

Simon Fraser University

SA 350: Sociological Thought

Summer 2014: Thursday, 8:30-12:20, BLU10655

Professor: Gerardo Otero. Office: A.Q. 5100. Office Hours: Thursday after class, 2:00-3:00 in my office, or by appointment. Phone: 778-782-4508. E-mail: otero@sfu.ca.

Course Objectives Description

The objectives of this course are to present an overview of classical sociological thought by engaging original texts of the “the classics” in sociology, in the historical context of its development. Using news articles on contemporary social issues, the course will also illustrate the links between theory and research, and foster a critical understanding of society. This means developing the ability to approach the social world in a deeper and more systematic way, using empirical evidence and logical assumptions in order to answer questions of sociological interest. Social theory is the backbone of the sociology discipline and all major substantive questions of sociological interest are directly related to theory.

Throughout history, countless thinkers in many parts of the world have wondered about the ways humans interact with other humans, the manners in which economic, political, and social processes function and change, how they limit or enhance certain kinds of human action, and reasons why history has certain outcomes and not others. As is so often the case, far more sociological theory must be left out of this course than can be included in it. SA 350 is designed as an introductory survey of *classical* sociological thought. Although many authors can be called “classics” in social thought, we will focus on the four thinkers whose work has had the most enduring impact on contemporary sociology: the pioneering work of Karl Marx (1818-1883), Emile Durkheim (1858-1917), Max Weber (1864-1920), and Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937).

Marx, Durkheim, Weber, and Gramsci represent different but, I will argue, complementary approaches to understanding the rise of capitalism or the transition from traditional to modern society. They addressed fundamental questions relating to exploitation, human nature, social cohesion, power, domination, social change, inequality, religion, ideology, hegemony and the state. They are all Western European men born during the nineteenth century. All of them have left intellectual legacies with which contemporary sociologists around the world are still struggling over. While mainstream American sociologists tended to pit the works of Durkheim and Weber against that of Marx, I will argue that their work is much more complementary of Marx’s than one might think. In fact, while both Durkheim and Weber did critique crude versions of economic determinism that passed as “Marxism” at the turn of the twentieth century, the thrust of their theories is actually compatible and supplementary to Marx’s contribution. Similarly, while Gramsci is usually regarded as a continuator of Marx and Lenin, it should become clear that he was also influenced by Weber’s political sociology and several other writers that took him away from the economic determinism that dominated simplistic “Marxist” views at the time. Gramsci’s Marxism, therefore, is nuanced and sophisticated.

Required Readings: (Available at the SFU bookstore and on reserve. Most are accessible online but the readability may not be great.)

Tucker, Robert (editor). 1978. *Marx-Engels Reader*. Second Edition. New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company. ISBN: 0-393-09040-X.

Durkheim, Emile. Selections from Robert Bellah’s *Emile Durkheim: On Morality and Society*. (These will be available in our Canvas course container.)

Gerth, H.H., and C. Wright Mills (editors and translators). 1972. *From Max Weber: Essays in*

Sociology. Oxford University Press. ISBN: (paperbound).

Gramsci, Antonio. 1971. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. Edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith. New York: International Publishers.

You are expected to do ALL the assigned readings and to come to class prepared to discuss these readings. Please bring each week's reading to class with you. You are encouraged to ask questions, debate, and provide critical commentary on the readings and the lectures.

Course Expectations and Requirements (PLEASE READ VERY CAREFULLY)

This syllabus is a contract between each individual student and the instructor. By taking this course you agree to the requirements and terms stated here. These requirements may be modified or supplemented later in minor ways, and you are responsible for those changes. This course will generally follow a combination of lecture and participatory-learning discussion. The purpose of lectures is to provide necessary background material (e.g., historical, biographical, and conceptual), exegesis of the original texts, as well as commentary and critique. The seminar part of the class will be devoted to clarify concepts from lecture and readings through class discussion and smaller-group activities. The lectures will supplement—not substitute—the assigned readings. The readings are extensive, complex, sophisticated and will require **many** hours of hard work and effort. You may discover that the readings appear to be difficult to understand at first. You should, however, continue to read, making notes about concepts and ideas that you do not understand. During the lectures these concepts and ideas may become clarified. If they do not, then **please** ask questions. If you do not understand something, chances are many of your fellow students do not understand and all will benefit from your questions. You are also encouraged to use my office hours for further conceptual clarification.

