Sociology 6050
Classical Sociological Theory

Fall 2018
BEH S 315 (380 South 1530 East)
380 South 1530 East
Wednesdays, 2:00–5:00 p.m.

Instructor: Wade M. Cole, Ph.D.
Office: BEH S 427
Phone: (801) 581-4601
E-mail: wade.cole@soc.utah.edu
Office hours: By appointment

Course Description

This graduate-level seminar addresses major themes, arguments, and debates in what has come to be called “classical sociological theory,” with emphasis on the writings of Karl Marx, Max Weber, Emile Durkheim, George Herbert Mead, and Erving Goffman. In addition, we will study a seminal book by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality, which incorporates key insights from each aforementioned theorist. To illustrate the continued relevance of classical theory for contemporary “middle-range” theories, we will also study the sociological institutionalist perspective of John W. Meyer and his collaborators. I encourage you to approach these theories critically and creatively, in order to facilitate your own distinctive syntheses.

This survey will familiarize you with the fundamental debates and concerns that underlie sociological research, but it is far from comprehensive; it omits, for example, the works of Jane Addams, Auguste Comte, W. E. B. Du Bois, Charlotte Gilman, Harriet Martineau, Georg Simmel, and others who have assumed the mantle of “classical” theorists in sociology. Nevertheless, this seminar should give you a solid foundation for pursuing their works.

A great irony underlies the sociological enterprise. The very discipline that emphasizes the social construction of virtually everything often takes its own socially constructed existence for granted. This is especially true with respect to classical sociological theory. It is now commonplace to canonize Marx, Weber, and Durkheim as the undisputed progenitors of sociological theory, and indeed of sociology more generally. Canons, however, are retrospectively compiled and constructed; they do not descend from on high as fully formed scripture. Consider some examples:

- Two of the discipline’s earliest canon-makers, Talcott Parsons and Alex Inkeles, counted Weber and Durkheim as founding figures but paid little attention to Marx. “Marx,” according to Connell (1997: 1542), “did not become a full-fledged member of the

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1 In contrast with the “grand” theorizing of social theory, middle-range theories seek to integrate theory and research. The idea comes from Robert K. Merton's On Social Structure and Science, first published in 1949. Theories of the middle range, according to Merton (1968: 39), “lie between the minor but necessary working hypotheses that evolve in abundance during day-to-day research and the all-inclusive systematic efforts to develop a unified theory that will explain all the observed uniformities of social behavior, social organization, and social change.”

C. Wright Mills criticized both grand theorizing and abstracted empiricism. For Mills, grand theories—Theory with capital T—are overly abstract, “encyclopedic,” and disconnected from empirical realities; so-called “theories of history” or “theories of the nature of man and society” fall under this rubric. Abstract empiricism, in contrast, is largely divorced from any and all theoretical explanation. Studies in this vein “become a series of rather unrelated and often insignificant facts of milieu” (Mills 2000: 23).
sociological canon until the dramatic expansion of sociology in the 1960s and the radicalization of university students.” Socialist states revered Marx as the seminal founding father of modern social science, but American sociologists often portrayed his work as oversimplifying, excessive, dogmatic, and radical (Connell 1997).

- Few sociologists would dispute Durkheim’s centrality to the discipline; after all, he established the first department of sociology in a European university, at Bordeaux in 1895. (The University of Chicago beat poor Durkheim by three years, establishing its sociology department in 1892.) Even so, Durkheim’s approach to sociology was controversial during his own lifetime (Giddens 1971), and American sociologists in particular ignored or even denigrated his work (Platt 1995). No less a scholar than Charles Tilly dismissed Durkheim as “useless” (Tilly 1981). Barnes (1995: 6) contends that Durkheim’s “role in the practice of macro theory, particularly in the English-speaking world, is less than it should be.”


So, why do we still read Marx, Weber, and Durkheim? There are at least three reasons:

- Sociology is topically, methodologically, epistemologically, and theoretically diverse. The American Sociological Association counts more than 21,000 members distributed across 52 “special-interest” sections, up from five sections in 1961, 25 in 1987, and 40 in 2000 (American Sociological Association 2005, 2017; Simpson and Simpson 2001). These sections address topics ranging from Alcohol, Drugs, and Tobacco to Global and Transnational Sociology. For better or worse, the classical theorists represent the least common denominator of our fragmented discipline. Their works serve as the lingua franca of all sociologists.

