

Sociology 306
SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

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Office Hours: Thursday, 2:00-3:30
(or by appointment)
1808 Chicago Avenue, #107

Wednesday, 2:00-4:00
Locy Hall, #310A

Course Description

This course examines some of the guiding themes of sociological analysis as they were originally formulated by four influential “classical” social thinkers: Emile Durkheim (1858-1917), Karl Marx (1818-1883), Max Weber (1864-1920), and W.E.B. Du Bois (1868-1963). Drawing on some of these theorists’ major writings, class sessions will unpack each thinker’s major concepts and consider how he fused them in order to craft a distinctive lens through which to view the social world.

Grading

Course grades are determined on a 100-point basis. The sources of these points are as follows.

- Midterm exam: in-class exam (short-answer format), Thursday, January 31.
Possible points: 35.
- Final exam: in-class exam (short-answer and essay format), cumulative in coverage, Wednesday, March 20, 9:00-11:00.
Possible points: 50.
- Participation: Contribution to analysis and discussion of assigned readings.
Possible points: 15.
 - *Up to 10* of these 15 participation points may alternatively be earned by five short writing assignments (see p. 4 of this syllabus).

At the end of the quarter, the instructor will add up the total score for each student, plot the class distribution of total scores, and use the resulting curve to assign a final letter grade.

Readings

Students should acquire the following five books, which are available at Norris Center Bookstore.

W. E. B. Du Bois. *The Souls of Black Folk*. Introduction by Jonathan Scott Holloway. **2015 edition by Yale University Press.** (Hereafter *SBF*.)

Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*. Edited by Steven Lukes. **2014 edition by Free Press.** (Hereafter cited as *DOL*.)

Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Translation by Carol Cosman. **2001 edition by Oxford University Press** [reprinted 2008]. (Hereafter *EF*.)

Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. **2001 edition by Routledge.** (Hereafter *PE*.)

Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*. Edited by Talcott Parsons. (Hereafter *EAS*.)

NOTE: To follow and understand the close textual analysis that will take place during class meetings, it is necessary to use hardcopies of the specific editions listed above. Some of these books exist in other hardcopy editions, and some of them are also available electronically. However, the page numbering and formatting of these other editions typically *do not correspond* with the pagination and format of the editions that will be used in class. Only the editions listed above will make it possible to track the analysis in class.

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS¹

January 8 Introduction

Part I: Social Bonds

January 10 -
January 29

Emile Durkheim

- Reading assignment for January 10:
 - (a) *DOL*, pp. 3-7, 33-103
 - (b) Selection from *The Rules of Sociological Method* (Available on Canvas)
- Reading Assignment for January 15:
DOL, pp. 105-115, 131-149, 158-189, 201-215, 236-237

¹ *NOTE:* No reading assignments are indicated for the class meetings of January 17, February 12, February 14, February 28, and March 7 because, when the class meets on these dates, the session will continue with the analysis of the reading assignment listed for the *previous* class session.

- Reading assignment for January 22:
DOL, pp. 277-319*
- Reading assignment for January 24:
EF, pp. 3-46
- Reading assignment for January 29:
EF, pp. 140-182, 310-343*

January 31

MIDTERM EXAM

Part II: Social Divisions

February 5-
February 14

Karl Marx

NOTE: The following two assignments are available on Canvass.

- Reading assignment for February 5:
Karl Marx: Selected Writings, pp. 71-72, 83-95, 171-195*
- Reading assignment for February 7:
Karl Marx: Selected Writings, 196-208, 245-262, 424-427, 452-458

Part III: Meanings and Social Institutions

February 19-
February 28

Max Weber

- Reading assignment for February 19:
EAS, pp. 87-120, 324-333, 341-345, 358-363
- Reading assignment for February 21:
PE, pp. xxvii-80*
- Reading assignment for February 26:
PE, pp. 102-125

March 5-
March 7

W.E.B. Du Bois

- Reading assignment for March 5:
SBF, pp. 1-200*

Supplementary Participation Option

As explained above (p. 1), the grading scheme for this course is structured such that 15 points (out of the 100 possible points on which the final grade is based) are assigned on the basis of participation: that is, in-class contributions to the analysis of the assigned readings.

To earn these points, what is required is *regular participation* during class meetings. *Participation may consist of commenting on the readings, answering questions raised about them by the instructor, posing questions of your own, or otherwise speaking about some aspect of the material under discussion.*

For those who prefer an *alternative* to regular participation *up to 10* of the 15 possible participation points may alternatively be earned by five short writing assignments.

The nature of these writing assignments is as follows.

- On this syllabus (pp. 2-3), five assignments/dates are marked with an asterisk. These are:
 - Assignment for January 22:
Durkheim *DOL*, pp. 277-319*
 - Assignment for January 29:
Durkheim *EF*, pp. 140-182, 310-343*
 - Assignment for February 5:
Marx, *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, pp. 71-72, 83-95, 171-195*
 - Assignment for February 21:
Weber, *PE*, pp. xxvii-80*
 - Assignment for March 5:
Du Bois, *SBF*, pp. 1-200*
- A short paper on each of these assignments will be worth up to 2 points, for a possible total of 10 points, for those opting to write on all five reading assignments – though *it is not necessary to write on all five assignments*. One can write on four, three, two, or one of the assignments, for a possible 8, 6, 4, or 2 points respectively.
- A “short paper” is a commentary of 2-3 (double-spaced) pages. This commentary should consist of a summary (of no more than half the length of the paper) of the assignment, following by an analytical or critical comment on the assignment.
- The paper must be submitted *no later than the start of class* on the dates listed above. Late papers will be read, but will not earn points.
 - To submit a paper, send it as an email attachment to c-camic@northwestern.edu and devinwigg2023@u.northwestern.edu
- This writing assignment is **entirely optional**. No one is required (or expected) to write even one short paper. A full (15-point) participation score can be earned on the basis of regular class participation alone.
- Since no more than 10 out of 15 participation points can be earned by writing short papers, those choosing this option will still need to participate during class meetings if they want to receive the remaining 5 points.