

Syllabus for Classical Theory, Undergraduate*
Sociology 20005. Spring 2011
Tuesday, Thursday 9:00 – 10:20
P 16. Is that Pick Hall? I imagine so.

Instructor:

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Description: This class attempts to present key contributions to sociological theory (as it is understood today) as part of a historical development that begins with political philosophy. Basic questions about what it means to be free, to be an individual, to live in a society, inspired a tradition of thought that ultimately led to sociology (among other things). These questions are still as interesting today as they ever were (I heard that!), but beginning with them also helps us make sense of why sociological theory focused upon what it did. Our themes, then, will be freedom, will, good, individuality, and (social) law. We'll find these to be the themes of sociological theory too! In tracing how different theorists grappled with these themes, we will see the different ways they conceived of society, and its relation to the individual.

Requirements

There are four main requirements to this course. 1) You must keep up with the reading. 2) You must attend class. You won't be able to make much of the readings otherwise. 3) You must write three five-page essays.

Grades are computed as follows: 25% each paper; 10% daily attendance (collected perhaps by a sampling procedure to be announced), 10% participation, 5% pop quizzes, 5% magic and .1% sodium benzoate to preserve freshness.

*. This course is closely based on one created by Jim Stockinger of the University of California at Berkeley/UC Child Care. I wish to thank him for allowing the additional use of his lectures and other printed materials.

BOOKS: NOTE—These are available at the Seminary Coop; you may have some, and others you can get away with not buying because I'll have selections on CHALK. But all of these are worth adding to your personal library! Only the ones in BOLD are required.

Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Penguin edition.

Locke, *Second Treatise*, Hackett edition.

Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, Chicago Edition

Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, Oxford

Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*

Marx, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, Norton

Durkheim, *The Division of Labor*, Free Press

Durkheim, *Moral Education*, Free Press

Durkheim, *Suicide*, Free Press

Weber, *From Max Weber*, Oxford

Simmel, *Philosophy of Money*

Simmel, *Sociology of Georg Simmel*

Sort of Recommended book: I have not assigned a secondary source, but I have examined some, and conclude that Irving Zeitlin's *Ideology and the Development of Sociological Theory* would probably be the best, in terms of putting sociological theory in the context of the questions first raised in the enlightenment. It's probably no easier than class time, but might repay the time.

Meeting #1 (Tuesday, March 29): Introduction

Sociological Theory starts with a substantive hunch that something bigger than us exists. This question had already been raised by political philosophers. They drew conclusions from this that the sociological theorists didn't always like. I'll trace this path, and hopefully demonstrate how it spawned some core sociological theories. But I'll also make a side trip, so that we can cover the thought of Karl Marx, who is so influential later that we need to learn about him, even though he's not really a sociological theorist.

We will go rather quickly through the first set of readings—if this is Thursday, this must be Naples!—but many of you have already read some of these in other classes. Those who haven't, well I suppose you'd want to catch up with your peers anyway, right?

Meeting #2 (Thursday, March 31): Hobbes

Required Reading: Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan. If you are using the book, you should—as always—read as much as you can, but you should focus on the following: Part I, Chap 6 [118-; can skip starting mid 119 and just read paragraph starting 120, resume top 123, can skip mid 124-mid 126, resume with “contempt,” can skip mid 128 on, resume last paragraph 129], Chap 8 [center two paragraphs on p. 139, end of chapter p. 146-147 (“Insignificant Speech”)], Chapter 11 [160-162 (until “causing a new shuffle”), Chap 13 [183-188], Chap 14 [189-192, 198-199 (through first paragraph)]; Chap 15 [201-203; until “it is then that propriety begins”]. Part II, Chap 17 [223-225, end of continuing paragraph (until “I shall speak of a commonwealth by institution”), 227-228], Chap 18 [233-234, , the sixthly and seventhly points, 238-239, last paragraph], Chapter 20 [251-253], Chapter 21 [261-265 (leave off when he gets to Uriah)], Chapter 22 [274, first paragraph].