- Marx, Weber, and Durkheim established the core questions, ontological assumptions, and epistemological frameworks of our discipline. What is the nature of “society,” and what makes social life possible? Do individuals precede and constitute society, or does society precede and constitute individuals? How are structure and agency related? Do “laws of sociology” exist? Which methods, positivist or interpretivist, offer the best tools for understanding social reality? Their answers to these questions continue to inform sociological thinking.

- Finally, their theories, concepts, and ideas remain influential. Marx, Weber, and Durkheim enjoy tremendous staying power, owing in no small part to their tremendous perspicacity.

What of Mead and Goffman? George Herbert Mead represents a sort of “latter-day saint” alongside the Sociological Trinity. In his later years, Talcott Parsons expressed regret in failing to place Mead alongside Weber and Durkheim in the canon he assembled (Joas 2015). Mead was not a sociologist; he was trained as a philosopher but did not complete his Ph.D. and never published a book. His books, including Mind, Self & Society, were published posthumously. Nevertheless, his thinking gave impetus to large swaths of contemporary sociology, including social psychology, the symbolic interactionist tradition, and theories of socialization more generally.
For his part, Goffman—whom Fine and Manning (2000: 481) laud as “the most influential American sociologist of the twentieth century”—trained few students and eschewed efforts to develop an overarching social theory. Even so, Goffman’s work remains massively influential, prompting Fine and Manning (2000: 481) to designate him the “first postmodern sociological theorist.”

The “classics” are not museum pieces to be admired from afar. Toward the end of the term, we will consider how practitioners have put them to use. Berger and Luckmann’s well-known “treatise in the sociology of knowledge” draws from Marxian, Weberian, Durkheimian, Median, and Goffmanian strands of thought to explain how social reality is constructed and reconstructed in everyday life. John Meyer, in turn, synthesizes Berger and Luckmann with Weber, Durkheim, Mead, and Goffman to develop sociological institutionalism, a middle-range theory influential among sociologists of education, organizations, politics, and globalization.

Your time in graduate school is a socializing experience, during which you will acquire the knowledge, skills, and norms for becoming a professional academic. It is also a time for you to discover what kind of sociologist (or social scientist) you wish to become. As this seminar should make abundantly clear, there is no one way to do sociology or to be a sociologist. Are you drawn to macro- or micro-level questions? Are you a methodological individualist or holist? A positivist or interpretivist? A realist or constructivist? In addition to acquainting you with sociology’s lingua franca, this seminar will put you on the path to answering these questions for yourself, and in so doing shape your identity as a sociologist.

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**REQUIRED BOOKS**


**Notes:**

In general, other editions of these books should be okay (although I strongly recommend Fields’s translation of *Elementary Forms* over Swaine’s). Additional selections noted in the schedule of readings are available online or from the instructor.

The same survey of the International Sociological Association that ranked Weber’s *Economy and Society* the most influential book in 20th-century sociology (out of 978 books) placed *The Protestant Ethic* at number 4; Berger and Luckmann’s *Social Construction of Reality* at number 5; Goffman’s *Presentation of Self* at number 10; Mead’s *Mind, Self & Society* at number 11; Durkheim’s *Elementary Forms, Division of Labor, and Rules* at numbers 13, 34, and 35, respectively; and Marx’s *Capital* at number 32. The essays collected in *From Max Weber* and *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* were subsequently published as part of Weber’s two-volume opus, *Economy and Society*. See: http://www.isa-sociology.org/en/about-isa/history-of-isa/books-of-the-xx-century/.
**Assignments and Grading**

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**Participation:** The success of this (or any) seminar hinges on your active and informed contributions, which in turn depends on your level of preparation. Seminars require students to engage in lively discussions. Consequently, I expect you to have completed each week’s readings prior to class, to have reflected critically and analytically on those readings, and to discuss them actively in class. Be sure to bring your books, notes, reflections, questions, and comments to each class. Your active participation in the seminar throughout the semester is worth 100 points (25% of your final grade).

