

York University  
Department of Sociology  
Faculty of Liberal Arts & Professional Studies

AP/SOCI 2040 6.0 A (Y) - Section B

## **Sociological Theory**

Fall 2020 - Winter 2021

Course Director: Marcello Musto

Class Time: Thursday 16:30 - 18:30

Class Location: Synchronous and Asynchronous Online

Office Location: Ross Building N833A

Office Hours: By appointment (Skype: marcello.musto3)

Email: marcello.musto@gmail.com

Teaching Assistants: Rana Sukarieh (sukarieh@yorku.ca) – Marcello Musto

Tutorial 1: Thursday 18:30 – TA Marcello Musto

Tutorial 2: Thursday 19:30 – TA Rana Sukarieh

Tutorial 3: Thursday 18:30 – TA Rana Sukarieh

### **Course Syllabus**

This course deals with the development of sociological theory from the major foundational thinkers of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, through recent approaches informed by a variety of critical perspectives. Much of classical sociological theory was focussed upon growing awareness of society, as such, being the subject of profound change. Central questions addressed by its main authors were: “What is the nature of the society emerging in (and from) 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe?” and “What is its significance with respect to the development of humanity?” Difference of opinion and profound debate have been characteristic of sociological theory and have widely been recognized as contributing to its development. Since the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the enduring debates have been compounded, without being entirely superseded, by new critical approaches that have sought new insights not only into the nature of society and social change, but of the ways in which knowledge in, and of, society are constructed.

The first part of the course will focus on the principal authors, texts and debates of the classical era of sociology. A wide range of thinkers helped establish the context for, built upon the insights of, filled the gaps between, and discerned alternatives to, the often conflicting ideas of the recognized giants of classical social theory (among others Karl Marx, Émile Durkheim and Max Weber).

The second part of the course will focus on the contributions and controversies that have followed from broad recognition of sociology as a distinct intellectual discipline, coupled with recurrent efforts to shed light on its most basic theoretical underpinnings. These additions to the corpus of classical sociological theory have extended its critical range and multiplied its analytical power and complexity.

A primary goal of this course is to illuminate the role of critical analysis in the expansion and deepening of social knowledge, insisting upon the need for every individual to become informed by confronting ideas in debate and then to arrive at a personal position through a critical evaluation of alternatives.

## **Course Requirements**

### Class and Tutorial Participation:

This course is taught in 24 weekly lectures - lasting 1 hour and 50 minutes - and tutorials lasting 50 minutes. Participation will be marked on the basis of a combination of attendance to lectures and tutorials.

Class participation: attendance and informed participation at all class meetings is not only strongly recommended, but required. Students are expected to attend class regularly, *complete the assigned readings on time*, and participate actively.

Please note that food and the use of cell phone in classroom will not be allowed.

Tutorial participation: The Teaching Assistant will lead the discussion among the students and will also respond to their questions.

Students are required to prepare prior to each class a single-spaced 12 point, Times New Roman font, one page abstract (around 500 words) about the readings, which may include reflections on the main concepts included in the texts, questions about them, problems encountered with the readings (terminology, historical context, etc.), critical comparison with contemporary issues, etc. This preparatory work will help you during the tutorial.

### Midterm Exams:

Two midterm exams will be held on **October 29, 2020** and on **March 4, 2021**, at the regular class time and place. The exam will last 90 minute and it will consist of answering to 3 questions drawn from the readings assigned until that date. At the fall mid-term exam students will be required to respond to questions concerning the readings from week 1 to week 6, while at the winter mid-term exam students will have to respond to questions related to the readings of the period lasting weeks 8 to week 18. Note that students who miss a test will not be offered the opportunity to repeat the test.

All students who require extra accommodation for either tests or assignments are responsible for consulting with the York University office in charge of alternate exam/test.

Midterm marks will be available by email (please contact your Teaching Assistant) before November 12, 2020, for the Fall term, and March 18, 2021, for the Winter term.

### Final Paper:

The final paper will be divided in two parts: 1) Abstract of the Readings; and 2) Final Essay.

Abstract of the Readings: students should deliver 3 abstracts (of about 500 words each - total of 1,500 words) of the readings from week 20 to week 24.

Final Essay: approximately 3,000 – 3,500 words, including footnotes and a final bibliography (roughly 10 pages double-spaced in 12 pt. 'Times New Roman' font). This essay has to be clearly structured (divided into at least 3 sections), and written with rigorous reference to supporting evidence; generally, 1-2 references to books or articles per page is a good rule of thumb. These sources may include assigned readings, but there must also be evidence of further research.

Students are free to propose their own final paper topic, but it has to be related to the authors and/or the writings read during the course (papers on the sociological theory as a whole of one or more authors, or offering comparison among different sociological conceptions, are the most welcome). Students are encouraged to discuss the topic of the final essay with the Teaching Assistants.

Due date of the abstract of the readings and of the final essay is **April 15, 2021**. Assignments not received after this point will be considered late. The penalty for the first 48 hours late is 5% and 2% will be subtracted for every subsequent day up until a week after the initial due date, totalling a maximum deduction of 15%. After the seventh day, no assignments will be accepted unless very extraordinary circumstances.

