

**SOC 2040**  
**Classical Sociological Theory**  
**FALL 2018**

**Instructor:** Dan Hirschman

**Email:** [daniel\\_hirschman@brown.edu](mailto:daniel_hirschman@brown.edu)

**Time and Location:** 9:00am-12:00pm Thursdays, 108 Maxcy Hall

**Office Hours:** 1:00pm-3:00pm Wednesdays, 209 Maxcy Hall. Sign-up [here](#) or email to arrange an alternative time.

## Overview & Objectives

This course provides a foundation in classical sociological theory by exploring the work of a few major social thinkers of the 19th and early 20th century. These works represent my take on the canon, the shared collection of texts that are deemed essential touchstones for practicing sociologists. Whether or not practicing sociologists *need* a classical canon, and whether these particular texts are the right ones to constitute that canon, are questions that we will consider along the way.

We will approach these classical texts with two big questions or overarching themes in mind. First, we'll ask, what is the social? What is society? How did we come to start thinking about "the social" in the first place? What is the relationship between the social (society) and the political (politics) or the economic (economy) or the natural (nature)? This thread will take us back a bit before classical theory, to 17th century political theory and 18th-19th century economic theory, which will serve as a springboard into four of the classics proper: Karl Marx, Max Weber, Emile Durkheim, and W.E.B. Du Bois. Each of these theorists, in some sense, was responding to political and economic theory (and, later, to each other). And each remains incredibly influential in contemporary debates. We will trace some of that influence through readings of more recent feminist critics of the classics. These feminist theorists argue that classical social theorists defined society through a distinctly patriarchal lens, and in so doing misunderstood the real workings of the social.

Second, we'll ask, how do we make knowledge about the social? What does it mean to do sociology? What sorts of methods are appropriate for studying the social world, and what can those methods reveal or conceal? We will consider these questions in the context of the classical thinkers, each of whom was (arguably) an empirical social scientist as much or more than a social theorist. That is, these works of classical sociological theory were also extraordinary, groundbreaking works of (then) contemporary empirical sociological research. We will supplement our reading of primary sources with some secondary sources which highlight these methodological maneuvers, as well as later methodological and epistemological reflections deeply inspired by the classics.

The most important requirement for the course is to do the reading before class and to attend class prepared to discuss the reading. To facilitate this process, you will submit a short, structured response memo on the afternoon before class. In addition, there will be three longer writing assignments described below. The first two assignments will emphasize the course themes as well as the ability to do a close reading of a difficult text; the final assignment will offer you the chance to do your own classical theorizing.

Practically, this course is a requirement for the PhD in Sociology and provides the jumping off point for the social theory prelim exam. We will also devote a few minutes during each class to practical and professional concerns that emerge in your first semester of the program.

## Requirements

*Attendance and Participation:* You are required to attend and participate in class. If you are unable to attend class (for health, family obligations, religious obligations, etc.), please let me know in advance.

*Readings:* This course is a doctoral seminar. As such, it carries a substantial reading load. You are expected to read all assigned material before coming to class. We will devote most of our class time to exploring the readings.

*Response Memos:* Each week (other than the first), you are expected to write a structured response memo approximately 500 words long. This memo should do two things. First, it should attempt to summarize the major argument (as you see it) of one of the week's main readings. Second, it should identify a particular passage that you would like to discuss further and offer a question or commentary about that passage.

*Respect:* There are many ways to interpret the course readings and many competing views on the topics we will discuss, and I hope we will debate many contrasting viewpoints during the course of the semester. To facilitate good discussion, please keep in mind that we are debating ideas, not each other as individuals. This type of debate might take the form of "I disagree" instead of "you are wrong." Please keep the difference in mind so that we can engage in useful and vigorous discussion!

