

University of Wisconsin-Madison
Professor Adam Hayes – ahayes8@wisc.edu
Spring 2020
MWF 8:50-9:40am
Classroom: 4308 Social Science

Sociology 475 - Classical Sociological Theory

I. General Orientation

Overview: Several historical figures—e.g. Alexis de Tocqueville, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, and W.E.B. Du Bois—continue to exert a profound influence on our understanding of modern society. This course pursues an in-depth study of these and other classical social thinkers. It traces the development of classical sociology as a response to the central political, industrial, and social revolutions that have shaped Western society during the past three centuries. How can we understand the relationship between individual biography and collective social forces? And what is the relevance of classical sociology for understanding contemporary society?

Learning Objectives:

1. Students will demonstrate a broad understanding of major theories, methodologies, and research findings in the sociological literature.
2. Students will develop an understanding of the field of sociology through course work.
3. Students will develop analytical thinking skills that enable them to evaluate information pertinent to their research question.
4. Students will communicate in a clear, organized engaging manner, using language, methods, and critical tools appropriate to the social sciences.

In addition to the substantive goal of imparting knowledge about classical thinkers who have contributed greatly to the development and self-understanding of modern society, this course has another important set of learning objectives: to help students develop skills in reading lengthy, original texts carefully and thoroughly; skills in grasping complex analytic arguments presented therein; and develop skills in thinking about and critically assessing and evaluating complex analytic arguments. Below on this syllabus are some tips on reading and underlining, which should help with at least some of these learning objectives.

Reading Load: Sociology 475 is a reading-oriented course. The readings consist almost entirely of original texts and excerpts. The average amount of reading per week varies with the difficulty of the author. Overall, the reading load is approximately 50-75 pages per week. This may seem like a lot, but if you commit a few hours each week to the readings, you'll be fine (really!).

Difficulty of Course: How difficult is this course? Most undergraduates consider it to be of average difficulty. It is not a hard course. It is not an easy course. The hardest part is sticking to the readings but not necessarily the readings themselves. There are no exams or quizzes to cram for. Just reading and thinking – and then some writing.

On the Concept of “Theory”: Despite the fact that the official title of Sociology 475 includes the word “theory,” I do not consider it a pure “theory” course. Theory courses are the general rubric under which, at least in American sociology (for historically contingent reasons), key writings by the great sociologists of the past are included in the curriculum. Alexis de Tocqueville, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, etc.—*these were sociologists plain and simple*, and their work spanned not only the theoretical but also the empirical, methodological, and normative dimensions. They are included here not because they were “pure theorists” but because the theoretical aspects of their work happen to have been especially innovative and profound. This is a course, ultimately, not on “sociological theory” per se but on the sociological tradition.

What I Would Name This Course if I Could Name It Anything I Wanted? “The Sociological Tradition (Classical Generation).”

A Final Note about the Syllabus: Please do the readings in the exact order given!

Readings: Four books will be required in this course. All are on sale at University Bookstore and on reserve at College Library – as well as on Amazon and elsewhere.

-The four books are:

1. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (***use **only** the single-volume Perennial Classics / HarperCollins edition, edited by J.P. Mayer and translated by George Lawrence);
2. Karl Marx, *The Marx-Engels Reader* (edited by Robert Tucker);
3. Emile Durkheim, *Emile Durkheim: Sociologist of Modernity* (edited by Mustafa Emirbayer); and
4. Max Weber, *The Essential Weber* (edited by Sam Whimster).

You also will be assigned some additional readings, copies of which will be available at Canvas. In addition to these readings, you will be required to consult a set of reading notes also available at Canvas.

II. Grading

Grading Format: Students’ final grades for this course will be based on (A) a series of weekly reading reflections [30%]; (B) a midterm and final course paper (essay) [30% each]; and (C) class attendance and participation [10%]. More on each of these below:

A. Weekly Reflections: (30% of course grade)

Each student must prepare and submit 10x weekly reading reflections based on the week’s cumulative readings, with a maximum score of 3 points each (partial credit will be awarded). These must be submitted by each Wednesday morning before class meets on the course Canvas. Reflections should be approximately 600 words and achieve the following four goals: (1) identify the key concepts of the readings and explain them succinctly; (2) address the points that you find most compelling, interesting, or controversial; (3) identify what you agree with and/or disagree with **in terms of how these concepts fit in with today’s social world**; and (4) ask questions about where you need clarity.