Everyone is encouraged to participate in seminar discussion and questions by sharing thoughts and ideas, observations, and assessments during class time. Thoughtful and active participation means **regularly** attending class and being prepared to discuss the assigned subject matter. My assumption, and I hope yours too, is that education is not a “banking” process whereby a professor “deposits” a bunch of information into the heads of passive receivers (students). Learning is a collaborative process in which information and knowledge is to be shared between the professor and students.

Grading will be determined by your performance on the following aspects:

Discussion Papers (a total of five): These typewritten, single-spaced papers, in 12-point font are due by Tuesday of each week **no later** than 12:00 noon. Discussion papers should be kept to one page single-spaced (350-450 words) and posted on our course's Canvas space under “discussions” on the top left side. Save an electronic copy for your files. Please note that there are two fields under “discussions”: one for Discussion Papers, and another for Responses. Within each of these fields, there are containers for each week. Make sure to post your assignment in the relevant week's container. The Registrar's Office creates a courselist based on the course's enrolments: <sa350-d100@sfu.ca>. We will use this list to communicate important matters related to the course, such as any changes to this syllabus or deadlines, when applicable. I will use Canvas to make announcements, but this feature is unavailable to students. Please **label your emails** to the courselist and to me with “SA350” in the subject field for my immediate attention.

When writing your discussion papers or responses, please: (1) Include your name and week for which you are writing on the top line, and use **only one line** for this information: the fewer pages I have to print the better. (2) There is no need to include the reference for these assignments. (3) Discussion papers and Responses should be written **EXCLUSIVELY** on the basis of required readings. Avoid resorting to web sources, particularly those that are not original

writings of our classical authors; that would entirely defeat the purpose of this course's orientation: read *classical* sociological writings directly, without the mediation of any textbook.

Organizing the content. Discussion papers should include **4 explicit** sections. That is to say, divide your papers into four **overt sections**, resembling the following model:

(1) **Introduction.** Brief paragraph raising a paradox or central question about the topic of the readings. You must then provide a **brief agenda or outline** of what you will write in the rest of your essay. (Write 30-40 words.) Having an agenda, however brief, is a crucial element in social-science writing. Developing this ability will become very handy when you write your mid-term and final exam papers in this and other advanced courses. Outlines must, of course, include the items required in this model (i.e., a synthesis, an evaluation and two discussion questions).

(2) **Synthesis.** Brief *synthesis* of what the author is saying. (240-280 words.) Identify the central questions, main points, concepts, and/or core arguments. Rather than presenting an inventory of all the ideas that the author presents, you should focus in depth on the most significant aspects of the text, always mentioning the key concepts used by the author. Brief definitions of such concepts would help, and you should include a reference to a specific page number or provide the author's most synthetic rendering of the concept(s) by using a textual quotation (with page number). A synthesis is not the same as a summary. The latter is an attempt to provide an account of the entire text. A synthesis is not as easy because it presupposes that the text has been understood, and focuses on the core, most central parts. A good synthesis of a text requires an awareness and knowledge of the author's style of thinking, not just the particular facts that are presented to support an argument.