In the context of a graduate seminar, respect takes on an additional, specific meaning. In graduate seminars, there is a tendency to try to "show off" by "name dropping" (or, read more sympathetically, to make exciting intellectual connections to material outside of the immediate scope of the class). This tendency can lead to stifled discussions and alienation as students who are unfamiliar with a particular thinker or concept are forced out of the conversation. Thus, as a rule, if you want to introduce a term or theorist that we have not explicitly discussed in the class, you must fully explain who the theorist is/was or the meaning of the concept, and then why that theorist or concept is relevant to our discussion. The goal here is not to prevent students from bringing in outside material, but to make sure that we can have a productive conversation by building a shared vocabulary — one of the central purposes of exposure to classical theory.

*Major Assignments:* The course has three major writing assignments. The first paper will be due approximately 1/2 of the way through the class. The second paper will be due approximately 3/4 of the way through the class. The third paper will be due after the final week of class. None of the papers will require outside reading (although you may choose a topic that would benefit from additional primary or secondary readings). Each of the first two papers will be approximately 1800-2400 words (6-8 pages) and ask you to compare the work of multiple theorists, or analyze multiple works by the same theorist along with some critical readings of those works. I will provide example essay prompts in advance of each assignment, but you are encouraged to choose your own topic (in consultation with me). The final paper (also 1800-2400 words) will ask you to craft your own classical theory, contrasting your approach to one or more of the big questions with those of at least two of the canonical classical theorists.

*Time Expectations:* You are expected to work approximately 180 hours total to complete this class. Over 13 weeks, students will spend 3 hours per week in class (39 hours total). The required readings for each class are expected to take approximately 7 hours per week (91 hours). Weekly response memos should take about an hour each (12 total), and the three papers should average 12 hours of work each (36 hours total).

## Grading

Your grade has three components.

*Participation: 20%*

Attending class is a necessary but insufficient condition for full participation. You must also engage with the readings and your colleagues, and do so respectfully. If you have concerns about your participation, please raise them with me in office hours before the end of the term.

*Response Memos: 20%*

Each of the 12 memos will be graded out of 10 points. If you get 100 points, you receive the full 20% towards your final grade (no extra beyond that). Theoretically, 10 perfect memos would suffice and most students should be able to miss one or two weeks without seriously impacting their grade.

*Writing Assignments: 60%*

Each of the three major writing assignment is worth 20% of your final grade.

*Grade Appeals:* If you feel that an *error* has been made, you may appeal your grade to me within *one week* of receiving your grade. To appeal your grade, you must provide a written explanation of the error you believe has been made, and I will re-grade the assignment. Please be advised that there is no guarantee that I will raise your grade; in fact, it is possible that I may lower it. For this reason, you should appeal a grade as a last resort when you feel *certain* that you have been graded unfairly.

## Administrative Issues

*Academic Integrity:* Plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct are unacceptable. Information on the University's academic code is available [here](#). Any student who plagiarizes will fail the course and may face other sanctions imposed by the University.

*Accommodations for Learning:* Brown University is committed to full inclusion of all students. Please inform me early in the term if you have a disability or other condition that might require accommodations or modification of any of these course procedures. You may speak with me after class or during office hours. For more information, please contact [Student and Employee Accessibility Services](#) (phone: 401-863-9588, email: [SEAS@brown.edu](mailto:SEAS@brown.edu)). Students in need of short-term academic advice or support can contact one of the deans in the Dean of the College office.

*Cell Phones and Laptops:* Turn off your cell phone and store it during class. If you might need to receive a call during class for some reason, put your phone on vibrate and step out quietly as needed. Similarly, please consider storing your laptop during class. Research shows that using a laptop during class impedes both your learning *and* the learning of students around you ([Sana et al. 2013](#)). There will be breaks during each class where I will encourage you to check your devices. If for any reason you feel you need to use a laptop to take notes, please keep your computer usage to that purpose, closing all applications/websites/etc. except for a notes documents and the course readings. Students misusing devices in class will be asked to leave and be counted as absent for the class.