**Reflection Papers:** You must write five reflection/reaction papers that critically examine (rather than merely summarize) a particular set of readings. You might use these papers to do one or more of the following:

- identify, in one or two sentences, a theorist’s central concern or overarching question;
- assess what you consider to be the primary strengths and weaknesses of particular arguments advanced by the theorist;
- consider the theorist’s logic of inquiry, the method by which s/he seeks to analyze social reality;
- put a theorist into dialogue with arguments or themes from previous theorists (or previous readings from the same theorist);
- highlight points or issues that aren’t clear;
- consider the theorist’s contemporary relevance; and so on.

These papers should be roughly five to six pages in length with standard formatting (double-spaced, 12-point font, 1-inch margins). They are due via Canvas by **11:00 am on the day before the seminar meeting for that week.** I will not accept late papers. Of the five reflection/reaction papers, one each must cover Marx, Weber, and Durkheim. A fourth paper must cover either Mead or Goffman, and the final paper must cover either Berger and Luckmann or Meyer. Two of these papers must be submitted the weeks you lead discussion (see below). Papers are worth 20 points each, for a total of 100 points (25% of your final grade).

**Discussion Leadership:** Each student will lead/co-lead and facilitate discussion during two seminar periods. Discussion leadership may include, but is not limited to, summarizing key arguments, extending or challenging theoretical arguments, posing questions for debate, highlighting critical issues, making connections with previous materials, grappling with difficult material, and so on.

- You should prepare a 15- to 20-minute “presentation” at the beginning of the seminar to orient the discussion.
- In addition, post at least five discussion questions or topics to the Canvas discussion board by 11:00 am on the day of class. All students should review these posts before we meet.
• Finally, you must also submit reflection papers for the week you lead discussion. That is, two of your five required reflection papers must be written for the weeks you lead discussion.

Discussion leadership is worth 100 points (25% your total grade).

**Final Paper:** At the end of the term, you will submit a 15- to 20-page paper (double-spaced, 12-point font, 1-inch margins). You may write *either* a research paper *or* an analytical essay. If you choose to write a research paper, you will conduct research on a topic that directly engages at least two of the theories/theorists we studied in the seminar. You are free to choose your own topic; however, you must obtain prior approval and submit a *proposal of no more than one page by the 8th week of the semester*. If you choose to submit an analytical essay, you will write an extended reflection paper that discusses how the theories/theorists we studied in the seminar have begun to shape your identity as a sociologist or social scientist. Which theories resonated most with your emerging sensibilities as a social scientist, which theories failed to make a deep impression, and why? Papers must be submitted via Canvas by **Wednesday, December 5 at 2:00 p.m.** (i.e., at the start of the last day of class). This paper is worth 100 points (25% of your final grade); late papers are subject to a daily 10-point reduction beginning at 2:01 p.m. on the due date.

**PROCEDURAL ISSUES**

**Student Responsibilities**

All students must maintain professional behavior in the classroom setting, according to the Student Code ([http://www.regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.html](http://www.regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.html)). Students have specific rights in the classroom as detailed in Article III of the Code. The Code also specifies proscribed conduct (Article XI) that involves cheating on tests, plagiarism, and/or collusion, as well as fraud, theft, etc. Students should read the Code carefully and know they are responsible for the content. According to Faculty Rules and Regulations, it is faculty members’ responsibility to enforce responsible classroom behaviors, beginning with verbal warnings and progressing to dismissal from class and a failing grade. Students have the right to appeal such action to the Student Behavior Committee.

**Open Learning Environment**

I intend this seminar to provide an open and thoughtful forum for a wide variety of topics and ideas. While discussing these topics, neither the instructor nor students shall discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, creed, sex, sexual orientation/identity, national origin, age, disability, or veteran status. Discussion and debate should be lively but also professional and polite. *Do not* shy away from making points, including potentially controversial ones. *Do* push arguments. *Do not* accept two logically inconsistent points as “equally valid perspectives.”