(3) **Assessment.** Brief *assessment* of the *strengths* and/or *weaknesses* of the authors' central arguments or concepts. (50-80 words.) Without being authorities, comment here on whether the authors' evidence or analysis really supports what they set out to do and their conclusions. How does their viewpoint colour the interpretations they make? Rather than giving your opinions, offer an analysis of why you agree or disagree with their argument and conclusions, or what you thought was particularly illuminating. I encourage you to be contentious and take a risk by taking a strong stand that will get debate going in class, and be ready to defend your stance with relevant evidence and/or analysis.

(4) **Questions.** Provide two discussion *questions* related to the readings. (30-40 words.) One should be a lingering question whose answer would further clarify the theory for you, and the other a question that will promote class discussion. Refrain from simply asking whether the concepts discussed by classical authors "apply" or not to the contemporary world. This is of course an important issue that will be discussed in class. But the main task of weekly written assignments is to help us understand the texts, a precondition to assess and discuss their contemporary applicability. I am looking for well-written papers which critique the readings directly, or support their arguments, and which draw in questions and issues that have been raised in other readings, lectures, and/or discussions from earlier in the course (25% for five papers, or 5% each). The form below the next paragraph will be used by the professor for marking, so please try to address all of these explicit expectations in your discussion papers.

Students not writing a paper for a given week are required to write a **Response** on the ideas of *at least* two of the other students' discussion papers. Send five sets of responses in as many weeks. The ideal responses or questions are those that will promote further disentangling and understanding of the readings, rather than simply rendering an opinion or raising a question about the concepts' applicability in today's world. **All** responses should be based on your peers' rendering of the text, **using citations and quotations** as needed to make **your** points. Assume that the texts constitute your "empirical evidence," which must be referred to in order to back up

or reinforce your statements and main arguments. Students writing discussion papers are accountable to those writing responses. Respondents will make sure that the right interpretations are being conveyed in discussion papers, or point out their disagreements (or agreements with reinforcement). Responses without some cites or quotes will automatically be marked with a **zero**. Post your responses in Canvas by 12:00 noon on the Wednesday before class. Make sure that you post your response as a single paper in its own weekly container under “Responses” (5%, or 1% each).

Name: _____.					Discussion Paper Evaluation	Grade: _____.
POOR				EXCELLENT		
1	2	3	4	5	Contains four explicit sections, as requested.	
1	2	3	4	5	Introduces main topic and sets up clearly defined agenda .	
1	2	3	4	5	Focuses on core arguments, concepts and perspectives (rather than a superficial summary or inventory of themes).	
1	2	3	4	5	Coherence of explanation. Clear statements. Succinct (i.e. thorough on core points, yet stays within word limit).	
1	2	3	4	5	Key terms and concepts are defined and explained .	
1	2	3	4	5	Assertions and arguments supported with specific cites to required readings.	
1	2	3	4	5	Assertions and arguments supported with specific quotes from required readings.	
1	2	3	4	5	Reasoned assessment of strengths and weaknesses (rather than merely agreeing or disagreeing).	
1	2	3	4	5	Questions help disentangle readings conceptually, referring back to text rather than eliciting opinion or application.	
1	2	3	4	5	Depth of coverage of required readings.	

Note: Late discussion papers or responses will not be marked or counted.

Examinations. There will be two in-class exams: one mid-term and a final. In each case, I will give you four to six study essay questions the previous week, two of which will appear on the exam for you to respond in class (closed books). In each question, you will be asked to compare and contrast the way in which two different theorists conceptualize and explain a given social phenomenon. You may also be asked to connect the work of one or more classical theorists to some current event(s), using their concepts as analytical tools to explain the event(s). For these question you will likely need to use a newspaper article distributed and discussed in class. Please use your **best hand writing** in writing your exam. Make sure to include an explicit agenda of what you do in each exam essay. Exams will be graded on a scale of A+, A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D, and F (see percentage equivalence below). Exams will be worth 25% each of your final grade.

