

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY  
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

Sociology 631

Seminar in Classical Sociological Theory

Fall 2008

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Seminar hours: W 9:00 AM -11:50 Noon

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### **Outline**

This seminar is designed to cover some of the key foundational contributions to sociological thought from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> through to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Given the time constraints, our strategy is not to offer an exhaustive survey of every major contribution over this period, but to highlight some of the enduring contributions to the field that continue to stimulate the sociological imagination of contemporaries. The sources to be examined include works by Marx and Engels, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber and Norbert Elias.

### **Major Assigned Readings**

Robert C. Tucker (ed.), The Marx-Engels Reader, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, New York: Norton, 1978.

Emile Durkheim, The Division of Labor in Society, Introduction by Lewis Coser (the Halls Translation), New York: Macmillan, 1984 (1983).

Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, Introduction by Anthony Giddens (the Parsons translation), New York: Scribner, 1958 (1904-05).

Norbert Elias, The Civilizing Process: The History of Manners and State Formation and Civilization, (the Jephcott Translation), Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1994 (1939).

## Schedule

Week 1	10 Sept	<p>Orientation: Debates over Classics in Sociological Theory:</p> <p>Orientation: What's makes a classic?</p> <p>Robert K. Merton "On the History and Systematics of Sociological Theory" ch 1, <i>Social Theory and Social Structure</i>, 1968</p> <p>Jeffrey Alexander, "The Centrality of the Classics," in Giddens and Turner (eds.) <i>Social Theory Today</i>, 1987</p> <p>Murray Davis, "That's Classic! The Phenomenology and Rhetoric of Successful Social Theories," <i>Philosophy of the Social Sciences</i> 16 (1986): 285-301.</p>	
Week 2	17 Sept	Marx and Engels	<p>Tucker Part 1 (1-200)</p> <p><i>The Early Marx</i></p>
Week 3	24 Sept	Marx and Engels	<p>Tucker pp. 294-438</p> <p><i>Capital</i> (selections)</p>
Week 4	1 Oct	Marx and Engels	<p>Tucker : 469-500 (<i>Manifesto</i>), 730-33 (<i>On Authority</i>), 734-60 (<i>Origin of the Family</i>), 760-69 (<i>Letters</i>)</p> <p>Short class presentations</p>
Week 5	8 Oct	Durkheim: DLS	<p>Coser's <i>Introduction; Preface to 2/e and Book 1: The Function of the D/L</i></p>
Week 6	15 Oct	Durkheim: DLS	<p><i>Book 2: Causes and Conditions</i></p>
Week 7	22 Oct	Durkheim: DLS	<p><i>Book3: Abnormal Forms</i></p> <p>Short class presentations</p>
Week 8	29 Oct	Weber: Protestant Ethic	<p>Giddens's <i>Introduction; Weber's Introduction; Part 1: The Problem</i> (pp. 35-92);</p>

			Weber essay on <i>Protestant Sects in America</i>
Week 9	5 Nov	Weber: Protestant Ethic	Part 2: <i>The Practical Ethics</i> (pp. 95-183)
Week 10	12 Nov	Weber's methodological writings	"The Interpretive Understanding of Social Action"; "Objectivity in Social Science"; "Ideal Types and Theory Construction" from May Brodbeck Reader, 1968  Short class presentations
Week 11	19 Nov	Elias: Civilizing Process Volume One	Part One <i>Kultuz vs Zivilization</i> (pp. 1-44) and Part Two <i>Transformation of Human Behaviour</i> (pp. 45-182)
Week 12	26 Nov	Elias: Civilizing Process Volume Two	Part Three: <i>Feudalization and State Formation</i> (pp. 185-362)
Week 13	3 Dec	Elias: Civilizing Process Volume Two	Part Four: <i>A Theory of the Civilizing Process</i> (pp. 363-448)  Short class presentations

### Some Organizing Themes for Classical Readings

1. What is the basic *underlying philosophy of nature* and/or philosophy of society on which the theory is based?
2. What are the implications for *methodology* arising from the theory's underlying philosophy?
3. What is the theory of *change and stability* that derives from the theory's perspective? In other words, what is the philosophy of history that derives from the underlying philosophy of nature and methodology?
4. What is the theory's perspective on the importance and *role of morals*, religion, values and laws?
5. What *politics* arise from the theory? Does the theory have an emancipatory interest, implications for social action praxis and politics?
6. What is the *endurance and/or continuity* of the theoretical perspective into contemporary social theory?
7. What assumptions does the theory make about *human nature*, human appetites, desires, needs and their relationship to structure and history?
8. What is the relationship of the theory to the time and place in which it was articulated? What relationship does it have to national development and political consciousness?

9. What do these European theories have to say about colonial social structures and colonial identities?
10. How does the theory understand gender identities and sexuality?

### **Assignments**

There are four blocks of readings spread over a period of 12 weeks, i.e. 3 weeks per block. Participants will be asked to make an oral presentation on a question related to the assigned readings. Presentations should be on the order of 10 minutes, and will be based on questions and/or summaries of readings identified beforehand in class. (5% each). They are scheduled for Oct 1 (Marx and Engels), Oct 22 (Durkheim), 12 November (Weber) and Dec 3 (Elias). There will also be a written assignment on each of the 4 readings due Oct 6 (Marx and Engels), Oct 27 (Durkheim), Nov 17 (Weber) and Dec 15 (Elias). These will be limited to 10-12 pages in length (2500-3000 pages) and are worth 20% each.

**Exam Policies:** Not applicable. Assignments submitted late will be docked a full point per day.

**Ethics Research:** Not applicable.

**Academic Misconduct:** cheating is regarded as a serious academic offense. Students are advised to consult the University Calendar, which presents a Statement of Intellectual Honesty and definitions and penalties associated with cheating, plagiarism, and other academic misconduct.

**The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP)** legislation disallows the practice of having students retrieve assignments from a public place, e.g., outside an instructor's office or the Department main office. Term assignments must be returned to students individually, during class, or during the instructor's office hours; if a student is unable to pick up her/his assignment s/he may provide the instructor with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to be used for the return of the assignment.

**Safewalk:** The University of Calgary provides a "safe walk" service to any location on Campus, including the LRT, parking lots, bus zones, and campus housing. For Campus Security/Safewalk call 220-5333. Campus Security can also be contacted from any of the "Help" phones located around Campus.