

Simon Fraser University
SA 849/450: History of Sociological Thought
Fall 2013: Thursdays, 5:30-9:20, TASC2-8201

Professor: Gerardo Otero. Office: A.Q. 5100. Office Hours: Thursdays 4:00-5:00 or by appointment. Phone: 778-782-4508. E-mail: otero@sfu.ca.

Course Objectives Description

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. Although many authors can be called “classics” in social thought, we will focus on three thinkers whose work has had an enduring impact on contemporary sociology: the pioneering work of Karl Marx (1818-1883), Max Weber (1864-1920), and Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937).

Marx, 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, 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 the world over are still struggling. While mainstream American sociologists tended to pit the work of Weber against that of Marx, I will argue that his work is much more complementary of Marx’s than one might think. In fact, while Weber did critique crude versions of economic determinism that passed as “Marxism” at the turn of the twentieth century, the thrust of his 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.

The chief objective of this course is to offer students the context for doing an in-depth exploration of key original works by three classical sociological theorists in the historical context of their development. The assumption is that all students have taken undergraduate survey courses on sociological theory, so that they have a general understanding of their contributions. Thus, rather than broad overviews of each theorist’s work, we will focus on their most central contributions to sociological theory. We will read key chapters of Marx’s central opus on the workings of exploitation in the capitalist mode of production, the first volume of *Capital*; Weber’s main contributions to political sociology in several essays; and Gramsci’s elaborations building on Marx and Weber for an understanding of hegemony. We will also be using current-news articles to interpret contemporary social issues in the light of classical sociological concepts. This will highlight the continuing relevance of classical sociological theory.

Learning Goals:

This seminar has several learning goals beyond the substantive topic of its title as specified above. Other learning goals include the following:

Critical synthesis. One of the main abilities that any university student must acquire is to

gather, classify, analyze and synthesize large amounts of information. Information is usually overly abundant, so what you need is the ability to synthesize and process it. For graduate students, this ability will become critical when writing their theses or dissertations. Most assignments in this course are geared to enhance this ability.

Peer review. Scholarly life progresses largely as a dialogue, discussion and debate in the community of peers. Peer review is the process by which a scholarly contribution is subjected to the reading by other scholars in a similar field with the goal of assessing its merits and identify areas in which it could be improved. There are several essential conditions to engage in fair peer review. One is to read materials generated by others with an open mind, looking for both strengths and weaknesses. Rendering a synthesis of core strengths is a condition to then engage in a discussion of weaknesses. Another condition for doing a fair peer review is to humbly subject one's own work to the review of others, get their feedback, and try to make the best of it in revising our work. This reciprocal back-and-forth process among scholars makes for a cooperative mode of advancing in the production of knowledge. Unfortunately some feedback is negative and ill-intended but, in my view, most scholarly exchange tends to be constructive and well-meaning. This is the type of feedback that I hope to promote in this seminar, both in relation to all of its members and the authors that we will be reading, reviewing, and discussing.

Group interaction. The world of work will involve discussion, dialogue, debate and group interaction. Fruitfully interacting with others is a skill to be learned or developed. Our group discussions will also involve that each student will take different roles in each seminar, which shall be rotated weekly among group members: **moderator**, chooses questions, introduces readings, and coordinates discussion, making sure that no two people speak at one time and that everyone gets a fair share of time to contribute; **time keeper**, makes sure that discussion is flowing at an adequate pace to finish assignments on time; **participation encourager**, makes sure that everyone in the group, including shy people, contributes in some way to the discussion; **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. Because this will be a small seminar, we will likely function as a single group with rotating roles each week, and two-three people will act as concept clarifiers.