Class participation. Seminar participation will involve the organization of discussion groups to do a textual analysis of a classical treatise from the day’s assignments, or apply some theoretical concepts to a current-event news article, and turn in an outline at the end of class. A textual analysis explains what the author’s main points and concepts are, how they are connected, and offers a critique of the author’s argument. The class will be divided into 5-6 groups composed of five people each. The membership of these groups will be established the first week of class and will remain the same throughout the semester. Each group will have the

following roles, which shall be rotated each week among group members: **time keeper** (makes sure that discussion is flowing at an adequate pace to finish assignment in time), **participation encourager** (makes sure that everyone in the group contributes in some way to the discussion), **moderator** (coordinates discussion, making sure that no two people speak at one time and that everyone gets a fair share of time to contribute), **concept clarifier** (checks the readings as needed to make sure that the group is properly understanding the key concepts under discussion), and **reporter** to class (records the names of group participants and keeps minutes of the discussion with a view to give a summary of conclusions to the entire class, and hand in an outline of the group's discussion with the names of participants to professor). In groups with only four members, one person will play the roles of participation encourager and moderator.

Regular class attendance is expected of all students and is merely a precondition for **active participation** unless you have a documented emergency. Effective class participation requires that one keep up with assigned readings and lectures, and that one come prepared to speak thoughtfully about these materials. My goal in seminar discussions is to avoid the two extremes that one finds in most classes: the extroverted that are **too eager** to participate and the introverted that are **too shy** to speak their minds. In the world of work we all have to learn how to listen to others' opinions and also how to give our own, so I want this course to contribute to this learning. In order to promote equitable participation, I will bring index cards with each of the students' names. After shuffling the name cards, the student whose name is selected at random will either raise or respond a question. Two additional students will be allowed to voluntarily respond or comment on the previous intervention. Then, another name card will be drawn, and so on. It is thus essential to come to class well prepared to participate. In deference to the entire class and to avoid disruptions, it is extremely important to **arrive to class on time**. Attendance will be taken at 8:30, after breaks, and/or at 12:15. Two late arrivals count as one absence. (15%)

Course Grades (summary):

- Five Discussion Papers (350-450 words), 5% each, 25%.
- Five Responses (60-80 words), 1% each, 5%.
- Mid-term exam (June 19), 30%.
- Final exam (July 31), 30%.
- Class Participation, Discussion and Analysis, 10%.

Percentage-Letter Grade Equivalence:

The Department of Sociology and Anthropology has the following percentage equivalences:

Excellent:		
A+	=	96-100%
A	=	90-95
A-	=	85-89
Good:		
B+	=	80-84
B	=	75-79
B-	=	70-74
Satisfactory		
C+	=	65-69
C	=	60-64
C-	=	55-59
D	=	50-54
Unsatisfactory		
F	=	0-49

Academic Dishonesty and Misconduct Policy

The Department of Sociology and Anthropology follows SFU policy in relation to grading practices, grade appeals (Policy T 20.01) and academic dishonesty and misconduct procedures (S10.01- S10.04). Unless otherwise informed by your instructor in writing, in graded written assignments you must cite the sources you rely on and include a bibliography/list of references, following an instructor-approved citation style. It is the responsibility of students to inform themselves of the content of SFU policies available on the SFU website:

<http://www.sfu.ca/policies/gazette/student.html>.

Deadlines Policy

Deadlines are firm and late assignments will receive a grade of zero (0). Extensions may be granted in the direst of circumstances provided (1) you contact me in person, by phone, or email 24 hours prior to the deadline; and (2) have appropriate documentation to back up your request. Please note: the direst of circumstances include illness, death, or some other equally significant event. Technical difficulties associated with computers (not being able to print a document, a crashing computer, whatever) or scheduling (the number of papers or exams you have due during a given period or work commitments or family commitments like weddings, trips, or birthdays) do not constitute the direst of circumstances.

Tentative Course Schedule

Week 1 (May 8): Marx-1: *Philosophical Foundations of Marx's Sociology*.