B. Midterm (30%) and Final (30%) essay papers (topics to be assigned later)

These will be about 6 pages (double-spaced) long and address the essay prompt that will be assigned. The papers should be considered take home exams. It is extremely unlikely that you will be able to do a good job on the papers if you do not attend class. The take-home final will be due during finals week, on May 5th, 11:59pm (submitted to Canvas).

C. Class Attendance and Participation:

Class attendance and participation is 10% of your final grade. In many cases, participation is what will raise that A/B to an A or keep it at an A/B or even lower it to a B. Clearly, class attendance and participation are an extremely important determinant of your final grade.

Class Attendance: Attendance all the way through each class meeting is required, with the exception of no more than four absences. If not in attendance for the entirety of a class meeting, students will be considered not to have attended that day. *Please note: beyond the three allowed absences, there is no such thing as an allowed absence in this course, except in cases of extended, sustained, several- weeks-long personal illness or family emergency. Otherwise, please don't even bother to ask. But if you do have a significant personal illness or family emergency, then by all means get in touch with me. Yet another note: No attendance will be taken the first week of the semester. It will not count toward your final number of classes attended or missed.* No need to contact me about the occasional missed class. Students often will tell me they are missing class or leaving class early a given day and then ask, "Is that all right?" My answer is no: they will not get attendance credit for that day, even if they are going for an interview, attending a wedding, or giving a presentation at a conference. (By the way, students often ask, "Is it all right to miss class?" even despite the preceding sentences in this syllabus.) The attendance policy is meant to allow you to miss classes without a penalty and without need for an explanation. But only so many classes!

Class Participation: Class participation will be evaluated—subjectively, by me—on the basis of overall contributions to weekly class meetings. I want to see evidence on a consistent basis across the semester, not only in weekly reflections but also during class discussions themselves, that a student has read the assigned materials carefully, thoughtfully, and thoroughly. This does not mean s/he must know and understand everything when s/he walks in the door to start the class meeting. It does not mean a student's judgments as to what is most important in the readings must always be the same as my own judgments. It does not mean the student has to dominate class discussion and speak up every other minute. What it does mean is that, if a student gives me a sense that s/he is not doing careful and consistent reading for the course, that s/he is not putting in a serious effort, then it will bode poorly for this portion of that student's final grade. I expect students to take part actively in class discussions. If I ask a student a question at a moment when s/he seems not to be paying attention, and the student answers, "Can you please repeat the question?," then this will be taken into account. If a student's comments do not reflect serious preparation for class discussions, then this too will be noticed. And if a student takes the class discussion onto irrelevant tangents, raises issues of interest only to him or herself, deflects attention from the important issues raised by me in class or by the readings, then this also will be taken into consideration. I do not ask for really frequent interventions. Some students are more talkative; others are quiet. All I ask for are a few—just a few—substantive, thoughtful, well-informed contributions per class meeting. This will get a student an "average" designation for this portion of their final grade or perhaps even a "good" designation. If a student really is working hard, trying hard, and doing their best to contribute, whether or not they always are "correct" in what they say, then this will get them a "good" designation. There is no court of higher appeal for this portion of the final grade. It is based entirely on my subjective evaluation of class performance.

D. Summary of Grading:

Final grades: A =95-100. A B=90-94. B=80-89. B C=70-79. C=69-65. F=64 or less.

What to Expect: The average semester grade in Sociology 475 historically has been between an A and an A/B. The only real challenge is that students have to spend a fair amount of time reading in this course. The weekly reflections require you to keep up with the reading assignments and will demonstrate whether students have done the readings slowly, carefully, and thoughtfully.

Extra Credit: There is no extra credit for this course.