### **Access to Course Readings:**

Many of the required readings are classical of sociological thought and are, therefore, available on-line (more information will be given in class).

All required and additional readings indicated in the syllabus are also available at Scott Library. The following textbooks, which you may find useful to consult during the year, have been placed on two hours reserve at Scott library:

Applerouth, Scott A., and Laura Desfor Edles, *Classical and Contemporary Sociological Theory: Text and Readings*, Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press, 2012.

Dillon, Michelle, *Introduction to Sociological Theory: Theorists, Concepts, and their Applicability to the Twenty-First Century*, Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.

Farganis, James, *Readings in Social Theory: The Classical Tradition to Post-Modernism*, Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2004.

Kivisto, Peter, *Social Theory: Roots and Branches*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Zeitlin, Irving M., *Ideology and the Development of Sociological Theory*. 7th ed. Upper Saddle River: Prentice-Hall, 2001.

## Course Evaluation

Class Participation	ongoing	15%
Tutorial Participation	ongoing	15%
First Midterm Exam (Fall)	October 29	20%
Second Midterm Exam (Winter)	March 4	20%
Final Paper	April 15	30%

Graded feedback worth 35%, based on class and tutorial participation in the Fall semester (15%) and on the first midterm exam (20%), will be transmitted to students who will request it prior to the last day to drop a course without receiving a grade (February 5, 2021).

## Schedule of Classes and Readings

### Part I: Classics

#### **Week 1 – 10 Sept: Introduction and Overview**

##### Recommended Readings:

Applerouth, Scott A., and Laura Desfor Edles, *Classical and Contemporary Sociological Theory: Text and Readings*, Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press, 2012, “Introduction”.

Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution 1789-1848*, Chap. 1, 2 and maps, pp. 7-52 and 363-374.

#### **Week 2 – 17 Sept: Saint-Simon and the Sociology of Industrialism**

##### Required Readings [I: 1-20]:

Claude de Saint-Simon, Selection of *The Organizer* [1819], *Industrial System* [1821] and *On Social Organization* [1825].

Excerpts taken from the following volumes:

Saint-Simon, Henri. *Henri Saint-Simon (1760-1825): Selected writings on science, industry, and social organization*. Croom Helm. 1975.

Comte de Saint-Simon (ed. Markham), *Henri Comte de Saint-Simon 1760-1825 Selected Writings*. Blackwell Oxford, 1952.

##### Additional Readings:

Ghita Ionescu, *Introduction*, in Id. (ed.), *The Political Thought of Saint-Simon*, Cambridge University Press 1976.

**Week 3 – 24 Sept:            Positivism and the Birth of Sociology**

Required Readings [I: 21-61]:

Auguste Comte, *A General View of Positivism* [1848] (excerpts).

Additional Readings:

Mary Pickering, *Auguste Comte: An Intellectual Biography (Vol. 1)*, Cambridge University Press, 1993.

**Week 4 – 1 Oct:            Liberalism**

Required Readings [I: 63-80]:

Jeremy Bentham, *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, Chapter I: “Of the Principle of Utility” and Chapter III: “Of the Four Sanctions or Sources of Pain and Pleasure”.

John Stuart Mill, *Principles of Political Economy*, Book II, chapter I: "On Property".

Additional Readings:

Stefan Collini, *Liberalism and Sociology*, Cambridge University Press, 1979.

**Week 5 – 8 Oct:            Tocqueville and The Sociological Analysis of Political Institutions**

Required Readings [I: 82-116]:

Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* [1835 - 1840] (excerpts).

Additional Readings:

Cheryl Welch, *De Tocqueville*, Oxford University Press, 2001.

**Week 6 – 22 Oct:            Marx’s Anti-capitalism**

Required Reading 1:

*Available online through the York library:*

Marcello Musto, “Revisiting Marx’s Concept of Alienation”, *Socialism and Democracy*, vol. 24 (2010), no. 3: 79-101.

Required Reading 2 [I: 118-163]:

Karl Marx, excerpts from the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* [1848], the *Grundrisse* [1857-58] and *Capital*, vol. I [1867].

Additional Readings:

Maximilien Rubel – Margaret Manale, *Marx Without Myth: A Chronological Study of his Life and Work*, Harper & Row, 1975.

**Week 7 – 29 Oct:                    First Midterm Exam**

**Week 8 – 5 Nov:                    Social Darwinism**

Required Readings [I: 165-182]:

Herbert Spencer, *The Man versus the State* [1884] (excerpts).

Additional Readings:

John Offer, *Herbert Spencer and Social Theory*, Palgrave, 2010.

**Week 9 – 12 Nov:                    Durkheim**

Required Readings [I: 226-251]:

Emile Durkheim, excerpts from *The Division of Labour in Society* [1893] and other minor writings.

Excerpts taken from the following edition:

Emile Durkheim, *Selected Writings*, (ed. by Giddens), Cambridge University Press, 1972.

