

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

AP/SOCI 2040 6.0 A (S2)

Sociological Theory

Summer 2023

Course Director: Marcello Musto

Class Time: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, 4-7 pm

Class Location: Monday & Thursday: SLH C - Tuesday: DB 0005 – Wednesday: DB 1005

Office Location: Ross Building N833A

Office Hours: By appointment

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Course Syllabus

This course deals with the development of sociological theory from the major foundational thinkers of the 19th and early 20th 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) 19th 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 Since the last decades of the 20th century, the enduring debates have been compounded, without being entirely superseded, by new critical approaches that have sought new insights not only into the nature of society and social change, but of the ways in which knowledge in, and of,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 Participation

This course is taught in daily lectures – four per week –, lasting 3 hours each. Classes will be held in-person and online, most synchronous.

Attendance and informed participation at all class meetings (in person and online) is not only strongly recommended but required. Students are expected to attend class regularly, *complete the assigned readings on time*, and participate actively. Participation will be marked for both attendance and quality of participation.

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

Midterm Exams

Two midterm exams will be held on May 24 and on June 12 at the regular class time and place. The exam will last 90 minutes, and it will consist of answering to 3 questions drawn from the readings assigned until that date. At the first mid-term exam students will be required to respond to questions concerning the readings from class 1 to class 9, while at the second mid-term exam students will have to respond to questions related to the readings of the period lasting class 10 to class 15.

Students who miss a test will not be offered the opportunity to write an additional assignment. 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.

The first Midterm marks will be available before the last date to drop the course without receiving a grade.

Presentation

During the second part of the course “Contemporary Developments” (from day 13), each student will be required to give a 15 to 20 minutes (not less) presentation. The presentations (in-person or synchronous online) will be scheduled in alphabetical order (from A to Z - according to surnames of all the students of the class) and will be focused on the authors discussed between classes 13 and 23 (not day 16, when there is the second midterm exam). The presentation schedule will be shared at the end of the second week of class. Students who will miss the presentation (20% of course evaluation) will not be offered the opportunity to do the presentation on another date.

Each presenter should expose the sociological theory of the sociologist(s) of the week. In addition to that, the presentations can include thoughts on their continuing relevance today, on the reception of their main ideas, and can also critically compare them with other main sociologists read between class 1 and 12.

Presenters should provide a 1-page summary (about 500 words), in hard copy, of her/his presentation to the course director. **Avoid Plagiarism** (see Senate Policy on Academic Honesty below).

A good presentation is very important to stimulate critical thinking. Therefore, please avoid just reading from a paper, try to present interesting ideas, and raise questions for the engagement of others. Presentations should:

- expose some of the main arguments of the sociologist(s) of the week;
- identify the key questions and the controversies implied by the readings of the week;

- critically analyze the texts (for example: what are the limitations of the position expressed in the readings?);
- conclude with three discussion questions for the other students of the class to debate.

Final Exam

The Final exam will be held (online) on June 26 and will have the same format of the two midterm exams. Students will be required to respond to 3 questions focused on the readings from class 17 to class 23, in a maximum of 90 minutes.

Access to Course Readings

Many of the required readings are classical of sociological thought and are, therefore, available on-line. Both Part I, entitled “Classics”, and Part II, entitled “Contemporary Developments”, of the readings can be downloaded here: <https://marcellomusto.org/sociological-theory-2020/> . Please note that “Schedule of Classes and Readings” below indicates, in square brackets, in which of the two online resources (indicated in Roman numbers, as “I” for the first document, and “II” for the second document) you can find the required reading for each lecture. The page number where the reading appears in each of the two online documents are indicated in from of the Roman numbers for each topic. For example, the course schedule below indicates [I: 1-20] for Day 2 required readings. This means that the three required readings for that day can be found on pages 1 to 20 of the first online file entitled “Classics”.

Note that the additional readings listed for some of the topics do not appear in the online resources. They can be accessed through the university library (either in physical copies or, often, online).

All required and additional readings indicated in the syllabus are 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*. 5th 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	20%
First Midterm Exam	20%
Second Midterm Exam	20%
Presentation	20%
Final Exam	20%

Schedule of Classes and Readings

Part I: Classics

Day 1 – 8 May, Mon: **Introduction and Overview**
In-person

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.

Day 2 – 9 May, Tue: **Saint-Simon and the Sociology of Industrialism**
Synchronous Online

Required Readings [I: 1-30]:

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.

Day 3 – 10 May, Wed: **Positivism and the Birth of Sociology**
In-person

Required Readings [I: 31-66]:

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

Additional Readings:

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

Day 4 – 11 May, Thu: Liberalism
Synchronous Online

Required Readings [I: 67-85]:

Jeremy Bentham, *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, Chapter I: “Of the Principle of Utility”

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

Additional Readings:

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

Day 5 – 15 May, Mon: Tocqueville and The Sociological Analysis of Political Institutions
Synchronous Online

Required Readings [I: 86-116]:

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

Additional Readings:

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

Day 6 – 16 May, Tue: Marx’s Anti-capitalism
Synchronous Online

Required Readings [117-138]:

Karl Marx, excerpts from the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* [1848], 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.

Day 7 – 17 May, Wed: Social Darwinism
In-person

Required Readings [I: 139-171]:

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

Additional Readings:

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

Day 8 – 18 May, Thu: Durkheim
Synchronous Online

Required Readings [I: 172-217]:

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.

Day 9 – 23 May, Tue: Veblen’s Institutionalism
Asynchronous Online

Required Readings [I: 218-253]:

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

Additional Readings:

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

Day 10 – 24 May, Wed: First Midterm Exam
In-person

Day 11 – 25 May, Thu: Weber
Synchronous Online

Required Readings [I: 254-307]:

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

Additional Readings:

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

Day 12 – 5 June, Mon: **Social Interactionism**
Synchronous Online

Required Readings [I: 308-353]:

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

Day 13 – 6 June, Tue: **Elite Theory**
In-person

Required Readings [II: 1-23]:

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.

Day 14 – 7 June, Wed: **Cultural Hegemony**
Synchronous Online

Required Readings [II: 24-58]:

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

Additional Readings:

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

Day 15 – 8 June, Thu: **Symbolic Interactionism**
Synchronous Online

Required Readings [II: 59-84]:

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

Additional Readings:

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

Day 16 – 12 June, Mon: **Second Midterm Exam**
In-person

Day 17 – 13 June, Tue: **Action Theory**
Synchronous Online

Required Readings [II: 85-117]:

Talcott Parsons, *The Structure of Social Action* [1937] (Excerpts from Part I ‘The Positivistic Theory of Action’).

Additional Readings:

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

Day 18 – 14 June, Wed: **The Sociological Imagination**
Synchronous Online

Required Readings [II: 118-154]:

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

Additional Readings:

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

Day 19 – 15 June, Thu: **The Frankfurt School**
In-person

Required Readings [II: 155-172]:

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.

Day 20 – 19 June, Mon: **Black Reconstruction**
In-person

Required Readings [II: 173-208]:

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.

Day 21 – 20 June, Tue: Feminist Critique
Asynchronous Online

Required Readings [II: 209-261]:

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

Additional Readings:

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

Day 22 – 21 June, Wed: The Critique of the Spectacle and Consumer Society
In-person

Required Readings [II: 287-341]:

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

Jean Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society* [1974] (Part II: chapter I).

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.

Day 23 – 22 June, Thu: Subalternity and Post-Colonialism
Synchronous Online

Required Readings [II: 262-286]:

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

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.

Day 24 – 26 June, Mon: **Final exam**
Synchronous Online