The 'Emirbayer Rules'

- (1) When you speak in class, please refer exclusively to authors and texts we happen to be reading that same day (or read earlier in the semester). Please don't mention any other authors or texts in class discussion. Let's stay focused.
- (2) Please try whenever possible to respond to the person who spoke right before you, rather than offering something completely disconnected. Let's have a genuine conversation. If you aren't able to maintain this continuity, then temporarily cede your place in line; we'll return to you a bit later.
- (3) Please be relatively succinct and to-the-point in your remarks. Let's be in dialogic. It's okay to be confused when confronting such challenging material, but I've found that confusion most effectively can be addressed when your comments are kept fairly brief, so that others can respond.
- (4) Please do all the reading by yourself and don't share the reading assignment in a group division of labor. I'm letting you take your weekly reflections in an open-book/open-notebook format. This doesn't mean it's okay for you to be consulting notes you've distributed among yourselves.

One more thing: Sometimes a student has a point to make that's so urgent, so necessary, so compelling, that he or she can't bear to wait in line. If this happens, raise *both* your hands at once, and I'll (probably) call on you. Don't overuse this privilege. Let's limit it to (at most) one time per student per class meeting. (By the way, I say I'll "probably" call on you because sometimes, in the interest solely of moving the discussion along, I'll ignore upraised hands. Nothing personal!)

Tips on Reading and Underlining

- (1) Mark in the margins the junctures in the text at which the author switches from one topic to another, or turns from making one point to making another. If you simply put little markings at those spots (e.g., little hash marks in the margins or colored paper flags), it will help you to break down the text from one long continuous flow into a number of different, discrete segments. (Typically, each of these segments will be between a paragraph and a couple of pages in length.) Perhaps also write in the margin a few words identifying what each segment is about.
- (2) Within each segment, make sure your underlinings capture the basic logic of the argument, so that if your future self forgets completely what you have read and goes over it as if for the first time, it should be able to follow the author's arguments simply by reading along the underlined sentences. (I think of this as analogous to stepping from stone to stone as you walk down the middle of a creek.) People often make the mistake of underlining, not for the sake of capturing the overall logic of an argument, but for highlighting (in episodic, disconnected fashion) particular passages, statements, or formulations that happen to leap out at them. Perhaps it is useful to place little markings next to those bits of text that strike you, but do not underline them if they are not helpful to your future self in recalling the logic of the argument. Underline always for the sake of your future self.
- (3) Underline with a pencil. You often will find yourself erasing and then underlining other parts of the text as you read along and as the overall logic of the argument becomes clearer to you. Even now, after years of practice, I often redo my own underlinings as I go along. Where I make up for the slowness is in never having to take notes in a separate notebook—a time-consuming exercise.
- (4) After having read through the entire text, go back and reread only the pieces of text you underlined, glancing quickly at the surrounding text to make sure you're recalling the gist of the argument. Keep thinking about the overall structure and flow of the argument as you reread.
- (5) If you can, go back over the text a third time, much more quickly than the other two, this time focusing on mapping carefully in your mind the overall logic of the argument, step by step. This final rereading might take you only a few minutes. Perhaps do this yet another time, too—a fourth time—right before you take your weekly in-class examination.