Theory and practice. Most of the books that we will be reading are on the theoretical rather than the historical side of scholarly production. The best way of gaining an understanding of theoretical concepts, however, is by seeing the specific ways in which they can be employed as tools for analysis of concrete historical situations. To put some of the main concepts to work, students leading the weekly discussion are encouraged to identify a current-news article in a major newspaper (e.g., *The New York Times*, *The Globe and Mail*, *The Guardian*) in the 600-800 words range. Ideally, such article will be thematically related to one of the core topics for the student's thesis or dissertation and also to the relevant week's main concepts. The article should be posted on our Canvas space, but the leader may also print enough copies of the article for use in class. The leader can then allow the class to engage either in a structured discussion around concepts that she or he considers most appropriate from the relevant week's readings, or allow the group to inductively derive such concepts in discussion. The group can spend 5-10 minutes reading the news article, 20 minutes establishing the relationship with major concepts, and another 20 minutes to better understand both the substantive issues involved in the current-news article and the concepts used for its analysis.

Required Readings: (All readings can be accessed online via the course's Canvas space. Print equivalents are shown below, which will be on reserve.)

Marx, Karl. 1977. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy (Volume I)*. Introduction by Ernest Mandel; Translated by Ben Fowkes. London: Penguin. ISBN: 0-394-72657-X.

Teeple, Gary. 2012. "Notes for the Study of Marx's *Capital: Volume I*. Available here: http://www.socanth.sfu.ca/documents/doc/Volume_One_Package

Gerth, H.H., and C. Wright Mills (editors and translators). 1946. *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. Oxford University Press. ISBN: 9780195004625.

Max Weber. 1978. *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*. Edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich; translated by, Ephraim Fischhoff, et al. Berkeley: University of California Press. (Selected chapters only to be placed on reserve.)

Gramsci, Antonio. 1971. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. Edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith. New York: International Publishers. ISBN: 0853152802.

Recommended Background Reading: (if required)

Ritzer, George. 2011. *Classical Sociological Theory*. New York and Boston: McGraw-Hill.

Grading (summary):

- Five Discussion Papers (350-450 words), 25%, 5% each.
- Five Responses (80-100 words), 10%, 2% each
- Leading One Seminar Discussion, 5%
- Mid-term take-home exam (Due Oct. 21, 4:30 p.m.), 25%.
- Final take-home exam (Due Dec. 2, 4:30 p.m.), 25%.
- Class Participation, 10%.

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 (minimal) 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 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. 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 at noon of each week. Post your discussion papers on even-numbered weeks if your SFU student i.d. is an even number; on odd-numbered weeks if your SFU i.d. is an odd number. If there is a topic on which you strongly prefer to write a discussion paper but it is outside of your corresponding weeks, you are allowed to do it; just let me know about it in advance. It is essential to post discussion papers on time because half the class needs to read them in order to write and post their own “responses” by 12 p.m. on the same day. 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 left side. Save an electronic copy for your files. Please note that there are specific spaces for Discussion Papers and Responses, respectively, for each week. Make sure to post your assignment in the relevant week’s container. I will use the “Announcements” feature of Canvas to communicate important matters related to the course, such as any changes to this syllabus or deadlines, when applicable. If you would like to communicate something to the entire class, please send me an email and I will post your message in Announcements—this feature can only be used by the instructor.

Please follow these guidelines when writing your discussion papers or responses: (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) The discussion papers 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. Provide a **brief agenda or outline** of what you will write in the rest of your mini-essay (i.e., a synthesis, an assessment and two discussion questions). (Write 30-40 words.)

(2) **Synthesis.** Provide a brief *synthesis* of what the author is saying. Identify the central questions, main points, concepts, and/or core arguments. Rather than presenting an inventory of all the ideas presented by the author, 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. In contrast to an inventory that simply lists topics, a good synthesis of a text requires that you give the reader a good idea of what the author means, not just the particular facts that are presented to support an argument. Providing citations and quotations is essential in this part of the assignment, as the text constitutes your “empirical” evidence of what you are writing about. (Write 200-280 words.)

(3) **Assessment.** Make a brief *assessment* of the *strengths* and/or *weaknesses* of the authors’ central arguments or concepts. 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, say 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. (Write 60-100 words.)

(4) **Questions.** Finally, provide two discussion **questions** that will help us further disentangle the readings, e.g., a lingering question whose answer would further clarify the author’s theory, and one that will promote class discussion. (Write 30-40 words.)