We begin with the Hobbesian problem of order—given scarce resources, desiring personalities, how is chaos averted? Hobbes’s answer: Live Unfree or Die. The social contract, yet the beginning of a sense of society as an organism.

Meeting #3 (Tuesday, April 5): Locke and Smith

Required Reading: John Locke, The Second Treatise, Chapters 1, 2, 5, 7 [¶ 77-80], 8 [¶ 95-99]; Adam Smith, The Wealth of Nations, Book I, Ch 2, Ch 5 [34-36], Book V, Ch 1, Pt iii, Art II, espec. 302- (from “Ought the state...”) 304, though the first few pages of this article are wonderful too...

I’m assuming most of you have read Smith in SOSC 121 (Self-Loathing and Society), but if not, this is a good time to jump in, and if you have, to brush up on the indicated parts. We look at Locke’s focus on labor and law, and Smith’s understanding of labor and exchange. Now we see a new basis for regularity, don’t we? We might carry this over into next session a bit? Maybe?

Meeting #4 (Thursday, April 7): Rousseau#1

Required Reading: Rousseau, Discourse on the Origin of Inequality, Part I (you do not need to read any preface or introduction, nor do you need to read the notes, although both the introduction and the notes are pretty interesting. You just read part I and part II.)

We look at how Rousseau also locates interdependence as the key to society—but we also see Rousseau proposing a more fundamental socialization of the personality. The replacement of the freedom of the state of nature with an unfreedom of interdependence, but a moral freedom elevating us above the animals. We can be good, if we act socially, that is, generally.

Meeting #5 (Tuesday, April 12): **Rousseau#2**

Required Reading: Finish Rousseau, Discourse on the Origin of Inequality; Rousseau, Social Contract, Book I, Chs 5 – 9*

Meeting #6 (Thursday, April 14): **Kant**

Recommended Reading: Immanuel Kant, Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals, espec Ch 1 (all), Ch 2 (80-84, 88, 95-96, 100-102), Ch 3 (114-121, 123-127). This is pretty tough stuff, so much so that there won't be a paper on it. But it is the single smartest thing said by anyone who didn't have his own tvee show.

Kant realizes the problem with Rousseau's answer—there must be a universal reason in which we all participate to determine what the good is. To act good is to act universally. In this, we have a moment of freedom, or at least no one can deny that we do.

Meeting #7 (Tuesday, April 19): **Hegel**

OPTIONAL Reading: G. W. F. Hegel, Philosophy of Right, annotated selections*; Smidgens from Hegel, Phenomenology,* Feuerbach, Critique of Hegel,* and The Essence of Christianity,* Stirner, The Ego and His Own.* **Note**: the reading from Hegel is so difficult that very few people would have a go at it without some secondary support; if you have never read Hegel before, you might want to skim first, and re-read after lecture?

Hegel can't stand the limitations Kant puts on the human spirit's freedom—it's wholly "formal". Hegel says that our freedom isn't in doing what's timelessly universal, but keepin' in step with the development of human spirit throughout world history. Feuerbach suggests that all the fancy-schmancy stuff Hegel's talking about ("spirit" like it's some kind of god, or God too, for that matter) is really our selves, and Hegel's got it all backwards. Marx and Engels then run Hegel's history upside-down, producing the theory of dialectical materialism.

***** PAPER 1 IS ASSIGNED TODAY IN CLASS *****

Due in 9 days! April 28th, 10:15 AM! Paper only!

Meeting #8 (Thursday, April 21): **Marx—dialectical materialism#1**

Required Reading: Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, The German Ideology, , (in Tucker) 149-166 (you can skim 151-153), 172-175, 184-186, 189-193, 196 (bottom)-200.* **NOTE: The VERSION ON CHALK MAY BE MISSING A FEW OF THESE PAGES....**

Any explanation must start from real material needs, and the way those needs are satisfied. The social organization of how we go about satisfying those needs is the most important thing going on, and from that develop all our ideas.