Reading & Discussion Schedule

Boldface = required reading

© = reading downloadable from Canvas

<u>Monday</u>	<u>Wednesday</u>	<u>Friday</u>
	1/22 <u>Intro & Course Overview</u> No readings	1/24 <u>Thomas Hobbes</u> <i>on Man & Reason</i> Leviathan reader ©: Intro-Ch.4 (stop at 5, State of Nature to Commonwealth) *Full text of <i>Leviathan</i> also available on Canvas
1/27 <u>Hobbes</u> <i>on the Commonwealth & Liberty</i> Leviathan reader ©: Ch.5-end (start at State of Nature to Commonwealth)	1/29 Discussion on Hobbes & Social Order	1/31 <u>Adam Smith</u> <i>on Value & the Division of Labor</i> Excerpts Wealth of Nations ©: pp.1-24 of .pdf (up to Ch. III)
2/3 <u>Smith</u> <i>on Commerce and Trade</i> Excerpts Wealth of Nations ©: Ch. III (p.25 of .pdf)-end.	2/5 Discussion on Wealth of Nations and Political Economy	2/7 <u>Smith</u> <i>on Moral Sentiment</i> Excerpts Theory of Moral Sentiment ©: Parts I & II (stop at p.34 of .pdf)
2/10 <u>Smith</u> <i>on Duty & Judgement by Others</i> Excerpts Theory of Moral Sentiment ©: Part III (pp.35-68 of .pdf)	2/12 <u>Smith</u> <i>on Custom and Human Nature</i> Excerpts Theory of Moral Sentiment ©: Part V (pp.69-end of .pdf)	2/14 Discussion on Smith & Theory of Moral Sentiment vs. TWN
2/17 <u>Alexis de Tocqueville</u> <i>on Equality of Conditions</i> Democracy in America : pp. 9–20; 50–63; 572–80.	2/19 <u>Tocqueville</u> <i>on Political Liberty</i> Democracy in America : pp. 452-54; 503-525; 530-39.	2/21 Discussion on Tocqueville, Democracy & Government
2/24 <u>Tocqueville</u> <i>on Race & Gender</i> Democracy in America : pp. 316-20; 340-63; 584-94; 600-03.	2/26 Discussion on Race & Gender in America	2/28 **No Class Meeting**
3/2 <u>Durkheim</u> <i>on the Division of Labor I</i> Emile Durkheim reader : pp. 3-8; 58-71	3/4 <u>Durkheim</u> <i>on the Division of Labor II</i> Emile Durkheim reader : pp. 192-95; 202-11; 257-63.	3/6 Discussion on Durkheim and Formalizing Sociology
3/9 <u>Durkheim</u> <i>on the Forms of Religious Life</i> Emile Durkheim reader : pp. 84-96; 109-24; 237-44.	3/11 Discussion on Durkheim and the Sociology of Religion	3/13 <u>Emile Durkheim</u> <i>on Suicide and Anomie</i> Emile Durkheim reader : pp. 31-49; 218-19; 263-67.
SPRING BREAK	SPRING BREAK	SPRING BREAK
3/23 <u>Max Weber</u> <i>on The Spirit of Capitalism</i> Max Weber reader : pp. 13-15 (to middle of page); 25-34; 60-65; 78 (middle of page) – 80.	3/25 Discussion on Max Weber and Method	3/27 <u>Weber</u> <i>on Ideal Types & Rationality</i> Max Weber reader : pp. 235-49; 325 (2 nd half of page)-31.
3/30 <u>Weber</u> <i>on Social Action and Interpretive Sociology</i> Some Categories of Interpretive Sociology ©: read in entirety	4/1 Discussion on Weber and Economic Sociology	4/3 <u>Weber</u> <i>on Social Class</i> Max Weber reader : pp. 128-29; 176-94.

<p style="text-align: right;">4/6</p> <p><u>Weber</u> on <i>Forms of Power & The State</i> Max Weber reader: pp.131-145</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">4/8</p> <p>Discussion on Weber vs. Durkheim (vs. Marx)</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">4/10</p> <p><u>Marx</u> on <i>Social Class & Exploitation</i> Marx-Engels reader: pp. 203-17; 417-19; 422-27; 441-42</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">4/13</p> <p><u>Karl Marx</u> on <i>The Labour Theory of Value</i> Marx-Engels reader: pp. 294-98; 302-316; 361-84.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">4/15</p> <p><u>Marx</u> on <i>Circuits of Capital</i> Marx-Engels reader: pp. 329-61.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">4/17</p> <p>Discussion on Marx as an Economic + Social Thinker</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">4/20</p> <p><u>Marx</u> on <i>Historical Materialism</i> Marx-Engels reader: pp. 3-6; 143-63.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">4/22</p> <p><u>Marx</u> on <i>Social Revolution & Crisis</i> Marx-Engels reader: pp. 469–500; optional: pp. 594–617.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">4/24</p> <p>Discussion on Marx as a Revolutionary: Marxism in Contemporary Thought</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">4/27</p> <p><u>Simmel</u> on <i>Interaction, Dyads & Triads</i> The Triad ©: Read in entirety The Stranger ©: Read in entirety</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">4/29</p> <p><u>Du Bois</u> on <i>Race</i> Selected Readings ©: Read in entirety</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">5/1</p> <p>Final Class Discussion</p>