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, films, and/or discussions from earlier in the course. The form above will be used for marking by the professor, so please try to address all of these explicit expectations in your discussion papers. (25% for five papers, or 5% each).

Discussion Paper Evaluation

Name: _____ 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 and responses will not be marked or counted.

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 at least five sets of responses in as many alternate weeks. The ideal responses are those that will promote further disentangling and understanding of the readings, rather than simply rendering an opinion. **All** responses should be based on your peers’ rendering of the text, **using citations and quotations** from the text 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. In a sense, 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 or elaboration). Responses without some cites or quotes will automatically be marked with a zero. Post your

responses in Canvas by 12:00 p.m. on the Wednesday before class. Make sure that you post your response as a single paper in its own weekly container under “Responses” (10%, or 2% each).

Examinations. For each exam (a take-home mid-term and a final), I will give you two to four essay questions to respond. In each question, you will be asked to compare, contrast or explain the way in which one or two different theorists conceptualize 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). Make sure to include an explicit agenda of what you will do in each of the exam essays. Exams should be typewritten, double-spaced papers in 12-point font. (25% each of your final grade.)

Class participation. Seminar participation will involve the organization of discussion groups to do a textual analysis of a required readings for 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. 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%)

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>.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS: 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 (Sept. 5): Marx-1: *Primitive Accumulation and the Origins of Capitalism.*

Required readings:

- *Capital*, Part Eight, Chs. 26-33, pp. 873-940.
- Refer to Gary Teeple's "Notes" on an as-needed basis (see link above).

Week 2 (Sept. 12): Marx-2: *Commodities, Labour Power, and Fetishism.*

Required readings:

- *Capital*, Part I, Chs. 1-3, pp. 125-244.

Guest Lecturer: Dr. Gary Teeple

Week 3: (Sept. 19): Marx-3: *Money, Capital and Surplus Value.*

Required readings:

- *Capital*, Part Two, Chs. 4-6, and Part Three, Chs. 7-9, pp. 247-339.

Week 4 (Sept. 26): Marx-4: *Labour Process and Relative Surplus Value.*

Required readings:

- *Capital*, Part Three, Chs. 9-11, pp. 320-426; and Part Four, Ch. 12, pp. 429-438.

Week 5 (Oct. 3): Marx-5: *Cooperation and Large-Scale Industry.*

Required readings:

- *Capital*, Part Four, Chs-13-14, and fraction of Ch. 15, pp. 439-543.

Week 6 (Oct. 10): *Surplus Value and Wages.*

Required Readings:

- *Capital*, Part Five, Chs. 16-18, pp. 643-672; and Part Six, Chs. 19-22, pp. 675-706.

Week 7 (Oct. 17): *The Process of Accumulation of Capital.*

Required Readings:

- *Capital*, Part Seven, Chs. 23-24, pp. 709-759; plus Ch. 25, sections 1-4, pp. 762-802.
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FIRST EXAM NEXT WEEK: GIVEN OCTOBER 24, DUE ON OCTOBER 28 AT 4:30.

Week 8 (Oct. 24): Weber-1: *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 (Oct. 30): Weber-2: *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 (Nov. 7): Weber-3: *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 (Nov. 14): Gramsci-1: *Intellectuals and Education; Americanism and Fordism.*

Required Readings: From *Selection from the Prison Notebooks*

- "The Intellectuals," pp. 1-23.
- "On Education," pp. 24-43.
- "Americanism and Fordism", pp. 277-318.

Week 12 (Nov. 21): Gramsci-2: *State and Civil Society.*

Required Readings: From *Selection from the Prison Notebooks*

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

Week 13 (Nov. 28): Gramsci-3: *Notes on Politics.*

Required Readings: From *Selection from the Prison Notebooks*

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

SECOND EXAM THIS WEEK: NOVEMBER 28, DUE DECEMBER 2 AT 4:30.

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? _____ Graduation 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)