**Academic Integrity**

Violations of academic integrity such as plagiarism, whether intentional or not, may result in a failing grade for the course. Under no circumstances are you permitted to submit work that is not your own. This includes submitting the work of another student, buying or copying a paper from the internet, and using the words or ideas of others without proper quotation and citation. Section I(B)(2) of the University of Utah Student Code defines several egregious academic offenses—misrepresentation, plagiarism, fabrication, and falsification—as follows:

- “Misrepresenting one’s work includes, but is not limited to, representing material prepared by another as one’s own work, or submitting the same work in more than one course without prior permission of both faculty members.”
• “Plagiarism” means the intentional unacknowledged use or incorporation of any other person’s work in, or as a basis for, one’s own work offered for academic consideration or credit or for public presentation. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, representing as one’s own, without attribution, any other individual’s words, phrasing, ideas, sequence of ideas, information or any other mode or content of expression.

• “‘Fabrication’ or ‘falsification’ includes reporting experiments or measurements or statistical analyses never performed; manipulating or altering data or other manifestations of research to achieve a desired result; falsifying or misrepresenting background information, credentials or other academically relevant information; or selective reporting, including the deliberate suppression of conflicting or unwanted data. It does not include honest error or honest differences in interpretations or judgments of data and/or results.”

The sanction for these forms of academic misconduct “may include, but is not limited to . . . a grade reduction, a failing grade, probation, suspension or dismissal from a program or the University, or revocation of a student’s degree or certificate.”

Addressing Sexual Misconduct

Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972 makes clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a civil rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran’s status, or genetic information. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 135 Park Building, (801) 581-8365, or the Office of the Dean of Students, 270 Union Building, (801) 581-7066. For support and confidential consultation, you can contact one of the following campus resources:

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<tr>
<th>Center for Student Wellness</th>
<th>University Counseling Center</th>
<th>Women’s Resource Center</th>
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<tr>
<td>426 Student Services Building</td>
<td>426 Student Services Building</td>
<td>411 Union Building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(801) 581-7776</td>
<td>(801) 581-6826</td>
<td>(801) 581-8030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>advocate.wellness.utah.edu</td>
<td>counselingcenter.utah.edu</td>
<td>womenscenter.utah.edu</td>
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Off-campus resources include the Rape Recovery Center, (801) 467-7273, raperecoverycenter.org, and the Rape & Sexual Assault Crisis Line, 1-888-421-1100. To report to the police, contact the Department of Public Safety, (801) 585-2677. You may also seek help with me, but be advised that as a university employee, I am a mandatory reporter (i.e., I am legally obligated to notify the Title IX Coordinator).

Accommodations Policy

The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Union Building, (801) 581-5020 (V/TDD). The Center for Disability Services will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All information in this course can be made available in alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services.

Emergency Action Plan

The College of Social and Behavioral Science takes seriously the safety of all its students. The last page of this syllabus includes an Emergency Action Plan for our classroom building, which should be followed in the event of an emergency on campus.
**Weekly Schedule**

I reserve the right to modify the following schedule over the course of the semester.

* = The corresponding selection is available via Canvas.

**W, 8/22**  **WEEK 1**
First Meeting: Introductions, Class Organization and Expectations, Overview of Sociology and Sociological Theory

**W, 8/29**  **WEEK 2**
Marx & Engels: From Philosophers to Social Scientists (Alienation, Historical Materialism, Class Conflict, the State, etc.)
Tucker, *The Marx-Engels Reader*
- “Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right,*” pp. 16-25.
- “Against Personality Cults,” p. 521.

**W, 9/5**  **WEEK 3**
The Framework of Marx’s Political Economy (Commodities and Exchange, Capital and Labor, Exploitation and Surplus Value)
Marx, *Capital*
- Chapters 1-11 (pp. 125-426).

**W, 9/12**  **WEEK 4**
Extending Marx’s Political Economy (Technology, Coordination, and Surplus Value; Primitive and Capitalist Accumulation)
Marx, *Capital*
- Chapters 12-18 (pp. 429-672).
- Chapters 23 and 24 (pp. 711-761).
- Chapter 25, sections 1-4 (pp. 762-802).
- Chapters 26-33 (pp. 873-940).
W, 9/19  WEEK 5
Weber: A Theorist without a Theory? (Foundational Concepts, Social Action, Multidimensional Stratification, Authority and Legitimation, Bureaucracy, Rationalization, etc.)