## General Advice

The first year of a PhD program can be overwhelming. For a very useful perspective, I recommend Fabio Rojas' [Grad Skool Rulz](#), an ebook based on a series of blog posts. Rojas is a successful sociologist and scholar of higher education who writes in a breezy style about everything from course work to choosing advisors to getting tenure. I have arranged to place a copy of these Rulz on our Canvas site. I will set aside time during class for brief discussions of graduate school and professionalization, with topics determined in part by popular demand.

## Required Texts

The following are books you might want to own. You'll need the Marx-Engels Reader before Week 3, but that should still give you enough time to order all of the books from your favorite online retailer. I link to specific editions of each book - it's not essential that you buy (or check out from the library) that edition, but it would greatly facilitate our shared close readings of texts, and if you do purchase another edition of a translated work, make sure it has the same translator. The approximate price of each text is listed new, and most are available used for a substantial discount.

- [The Marx-Engels Reader](#). (\$28 new, cheaper used, highly recommended to buy.)
- [From Max Weber](#). (As cheap as \$.01 used.)
- [The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism](#). (Here the translation matters. Make sure to get the Parsons, even though it has some issues. Used from \$2.)
- [The Rules of Sociological Method](#). (As cheap as \$.01 used.)
- [The Division of Labor in Society](#). (As cheap as \$3.30.)
- [The Souls of Black Folk](#). (\$8 new.)
- [Black Reconstruction in America](#). (\$25 new.)
- [The Great Transformation](#). (As cheap as \$8 used.)

The rest of the readings will be available on the course Canvas site as pdfs and/or as links.

## Course Outline

### Class 1: What is Theory? What is Social? (9/6)

- Abend, Gabriel. 2008. "The Meaning of Theory." *Sociological Theory* 26(2): 173-199.
- Dean, Mitchell. 2005. "Society." Pp. 326-329 in *New Keywords*.

### Class 2: The Birth of Liberalism (Political Theory and Political Economy) (9/13 [Reschedule!])

- Collins, Randall. *Four Sociological Traditions*. Pp. 121-133.
- Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*. Pp. 82-86, 111-115.
- Locke, John. *Second Treatise on Government*. Pp. 7-30, 42-75.
- Pateman, Carole. *The Sexual Contract*. Chapters 1-3, 8.
- Smith, Adam. *The Wealth of Nations*. Introduction, Chapters 1-3, 5.

### Class 3: Class, Culture, and Politics in Marx & Engels (9/20)

(All Marx and Engels readings are from the Marx-Engels Reader.)

- Marx, Karl. "Marx on the History of His Opinions." Pp. 3-6.
- Marx, Karl. "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844." Pp. 66-105.
- Marx, Karl. "Theses on Feuerbach." Pp. 143-145.

- Marx, Karl. “The German Ideology (Part 1).” Pp. 146-175.
- Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. “The Manifesto of the Communist Party.” Pp. 473-491.
- Engels, Friedrich. “Working-Class Manchester.” Pp. 579-585.
- MacKinnon, Catharine A. 1982. “Feminism, Marxism, Method, and the State: An Agenda for Theory.” *Signs* 7(3):515-44.

#### **Class 4: The Economic Marx (9/27)**

- Malthus, Thomas. *An Essay on Population*. Pp. 13-29, 100-109, 259-270.
- Ricardo, David. *On the Principles of Political Economy and Taxation*. Preface, Ch 1.
- Marx, Karl. “Wage Labor and Capital.” Pp. 203-217.
- Marx, Karl. “Selections from Capital, Volume I.” Pp. 294-364, 373-384, 404-407.
- Hartmann, Heidi. 1979. “The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union.” *Capital & Class* 3(2):1-33.