Required readings: (**ALL** readings are required. Pay **special** attention to readings in **bold**)

- "Introduction" (Pp. xv-xxxviii). (**Optional**) (all page numbers for Marx's work are for the Tucker's *Marx-Engels Reader*)
- "Marx on the History of His Opinions," pp. 3-6.
- "For a Ruthless Criticism of Everything Existing," pp. 12-15.
- "Theses on Feuerbach," pp. 143-145.
- **"The German Ideology," pp. 146-200.**

Week 2 (May 15): Marx-2: *Relations of Production, Class, and State.*

Required readings:

- **“The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte,” pp. 594-617**
- “On Imperialism in India,” pp. 653-664.
- “Speech at Graveside of Karl Marx,” pp. 681-82, by Friedrich Engels.
- “Letters on Historical Materialism,” pp. 760-768, by Friedrich Engels.
- “Marx on the History of his Opinions,” pp. 3-6.
- “Class Struggle and the Mode of Production,” p. 220.

Week 3: (May 22): Marx-3: *Commodities, Labour Power, and Fetishism.* (Self managed discussion this week, as I will be away at a conference in Chicago)

Required readings:

- **“The Secret of Primitive Accumulation,” pp. 431-34.**
- “Discovering Hegel” (Pp. 7-8).
- “Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*, pp. 16-25.
- “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844,” pp. 66-93.
- “Alienation and Social Classes,” pp. 133-135.
- **“Capital, Volume One,” pp. 302-343.**

Week 4 (May 29): Marx-4: *Capitalism and its Contradictions.*

Required readings:

Tucker. *Marx-Engels Reader*. Excerpts from *Capital*, Volume One:

- “The General Formulation for Capital,” pp. 329-36.
- “The Buying and Selling Labor Power,” pp. 336-43.
- “Cooperation,” pp. 384-88.
- “Division of Labor and Manufacture,” pp. 388-403.
- “General Law of Capitalist Accumulation,” pp. 419-31.
- “Expropriation of the Agricultural Population from the Land,” pp. 434-35.
- “Genesis of the Industrial Capitalist,” pp. 435-36.
- “Historical Tendency of Capitalist Accumulation,” pp. 436-38.

Week 5 (June 5): Marx-5: *Communism.*

Required readings:

- “The Upcoming Upheaval, pp. 218-219.
- “Manifesto of the Communist Party,” pp. 469-500.
- “Critique of the Gotha Program,” pp. 525-541.

Week 6 (June 12): Durkheim: *Sociology of Morality and Social Cohesion.*

Optional Background Readings:

- Ritzer, George. 2008. *Classical Sociological Theory*. McGraw-Hill Higher Education. Pp. 13-18 and pp. 186-216 (available on Canvas)

Required readings: (From Robert Bellah’s *Emile Durkheim: On Morality and Society.*)

- “Principles of 1789 and Sociology,” pp. 34-42.
- “Progressive Preponderance of Organic Solidarity,” pp. 63-85.
- “Organic Solidarity and Contractual Solidarity,” pp. 86-113.
- “Division of Labor in Society,” pp. 114-133.
- “Division of Labor in Society: Conclusion,” pp. 134-146.

Week 7 (June 19): Weber-1: *Culture and Religion*.

Optional Background Readings: From Gerth and Mills. *From Max Weber*.

- "Introduction" (pp. 1- 77). (**Optional**)
- Required Readings: From Gerth and Mills. *From Max Weber*.
- "The social Psychology of the World Religions," pp. 267-301.
- "The Protestant Sects and the Spirit of Capitalism," p. 302-322.

MID-TERM EXAM THIS WEEK, JUNE 19, SECOND HALF OF CLASS

Week 8 (June 26): Weber-2: *Power, Class and Stratification*.

Required Readings: From Gerth and Mills. *From Max Weber*.