Meeting #9 (Tuesday, April 26): **Marx—the relations of production; productive force**

Required Reading: Marx, Preface to the contribution to the critique, (in Tucker) pp. 4-5 (feel free to read "all" of 3-6).*

Not only that, but there's a specific logic to the development of this social organization—it follows a “dialectic” just like Hegel thought that the development of spirit followed a dialectic. But this one, say Marx and Engels, is real.

Meeting #10 (Thursday, April 28): Simmel and The Dialectic of Structures

Required Reading: Georg Simmel, Sociology, 3-11, 40-44, 190-213, 224-234, 250-267.

Here we follow Simmel as he examines the core impulse to sociation, and trace how it can lead to the development of social structures and institutions and...dunno...whatever....

Meeting #11 (Tuesday, May 3): Simmel and Social Objects

Required Reading: Sociology (The Stranger), & Metropolis: 402-424; Georg Simmel, Philosophy of Money, 59-62, 128-130, 146-152

In some ways, Simmel clings tight to the insight of Hegel's and Marx's that objects are relations. But what then are relations?

***** PAPER 2 IS ASSIGNED TODAY IN CLASS *****
Due in 9 days! May 12th, 10:15 AM! Paper only!

Meeting #12 (Thursday, May 5): Durkheim: Dependence and the Division of Labor

Required Reading: Emile Durkheim, The Division of Labor.*

If you are using the book, read 1-7,11-12 (till section I begins), 16 (begin with section II)-17 (end when he starts talking about marital relationships), 21(begin first full paragraph)-24 (end where III begins), 38f (start at the bottom of the page and read the long paragraph that runs over to page 39). Now turn to page 60. Durkheim describes the “mechanical” solidarity of simple societies where “everyone is the same” (because there's no division of labor). Read the paragraph at the bottom of page 60 and carrying over to the next page. Now turn to 83. Durkheim here starts discussing the other type of solidarity (organic solidarity) that you find in a “modern” society with a high division of labor. Start reading where section IV begins, and read to the end of the chapter on page 86. Read from the last paragraph on page 122 till the end of the next page. Read 126-127; stop near the bottom of 127 where Durkheim writes “What is more, they sustain...”. Read 132-133, stop after “The history of these two types...”. Read 149-155 (stop after the first two lines on 155), read from “summing up (middle of page 162) to the middle of 163 (end with “upset in another”). Read 173 (start with the third line and ignore “Consequently”) to the end of 174, 291-292 (stop where I begins), read 301 (start with III) – 305 (just the first three lines) (and note on page 304 that when Durkheim says “these examples”, he means examples of nasty, exploitative division of labor, like hereditary slavery). Read 306 (From “The foregoing...”) to the end of 308, 323-328, 331-337 (end where III begins).

I review Comte and Spencer and the development of the organismic metaphor, which leads to a new take on the division of labor. Durkheim picks up from here, and revisits the Kantian question of autonomy. All the Rousseauian critics think that modern society, via the dependence produced by the division of labor, has made us unfree, immoral, and unhappy. Durkheim sets out to prove them wrong! Yay, society! Back to the organismic metaphor.

Meeting #13 (Tuesday, May 10): Durkheim: Social constraint

Required Reading: Durkheim, Moral Education, selections as below.* Durkheim then asks, what is morality? It involves rules, he says, but he dismisses the idea that there has to be **one** formula for how to generate these rules, like Kant's categorical imperative.

Pick him up page 26, second full paragraph, "Thus, it is not necessary..." and read till end of chapter (p. 32). The next chapter begins with Durkheim reviewing what came before, I strongly suggest you read this beginning, but you may also skip to page 37 and pick up there with "In the first place" and read to end of the chapter (46). Start with "In sum," on page 54 (1st full paragraph) and read to page 69, stopping at the end of the first full paragraph (end with "out behavior"). Read 71 (from third line) to the end of 73 (stop at "Up to this point"); then read from the last paragraph on page 85 ("We have just shown") to the first line on page 87 (end with "social product"). (I suggest you read to the middle of page 90, but you don't have to. Similarly, you might want to take a look at Durkheim's discussion of Kant 108-110.) Then read 111-122 (stop where there's a break in the text). You're done!

