

SOCI 3003: Classical Sociological Theory

Spring 2024, Wed 4:30-6:15pm YIA 405

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1. Introduction

It will be all for the best if you think of SOCI 3003 as mainly an appreciation course in sociological theory. You have no doubt come across classes on the appreciation of art, of music, or of films. This course belongs in the same intellectual genre. The fine art of theory appreciation, however, may make greater demand on your mind and concentration, even when we aim at no more than helping you to develop a 'taste' for sociological theory. In order to develop - and possibly to also fine-tune - this taste for theory, the course will focus upon a particular stage in the unfolding drama of sociological thought, a stage that is usually designated by the somewhat ambiguous term, classical theory. The horizon of this time stage spans approximately from the mid-19th Century to early 20th Century. In geographical terms, we will be looking at sociological theorists coming from a continental background - from France, Germany, Italy, and so forth. Ideas and concepts explored and propounded by these exceptional thinkers built the very foundation of the sociological tradition. Yet in order to develop this taste for sociological theory as such, we must strive for more than a simple acquaintance with these ideas and concepts; Instead, by way of examining the lives and thoughts of this selected group of thinkers, eventually we mean to raise and then to answer the following questions: what is the nature of theory building? How does sociological theory bear upon practice and reality? How can sociological theory be applied beyond the legendary ivory tower of university? Why is it so important for sociology to aspire towards a theoretical foundation and destination? How is theory related to knowledge in general? and so on. Some of these puzzles may become clearer by the end of this course, others may well prove unanswerable. Yet at least you should be able to appreciate the significance and relevance of these concerns, for your particular status as a student in sociology, as well as for your more general position as a member of your own society. In the final analysis, to study sociological theory is to understand the all important question of what sociology is about.

Set against this broader intellectual framework, SOCI 3003 will discuss the ideas of the following theorists: Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, and Karl Marx will be dealt with in greater details, while Vilfredo Pareto, Georg Simmel, and even Sigmund Freud may be more briefly introduced. All these, in addition to concerns laid out in the above, will have to be accomplished within the scope of three months. The task at hand is formidable - but not entirely impossible.

2. Structure of the Course

There will be two teaching components for SOCI 3003. Specifically, this course will encompass thirteen lectures and six tutorials. The purposes of these components will be introduced below:

- a. Thirteen lectures that form the core of this course. Of these lectures, Durkheim, Weber, and Marx will each take up three lectures, a comparison of these figures will share the remaining four lectures. For detailed schedule, see section Four below.
- b. Six tutorial sessions that would serve mainly as 'study-aid' for the lecture and reading materials.

3. Texts and Readings

Students of sociology tend to come from a wide variety of backgrounds, as well as with different aspirations for what they want to accomplish in their sociological training. In this light, your assigned texts will fall into different groups and levels, and you can focus on those that seem to suit your own purposes best.

- a. Basic texts: Two books may be regarded as basic texts for this course, these are Coser, Lewis, Masters of Sociological Thought, various editions (HBJ Press); and Zeitlin, Irving, Ideology and Development of Sociological Theory, various editions (Prentice Hall). Coser's book especially has good and interesting coverage on all of the theorists to be dealt with in this course. Beyond these basic texts, there are other books that you should consult in accordance with your own level and intention. The basic texts are necessary, but by no means sufficient, preparations for this course.
- b. Intermediate texts: Two books have provided more in-depth, extensive and hence more difficult, coverage on some of the theorists here concerned, namely, Aron, Raymond, Main Currents in Sociological Thought, 2 vols. (Penguin books); and Giddens, Anthony, Capitalism and Modern Social Theory (Cambridge). Both texts are now standard classics in the field. You should at least attempt to supplement your reading of the basic texts with these more sophisticated treatments. This is in effect the level of understanding that you are expected to achieve for this course.

- c. Higher texts: There are other texts that tackle not so much individual thinkers but intellectual schools and currents. These would make greater demand on your understanding not only of particular concepts or ideas, but also of the more holistic picture and themes that such ideas made up. In other words, some texts help you to go beyond individual thinkers, and into their collective milieu as a whole. For those of you who welcome intellectual challenges at this higher order, the following texts should be recommended: Hughes, Stuart, Consciousness and Society (Vintage Books); and Hawthorn, Geoffery, Enlightenment and Despair (Cambridge U. Press). Both books will raise your understanding of sociological thought to a much higher level of theoretical rigor. In addition to these texts, times and circumstances have changed sufficiently to warrant new looks at classical theories altogether. As of now, many authors and books have set out to reexamine the nature of social theory from a "postmodern" vantage point. Nothing conclusive has yet emerged from this reexamination, but you may wish to acquaint yourself with this new approach to classical theory. See, for example, Seidman, Steven, Contested Knowledge (Blackwell Publisher), especially Introduction and Part One.
- d. Supplementary text: For those of you who do not have a background in sociology, or who need to strengthen this background anyway, read the short (but difficult) book by Frisby, David and Sayer, Derek, Society (Tavistock Press). This may turn out to be one of your more fruitful piece of reading.

On a more personal note, and echoing the Introduction above, this course is founded upon the spirit that the study of classical theory is not an idle exercise in intellectual memory. And yet how classical theory can be applied and made use of, as a living and relevant tradition, is not a question that can be answered in general terms. In this light, you may wish to consult the following work: 陳海文 (2002) 啓蒙論：社會學與中國文化啓蒙. Oxford University Press, Hong Kong. On the one hand, this book can be read as exemplar in the application of sociological theory, both classical and contemporary, on issues of imminent current concern. While on the other hand, it would certainly help you to have a better understanding of the intellectual orientation of your instructor, and hence of the direction and rationale of this course as a whole.

