

St. Francis Xavier University
Department of Sociology

Sociology 301.11
Fall 2017

Dr. David Lynes
Annex, Rm 9-C

Classical Social Theory

Sociology continues to be influenced by the work of a particular group of social theorists. The questions they raised about the nature and ethos of our collective coexistence, as well as the way each went about investigating the answers, continues to influence the theoretical framework within which much of sociology is presently pursued. This course will provide an overview of the historical context from which Sociology emerged as a discipline, committed as it was (and is still) to examining and confronting the troubling consequences of society's turn towards the modern era, with particular emphasis on the parallel developments of industrialization and capitalism.

The aim of this course is not to provide exhaustive coverage of the whole range of social thinkers who influenced the development of the field. Rather, we will focus on the works of 4 key theorists whose writings have contributed in important and lasting ways to the establishment of sociology's primary theoretical directions. They are, Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx, Max Weber and Georg Simmel. We will examine in particular how each viewed the social world they were a part of and deeply concerned about. In addition, the course will explore and develop how each of these perspectives implicitly recommends a particular understanding of what it means to live a socially responsible life. The main objective throughout, is to promote the capacity for critical social awareness through the practices of writing, active reading and interpreting of the main ideas and theoretical commitments in each case.

Texts

There is one required text for this course:

Capitalism and Classical Sociological Theory (2nd Ed.) by John Bratton & David Denham (Toronto: UTP, 2014).

This book will be available at the university bookstore, as well as many on-line book outlets. It will be supplemented by additional readings from key theoretical works by each of the theorists and will be made available via the course Moodle site. The books these additional readings will be taken from are as follows:

Emile Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method*. Edited with an introduction by Steven Lukes, translated by W. D. Halls (The Free Press, 1982).

Karl Marx, *The Marx-Engels Reader*. Edited by T. B. Bottomore (Norton, 1972).

Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. Edited and translated by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (Oxford, 1958).

Georg Simmel, *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*. Edited and translated by Kurt H. Wolf (The Free Press, 1964).

Evaluation

The course work will consist of a series of written exercises and assignments aimed at systematically developing a theoretically critical approach to the material covered in class. The exercises will be worth an increasing amount as the course progresses, as indicated below. There will also be an assessment for class participation. Note that the final exam in this course is a take-home exam.

1 st written exercise.....	15%
1 st written assignment.....	20%
2 nd written assignment.....	25%
Final exam.....	30%
Class participation.....	10%

Class Format

The class format and the speed at which the material is covered will be open for revision as the course develops, depending on the class' progress and facility with the material. However, the aim will always be to pursue the work within the context of open class discussions and exercises, in addition to lectures and presentations.

Please Note: Attendance is important for this course, as the in-class discussion is designed to enhance the appreciation of the text and reading material and is essential to the spirit of the course objectives. However, attendance is considered a prerequisite for, and not the substance of, the class participation component of the course.

Office Hours

My office is in the Annex, Rm 9-C (the lower floor, towards Lane Hall). Office hours are as follows:

Monday	2:30 to 4:15
Wednesday	1:00 to 3:30

There will be times when I am unable to be in the office during the posted office hours due to committee and department meetings or unforeseen circumstances. If this happens, please send an email message and I will get back to you as soon as possible. Other times can be arranged by appointment if you are unable to make those listed. Contact me through e-mail to arrange a meeting or to ask any questions.

E-mail: <dlynes@stfx.ca>
Phone: 902 867-3802

Finally, feel free to drop in to discuss any aspect of the course or the Sociology program more generally at any time during the term.

Reading and Assignment Schedule

Note: Page references listed below refer to: *Capitalism and Social Theory*, by Bratton et.al. Primary source readings will be available on the course Moodle site.

Readings

September 5 – 7: Introduction; Modernity, Textbook p. 23 – 44.

September 12 – 14: Textbook: The Enlightenment p. 45 – 72.

September 19 – 21: Karl Marx: Philosophy p. 75 – 101

September 26 – 28: Karl Marx: Theory of History p. 103 – 130

Moodle Reading: “Wage Labour and Capital”

October 3 – 5: Karl Marx: Capitalism p. 131 – 158;

October 10 – 12: Emile Durkheim: Division of Labour 159 – 182

October 17 – 19: Emile Durkheim: Method and Suicide 183 – 204

Moodle Reading “What is a Social Fact?”

October 24 – 26: Emile Durkheim: The Rules p. 159 – 179

Moodle Reading *The Rules of Sociological Method* (from p 50)

October 31 – Nov. 2: Max Weber: Understanding social action p. 235 – 246.

November 7 – 9: Max Weber: Moodle reading: “Science as a Vocation”

November 14 – 16: Max Weber: Moodle “Politics as a Vocation”

November 21 – 23: Georg Simmel: Moodle: “ The Social and the Individual Level”

November 28 – 30: Georg Simmel: Moodle: “The Metropolis and Mental Life”
Conclusion

Assignments:

Note: Due to the time constraints of the course and the number of assignments, no assignments will be accepted beyond the day after the Due date, and only then with permission (exceptions for dire emergencies only).