- "Structures of Power," pp. 159-179.
- "Class, Status, and Party," pp. 180-195.
- "India: The Brahman and the Castes." Read only pp. 405-409 on "Caste and Status Group."
- "Sociology of Charismatic Authority," pp. 245-252.

Week 9 (July 3): Weber-3: *Rationalization and Bureaucracy*.

Required Readings: From Gerth and Mills. *From Max Weber*.

- "Bureaucracy," pp. 196-244.
- "Meaning of Discipline," read only pp. 253, 262-264.

Week 10 (July 10): Weber-4: *Politics and the State: Weber vs. Lenin*.

Required Readings:

- "Politics as a Vocation," pp. 77-128. From Gerth and Mills. *From Max Weber*.
- OR** (but preferably both)
- "Parliament and Government in a Reconstructed Germany (A Contribution to the Political Critique of Officialdom and Party Politics)," pp. 1381-1462 from Max Weber's *Economy and Society*, Vol. 2 (placed on reserve).

Week 11 (July 17): Gramsci-1: *Intellectuals and Education*

Required Readings: From *Selection from the Prison Notebooks*

- "The Intellectuals," pp. 1-23.
- "On Education," pp. 24-43.

Week 12 (July 24): Gramsci-2: *State and Civil Society*.

Required Readings: From *Selection from the Prison Notebooks*

- "State and Civil Society," pp. 206-276.

Week 13 (July 31): Gramsci-3: *Notes on Politics*.

Required Readings: From *Selection from the Prison Notebooks*

- "The Modern Prince," pp. 123-190.

FINAL EXAM THIS WEEK: JULY 31, SECOND HALF OF CLASS

Sociological Essay Evaluation (for Mid-Term and Final Exams)

Name: _____.

Essay grade: _____.

Analysis and Criticism:

POOR		EXCELLENT			
1	2	3	4	5	Follows the directions of the assignment (e.g., answers questions sufficiently).
1	2	3	4	5	Clearly defined agenda to demonstrate the thesis or hypothesis.
1	2	3	4	5	Coherence of explanation. Clear statements. Succinct.
1	2	3	4	5	Key terms and concepts are defined and explained.
1	2	3	4	5	Assertions and arguments supported with specific <u>cites</u> to the original works.
1	2	3	4	5	Assertions and arguments supported with specific <u>quotes</u> from the original works.
1	2	3	4	5	Creative use of insights from lecture and class discussion.
1	2	3	4	5	Various parts and paragraphs of paper well structured and interconnected.
1	2	3	4	5	Depth of coverage of existing literature and original works.
1	2	3	4	5	Analyzes literature beyond summarizing.

Technical presentation:

X denotes that attention should be paid to this problem.

XX denotes that extra attention is warranted.

- _____ Late paper (one letter grade is deducted for each day the paper is late).
- _____ Paper format: pages numbered in top right hand corner, one-inch margins, double-spaced.
- _____ Appropriate citation format not followed.
- _____ Text is too long.
- _____ Text is too short.
- _____ Redundancy (wordy; can be trimmed without loss of meaning).
- _____ Some statements are unsupported (e.g., undeveloped and/or vague statements).
- _____ Insufficient coverage of existing literature.
- _____ Insufficient depth of coverage.
- _____ Typographic errors, misspelled words, punctuation errors.
- _____ Incomplete sentences, awkward sentence structure.
- _____ Some paragraphs are too long.
- _____ Some paragraphs are too short.

Name: _____

Phone(s): _____

Major? _____ Year/Class _____

E-mail: _____

Other courses taken this semester (names, not numbers):

Home town and/or country? _____

How long have you studied at Simon Fraser University? _____ If you come from another college or university, please name: _____

Why are you interested in this course? (check one:)

It is required Interested in subject Fit my timetable Looked easy Other Specify _____.

Please name two to three courses taken at Simon Fraser University or other universities or colleges that have influenced your thinking the most. Write course names, not numbers.

What is your current definition of social theory? (2-3 sentences)