4. Schedule of instruction

a. Lecturing Schedule

- Introduction: Genesis of Modern Sociological Theory (1st session)
- Emile Durkheim: In Search of Sociological Method (2nd session)
- Emile Durkheim: In Search of Modern Society (3rd session)
- Emile Durkheim: Defining the Boundaries of Social Being (4th session)
- Max Weber: Sentiment and Method (5th session)
- Max Weber: Capitalism and Society (6th session)
- Max Weber: Disenchantment and Reenchantment (7th session)
- Karl Marx: Revolution (8th session)
- Karl Marx: Capitalism (9th session)
- Karl Marx: Communism (10th session)
- On Social Change (11th session)
- On Social Consciousness (12th session)
- On Theoretical Discourse (13th session)
- Conclusion (14th session)

b. Tutorial arrangements will be announced by your tutors during the introductory session.

5. Course Requirements

- a. Tutorials: Presentation (10%) + participation (10%)
- b. Review Essay (30%)
- c. Final Take-home Exam. (50%)

6. Reading Assignments

Bibliography of reading assignments of original writings or commentaries will be distributed or assigned during lectures.

7. Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/>. Our Department also has a detailed guideline on academic citations <https://www.cuhk.edu.hk/soc/citation.pdf>

With each assignment, students are required to submit a signed Academic Honesty Declaration Statement that they are aware of these policies, regulations, guidelines and procedures. For assignment that is principally text-based and submitted via the VeriGuide system, the Academic Honesty Declaration Statement in the form of a receipt will be issued by VeriGuide upon students' uploading of the soft copy of the assignment. Assignments without the receipt will not be graded by teachers. Only the final version of the assignment should be submitted via VeriGuide.

8. Guide to Grading System

Grade Descriptors

- A A thorough understanding of the course materials and an outstanding performance on all learning outcomes.
- A- A solid understanding of the course materials and an outstanding performance on almost all learning outcomes.
- B An adequate understanding of the course materials and a substantial performance, on average, on all learning outcomes.
- C A basic understanding of the course materials and a satisfactory performance on the majority of learning outcomes, possibly with a few weaknesses.
- D A partial understanding of the course materials and an inadequate performance on a number of learning outcomes.
- F A poor understanding of the course materials and an unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes.

CLASSICAL SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY
READINGS BY LECTURE

H.M.CHAN

- I) Aron, R. (1968), Main Currents in Sociological Thought, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, vol. I, Introduction.
Biddiss, M. D. (1977), The Age of the Masses, Penguin Books, ch. 4.
Camic, C. (1997) ed. Reclaiming the Sociological Classics, Blackwell Press, Introduction.
陳海文 (2002) · 啓蒙論：社會學與中國文化啓蒙 · Hong Kong:Oxford Universtiy Press, ch. 5
Huges, S. (1958), Consciousness and Society, New York: Knopf, chs. 1 & 2.
- II) Δ Giddens, A. (1986), Durkheim, London: Fontana Press.
Δ Lukes, S. (1973), Emile Durkheim: his Life and Work, London: Allen Lane.
Durkheim, E. (1964), Rules of Sociological Method, New York: Free Press, chs. 1&2.
Durkheim, E. (1972), Selected Writings, edited by Anthony Giddens, Cambridge University Press, chs. I &2.
- III) Durkheim, E (1964), Division of Labour in Society, translated by George Simpson. Glencoe, Ill: Free Press, p.xiii-46.
Durkheim, E. (1972), chs. 5, 6, 8.
- IV) Durkheim, E. (1952), Suicide, London:Routledge. pps.209-216, 217-228, 241-258.
Durkheim, E. (1972), chs. 3, 4, 11, 12.
- V) Δ Bendix, R. (1977), Max Weber: an Intellectual Portrait, -Berkeley: University of California Press.
Δ 金子榮一 (1980) 韋伯的比較社會學 · 台北：水牛文庫
Mills, C. W. & Gerth, H. .ed. (1946), From Max Weber, New York: Oxford University Press, # V.
Runciman, W. ed. (1978), Max Weber: Selections in Translation, New York: Cambridge University Press, # 4, 6, 10.
Weber, M. (1968), Economy and Society, Berkeley: California Press. p.3-26.
- VI) Mills, C. W. & Gerth, H. ed. (1946), # XI.
Weber, M. (1976), The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, chs. 2, 3, 5.

- VII) Δ Mills, C. W. & Gerth, H. ed. (1946). # VIII.
Δ Weber, M. (1968), p.439-451.
Runciman, W. ed. (1978), # 3.
Weber, M. (1968), p. 212-254.
- VIII) Δ Avineri, Shlomo, (1968), The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx, London: Cambridge University Press.
Δ Berlin, Isaiah, (1978), Karl Marx: his Life and Environment, New York: Oxford University Press.
Δ Marx, Karl, (1977), Selected Writings, edited by David McLellan, Oxford University Press.
Marx, Karl, (1963), Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy, edited by Bottomore, T. & Rubel, M. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, pt. 1, and p. 236-245.
- IX) Marx, Karl, (1963), pt. 3, #1-5.
- X) Marx, Karl, (1963), pt.5.

* All items reserved at the main library, CUHK.

Δ For your reading pleasure, not required texts.