Gerth and Mills, *From Max Weber*
- “Politics as a Vocation,” pp. 77-128.
- “Science as a Vocation,” pp. 129-156.
- “Bureaucracy,” pp. 196-244.


W, 9/26  WEEK 6
Weber's Sociology of Religion (Rationalization [Again], Sociology of Religion, Disenchantment, the Interplay of Culture and Economy, Methodological Individualism)


Gerth and Mills, *From Max Weber*


W, 10/3  WEEK 7
Durkheim's Epistemology: Moral—but not Methodological—Individualism (Social Facts; the Normal and the Pathological; Methodological Holism; etc.)


W, 10/10  WEEK 8
Fall Break (no class meeting). Final paper proposal due.
W, 10/17 WEEK 9
Durkheim and the Ties that Bind (Division of Labor, Solidarity, Collective Consciousness/Conscience, etc.)

Durkheim, *The Division of Labor.*
(NB: This was his doctoral dissertation, folks. No pressure.)

W, 10/24 WEEK 10
Durkheim’s Theory of Religion: God Is Society, Writ Large (Sociology of Knowledge, Collective Consciousness/Conscience [Again], Sacred and Profane, Totems, the Soul, Positive and Negative Cults, etc.)

Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life."


W, 10/31 WEEK 11
Mead: Constituting the Self (Gestures and [Significant] Symbols, I vs. Me, Taking the Role of the Other, Generalized Other, Play and Games, etc.)

Mead, *Mind, Self & Society*

- Part I: The Point of View of Social Behaviorism (pp. 1-41).
- Part II: Mind (pp. 42-134).
- Part III: Self (pp. 135-226).
- Part IV: Society (pp. 227-336).


W, 11/7 WEEK 12
Goffman: Dramaturgical Analysis (Self-Presentation, Performance, Front and Back Stage, Impression Management, Face, etc.)

Goffman, *The Presentation of Self.*


W, 11/14 WEEK 13
Social Constructionism: A Synthesis? (Phenomenology; Society as Sacred Canopy; Externalization, Objectivation, Internalization)

W, 11/21    WEEK 14
Thanksgiving Recess (no class meeting)

W, 11/28    WEEK 15
Macro-phenomenological Institutionalism: Weber + Durkheim +
Mead + Goffman + (Berger & Luckmann) = Meyer

Krücken and Drori, *World Society*
- “Reflections: Institutional Theory and World Society,” pp. 36-63
- “Rationalization,” pp. 67-88
- “Myth and Ritual,” pp. 89-110
- “Actorhood,” pp. 111-135
- “Diffusion,” pp. 136-155
- “Globalization,” pp. 156-169
- “Science,” pp. 261-279
- “The Individual,” pp. 296-319
- “Law,” pp. 320-343

W, 12/5    WEEK 16
Final meeting. Final papers due. Come prepared to discuss your paper.
CSBS EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN

BUILDING EVACUATION

EAP (Emergency Assembly Point) – When you receive a notification to evacuate the building either by campus text alert system or by building fire alarm, please follow your instructor in an orderly fashion to the EAP marked on the map below. Once everyone is at the EAP, you will receive further instructions from Emergency Management personnel. You can also look up the EAP for any building you may be in on campus at http://emergencymanagement.utah.edu/eap.

CAMPUS RESOURCES

U Heads Up App: There’s an app for that. Download the app on your smartphone at alert.utah.edu/headsup to access the following resources:

- **Emergency Response Guide:** Provides instructions on how to handle any type of emergency, such as earthquake, utility failure, fire, active shooter, etc. Flip charts with this information are also available around campus.

- **See Something, Say Something:** Report unsafe or hazardous conditions on campus. If you see a life threatening or emergency situation, please call 911!

**Safety Escorts:** For students who are on campus at night or past business hours and would like an escort to your car, please call 801-585-2677. You can call 24/7 and a security officer will be sent to walk with you or give you a ride to your desired on-campus location.