#### **Class 5: Weber on Science and Politics (10/4)**

- Weber, Max. 1958. “Politics as a Vocation” and “Science as a Vocation” in *From Max Weber*, edited by H.H. Garth and C. Wright Mills. New York: Oxford University Press. Pp. 77-158
- Weber, Max. 1968. “‘Objectivity’ in Social Science and Social Policy.” Pp. 49-112 in *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*.
- Hekman, Susan. 1997. “Truth and Method: Feminist Standpoint Theory Revisited.” *Signs* 22(2):341-65.

#### **Class 6: Weber’s Method and Examples (10/11)**

- Weber, Max. 1958. “Class, Status, and Party” and “Bureaucracy” in *From Max Weber*, edited by H.H. Garth and C. Wright Mills. New York: Oxford University Press. Pp. 180-244
- Olin Wright, Erik. 2002. “The Shadow of Exploitation in Weber’s Class Analysis.” *American Sociological Review* 67:832-853.
- Martin, Joanne and Kathleen Knopoff. 1997. “The gendered implications of apparently gender-neutral theory: Rereading Max Weber.” Pp. 30-49 in *Business Ethics and Women’s Studies*.

## Class 7: Weber, Culture, and Interpretation (10/18)

- Weber, Max. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Introduction, Chapters 1-3, Chapter 4 (pp. 53-80), Chapter 5.
- Weeks, Kathi. 2011. *The Problem With Work*. Introduction, Chapter 1.

*Paper 1 due Monday, 10/22.*

## Class 8: Durkheim and the Birth of Statistical Social Science (10/25)

- Durkheim, Emile. *Suicide*. Introduction, Book 2, Chapters 1, 5.
- Durkheim, Emile. *Rules of the Sociological Method*. Introduction, Chapters 1-3.
- Hacking, Ian. 1990. *The Taming of Chance*. Chapters 19-20.
- Mueller, Anna S., Seth Abrutyn, and Melissa Osborne. 2017. "Durkheim's 'Suicide' in the Zombie Apocalypse." *Contexts* 16(2):44-49.

## Class 9: Durkheim on Solidarity and the Division of Labor (11/1)

- Durkheim, Emile. 1984. *The Division of Labor in Society*. Introduction. Book 1, Chapters 1-3. Book 3, Chapter 1.
- Lehmann, Jennifer M. 1995. "Durkheim's Theories of Deviance and Suicide: A Feminist Reconsideration." *American Journal of Sociology* 100(4):904-30.

## Class 10: Du Bois on the Sociology of Race and Gender (11/8)

- Morris, Aldon. 2007. "Sociology of Race and W.E.B. Du Bois: The Path Not Taken." Pp. 503-534 in *Sociology in America*.
- Du Bois, W.E.B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. Ch 1, 3, 4, 13, 14.
- Itzigsohn, José, and Karida Brown. 2015. "Sociology and the Theory of Double Consciousness." *Du Bois Review* 12(2): 231-48.
- Du Bois, W.E.B. 1898. "The Study of the Negro Problems." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 11:1-23.
- Du Bois, W.E.B. 1920. "The Damnation of Women." in *Darkwater: Voices From Within the Veil*.

- Griffin, Farah Jasmine. 2000. "Black Feminists and Du Bois: Respectability, Protection, and beyond." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 568:28-40.

### **Class 11: Du Bois on Race, Class, and Historical Agency (11/15)**

- Du Bois, W.E.B. *Black Reconstruction in America*, Ch 1-4, 9, 13, 14.
- Hartman, Andrew. 2017. "W.E.B. Du Bois's 'Black Reconstruction' and the New (Marxist) Historiography" [U.S. Intellectual History Blog](#).

*No class on 11/22! Paper 2 due Monday, 11/26.*

### **Class 12: Polanyi and the Rise of the Market (11/29)**

- Polanyi, Karl. 2001. *The Great Transformation*. Chapters 1, 3-13, 18-21.
- Farrell, Henry. 2017. "The Thousand Day Reich: The Double Movement." *Crooked Timber*. