMARY OF GRADES**

Weekly Reading Memos: 20%
Class Presentations: 20%
Final Paper: 50% Total
  - Topic Overview: 10%
  - Introduction and Annotated Outline: 10%
  - Presentation: 5%
  - Final Draft: 25%
Class Participation: 10%
Even if you are taking this course pass/fail, all assignments must be handed in to receive a grade of “pass.”

**HONOR CODE**
Students are expected to abide by the Rice Honor System ([http://honor.rice.edu/emplibrary/Student%20Handbook%20(rev%201-1-08).pdf](http://honor.rice.edu/emplibrary/Student%20Handbook%20(rev%201-1-08).pdf)).

**CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS**
My expectations include the following:

1) I expect that you will give me, guest speakers, and your colleagues your complete attention when you are in the course. This means that you will not sleep, read the newspaper, fiddle with or talk on your cell phone or any other electronic device, check e-mail, text, surf the web or eat during class (drinking is certainly permitted). Immediately upon entering the classroom, turn off your phone if you have one. You may use lap tops during this course for note taking.

2) Expect critical but constructive feedback both from me and from your classmates. Give critical feedback with a spirit of helpfulness.

3) When another student is speaking, please give that student your undivided attention.

4) It is extremely disruptive when students come to class late, leave early, or start packing up belongings before the class is finished. Please do not do this.

5) I want to know how things are going for you in the course. If something is not working, let me know. I value your feedback, and want to make this an enjoyable and challenging learning experience for you.

I deeply enjoy my work and can think of little that I would rather be doing than working as your instructor. You can expect the following:

1) I will be organized and prepared for every class meeting.

2) I will be attentive to your concerns and try my hardest to make the course material interesting, accessible and relevant to your overall work as a graduate student.

3) I will grade fairly and promptly. Your grade will be based on your performance and not any personal consideration (such as race, gender, class, religion, or whether or not you and I agree or disagree about a particular issue). I will do my best to return assignments within (usually) one week after they are turned in and at most two weeks.

4) When you are speaking during class or when we meet in my office, I will do my very best to give undivided attention.

5) As a matter of keeping the classroom a conducive learning environment for each of you and in respecting the kind of resources that you are giving to be here, I absolutely will not tolerate inattention or lack of respect or incivility directed towards me or towards other students.

6) I know you have other commitments besides this course and consequently, I will begin and end class on time.
Note: I may change the syllabus AND ASSIGNMENTS as necessary (I will not increase the level of work but may decrease it a bit). You are responsible for all changes and information presented in the course, regardless of whether you attended class.

**TOPICS AND ASSIGNED READINGS**

**August 24th Overview of Course, Its Significance and Limitations**

What is classical sociological theory and why is it important (or not important) to modern sociological projects?

Presenter: Elaine Howard Ecklund

**August 31st Classical Theory and Its Critics**


In addition, we will discuss feminist critiques of classical theory.

Total Reading: 107 pages

Presenter: Elaine Howard Ecklund

Memo 1: James Phillips

Memo 2: Junia Howell

**September 7th On the Origins of Sociological Theory**

pp. 19-27, “Introduction to Part I”


pp. 55-71, “Democracy in America,” Alexis de Tocqueville


Total Reading: 91 pages

Presenter 1: Junia Howell

Presenter 2: Irina Chukhray

Memo 1: Junia Howell

Memo 2: Irina Chukhray

**September 14: Overview of the Ideas of Karl Marx**


pp. 73-81, “Introduction to Part II”

pp. 82-85, “The German Ideology,” Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels

pp. 86-95, “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844,” Karl Marx

pp. 96-111, “Manifesto of the Communist Party”

pp. 112-121, “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte,” [1852]


pp. 130, “Classes,” Karl Marx
Total Reading: 57 pages

Presenter 1: Junia Howell

Presenter 2: Irina Chukhray

Memo 1: Christina Zarraga

Memo 2: Junia Howell

Memo 3: Irina Chukhray

September 21: Contemporary Influences and Uses of Marxist Sociology
*Guest Visit from Elizabeth Long

*class ends at 4P today, so that students might hear talk by University of Colorado sociology faculty member Dr. Richard G. Rogers


Total Reading: 111 pages

Presenter 1: Jessica Davenport

Presenter 2: Jason Jeffries

Memo 1: Jessica Davenport
Memo 2: Jason Jeffries

September 28th Durkheim’s Sociology
ASSIGNMENT DUE: Overview of final paper

From Classical Sociological Theory, 2nd Edition, Calhoun et. al

pp. 133-138, “Introduction to Part III”

* will be distributed in class

Total Reading: 166 pages

Presenter 1: Elaine Howard Ecklund

Memo 1: Irina Chukray

October 5th There will be no class today; see this as a time to catch up on work or we may decide collectively to meet another time as a class.

October 12th Durkheim’s Views of Society

Mid-term Course Evaluation

From Classical Sociological Theory, 2nd Edition, Calhoun et. al

pp. 158-170, “The Division of Labor in Society,” Emile Durkheim

From The Elementary Forms of Religious Life, Cosman vii-xxxvii, “Introduction”

From Book 1

pp. 76-86, “Chapter 4: Totemism as Elementary Religion,” Emile Durkheim

From Book 2
pp. 87-100, “Chapter 1: Central Totemic Beliefs pt. I,” Emile Durkheim
pp. 109-120, “Chapter 3: Central Totemic Beliefs pt. II,” Emile Durkheim

pp. 140-152, “Chapter 6: The Origins of These Beliefs pt. II,” Emile Durkheim

pp. 153-182, “Chapter 7: The Origins of These Beliefs pt. III,” Emile Durkheim

From Book 3
pp. 310-343, “Conclusion”

Total Reading: 170 pages

Presenter 1: Jason Jeffries

Presenter 2: Jessica Davenport

Memo 1: Jason Jeffries

Memo 2: Jessica Davenport

Memo 3: William Oliver

October 19th Contemporary Analysis and Uses of Durkheim


Total Reading: 186 pages

Presenter 1: James Phillips

Memo 1: James Phillips

October 26th  An Overview of Weberian Sociology

*Guest Visit from Elizabeth Long

From Classical Sociological Theory, 2nd Edition, Calhoun et. al


pp. 218-227, “Basic Sociological Terms,” Max Weber

pp. 247-255, “The Distribution if Power within the Political Community: Class, Status, Party,” Max Weber

pp. 256-263, “The Types of Legitimate Domination,” Max Weber


Total Reading: 84 pages

Presenter 1: Christina Zarraga

Presenter 2: William Oliver

Memo 1: Christina Zarraga

Memo 2: William Oliver
November 2\textsuperscript{nd}  The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism

ASSIGNMENT DUE: Introduction to final paper and annotated outline.

From The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, Kalberg.


Total Reading: 170 pages

Presenter 1: James Phillips

Memo 1: Jason Jeffries

Memo 2: James Phillips

November 9\textsuperscript{th}  Contemporary Uses and Misuses of Weberian Sociology


Total Reading: 157 pages

Presenter 1: Elaine Howard Ecklund
November 16th Self (Gender and Race) and Society in Classical Social Theory
(Mead, Simmel, Freud, Du Bois)

From Classical Sociological Theory, 2nd Edition, Calhoun et. al

pp. 277-281, “Introduction to Part V”


Total Reading: about 180 pages

Presenter 1: Christina Zarraga

Memo 1: Christina Zarraga

Memo 2: Jessica Davenport

November 23rd The Movement from Classical to Contemporary Theory

From Classical Sociological Theory, 2nd Edition, Calhoun et. al

pp. 401-406, “Introduction to Part VII”


pp. 414-420, “Structural Components of the Social System,” Talcott Parsons


Total Reading: 70 pages

Presenter 1: William Oliver

Memo 1: William Oliver

**November 30**

**Beyond Classical Theory (?) and Class Presentations**


Total Reading: 57 pages

**December 14**

**FINAL PAPER DUE**