Additional Readings:

Anthony Giddens, *Durkheim*, Harvester, 1978.

**Week 10 – 19 Nov:                    Veblen's Institutionalism**

Required Readings [I: 252-296]:

Thorstein Veblen, *Theory of the Leisure Class* [1899] (excerpts).

Additional Readings:

Stephen Edgell, *Veblen in Perspective: His Life and Thought*, M.E. Sharpe, 2001.

**Week 11 – 26 Nov:                    Weber**

Required Readings [I: 297-325]:

Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* [1904-05] (excerpts).

Additional Readings:

Joachim Radkau, *Max Weber: A Biography*, Polity, 2009.

**Week 12 – 3 Dec: Social Interactionism**

Required Readings [I: 326-365]:

Georg Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money* [1907] (excerpts); *Sociology* [1908] (excerpts).

Excerpts taken from the following volume:

Georg Simmel, *On Individuality and Social Forms*, (ed. by Levine), University of Chicago Press, 1971.

Additional Readings:

Norman Levine, *Introduction*, in Id. (ed.), Georg Simmel, *On Individuality and Social Forms*, University of Chicago Press, 1971.

**Part II: Contemporary Developments**

**Week 13 – 14 Jan: Elite Theory**

Required Readings [II: 1-15]:

Vilfredo Pareto, *The Mind and Society* [1916] (excerpts from volume IV: 'The General Form of Society').

Additional Readings:

Raymond Aron, *Main Currents in Sociological Thought: Durkheim, Pareto, Weber*, Vol. 2, Basic Books 1967.

**Week 14 – 21 Jan: Cultural Hegemony**

Required Readings [II: 16-73]:

Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks* [1929-35] (excerpts).

Additional Readings:

Joseph Buttigieg, *Introduction*, in Id. (ed.), Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, Columbia University Press, 1992.

**Week 15 – 28 Jan: Symbolic Interactionism**

Required Readings [II: 74-95]:

George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self and Society* [1934] (excerpts from chapter IV 'Society').

Additional Readings:

Mitchell Aboulaflia (ed.), *Philosophy, Social Theory, and the Thought of George Herbert Mead*, SUNY, 1991.

**Week 16 – 4 Feb: Action Theory**

Required Readings [II: 96-127]:

Talcott Parsons, *The Structure of Social Action* [1937] (Excerpts from Part I 'The Positivistic Theory of Action' and Part IV 'Conclusion').

Additional Readings:

Hamilton Peter, *Talcott Parsons*, Horwood, 1983.

**Week 17 – 11 Feb: The Sociological Imagination**

Required Readings [II: 141-176]:

Charles Wright Mills, *White Collar* [1951] (excerpts).

Additional Readings:

John Eldridge, *C. Wright Mills*, Horwood, 1983.

**Week 18 – 25 Feb: The Frankfurt School**

Required Readings [II: 177-193]:

Douglas Kellner, "The Frankfurt School" (selections of writings).

Additional Readings

Andrew Arato, and Eike Gebhardt (Eds.), *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, Continuum, 1982.

Jay Bernstein (Ed.), *The Frankfurt School: Critical Assessments* (6 voll.), Routledge, 1994.

**Week 19 – 4 Mar: Second Midterm Exam**

**Week 20 – 11 Mar: Black Reconstruction**

Required Readings [II: 194-222]:



William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, excerpts (TBA) from various writings [1935 and others].

Malcolm X, excerpts from *The Last Speeches* and other writings.

Additional Readings:

David Levering Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: The Fight for Equality and the American Century 1919–1963*, Owl Books 2001

Manning Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*, Penguin 2011.

**Week 21 – 18 Mar: Feminist Critique**

Required Readings [II: 223-306]:

Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* [1949] (excerpts).

Additional Readings:

D. Bair, *Introduction to Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex*, Vintage, 1989.

**Week 22 – 25 Mar: Biopolitics**

Required Readings [II: 307-329]:

Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics* [1978–1979] (excerpts)

Additional Readings:

Gary Gutting, *Foucault: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford 2005.

**Week 23 – 1 Apr: Subalternity and Post-Colonialism**

Required Readings [II: 330-445]:

Franz Fanon, excerpts from *The Wretched of the Earth* [1961].

Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* [1978] (“Introduction”).

Additional Readings:

Reiland Rabaka, *Forms of Fanonism: Frantz Fanon’s Critical Theory and the Dialectics of Decolonization*, Lexington Books, 2011.

Conor McCarthy, *The Cambridge Introduction to Edward Said*, Cambridge University Press, 2010.

**Week 24 – 8 Apr: The Critique of the Spectacle and Consumer Society**

Required Readings [II: 446-499]:

Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* [1967] (chapters 1-53).

Jean Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society* [1974] (Part I: chapters I-III; Part II: chapter I; Part III: Conclusion) and other writings (TBA).

Additional Readings:

Anselm Jappe, *Guy Debord*, University of California Press, 1999.

Douglas Kellner, *Jean Baudrillard: From Marxism to Postmodernism and Beyond*, Stanford University Press, 1989.