Having saved society's rep, Durkheim answers Kant's basic question—yes, we're free only so long as we're not animal-free, but society-free...which sounds a lot like being unfree. Hobbes without the cynicism.

Meeting #14 (Thursday, May 12): What brings us together and what happens when it ain't there.

Required Reading: Durkheim, Suicide.*

First of all, we start after Durkheim defines suicide (guess what—it's when you kill yourself). Pick him up on page 46, section II, read to page 53. Then Durkheim finds that religion can lower the suicide rate. Now read 171-173, but just the first paragraph on page 173. Then 179-189 (stop at III), 197 (start at IV)-202 (stop at V). Then Emile examines national crises (we skip this), now pick up at "These facts" on page 208, and read to 216. Then 241-257. The next section is hard and a bit tricky, but have a go anyway...it's interesting. That's 321-325. Now read 378 (start at III)-384. You're done!

Okay, maybe it doesn't sound too convincing, that we're free when society bosses us around, but think about what happens when society doesn't boss us around! It's even worse, isn't it!

Meeting #15 (Tuesday, May 13): Continued**Meeting #16 (Thursday, May 19): Weber: Politics/Science as a vocation**

Required Reading: Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," selections*

Weber's stuck with the same problem, but he doesn't have to prove society is god, so he can emphasize the rigorous discipline and constraint required by the modern ethical dude with no illusions. This is a guy who liked to march by himself.

Meeting #17 (Tuesday, May 24): Weber: Types of orientations and their conflicts

Required Reading: Continue "Politics as a Vocation," start Max Weber, "Religious Rejections of the World," selections, in From Max Weber.*

Okay, but maybe the rest of the world was marching with him—off into separate corners. The separation and purification of spheres of value—an irreversible change in modern history... "rationalization!" We use this to get at Weber's way of conceiving of social institutions as if they were designed to carry out some ideal type of action, or motivation.

***** PAPER 3 IS ASSIGNED TODAY IN CLASS *****

Graduating seniors; due in 9 days (June 2nd)! Everyone else, due June 6th 10:15 AM! Paper only! I mean it!

Meeting #18 (Thursday, May 26): **Weber: Conflicting Conflicts**

Finish Religious Rejections; probably start Max Weber, Economy and Society.

Meeting #19 (Tuesday, May 31): **Weber and conclusion to the project of theory.**

Required Reading: Finish Max Weber, Economy and Society. From this orientation to the individual actor, Weber derives an approach to sociology; indeed, the same basic patterns that describe individual action can be used to describe important aspects of huge groups. Coincidence? Pattern?Mur-der? You be the judge.

Other little things....

* Office hours “by appointment” are usually best for you, though you are always welcome to drop by during my scheduled hours. The way to do it is to email me a set of times you can meet in order of preference, and then I’ll choose the one I can do. This shortens the number of back-and-forth emails and allows us to set something up quicker.

** Of course we run on the honor system here, but the internet has changed the nature of academic misconduct in such a way as to lead to more “borderline cases.” As you are responsible for knowing where this line is, if you have any doubts, definitely talk to me and advisors here.

*** Please take care of your life before grades are attached to work; I am remarkably flexible before grades are assigned and remarkably inflexible afterwards. If you need more guidance on my policies regarding difficult situations, you can always consult my webpage for my answers to *Frequently Asked Questions*.

**** Papers go down ½ grade (e.g., from 4.0 to 3.5 on the 4-point scale for every day late; that is, if it is due 4:30 Monday, it is -.5 for being turned in from 4:31 Monday through 4:30 Tuesday, -1.0 for 4:31 Tuesday to 4:30 Wednesday, and so on.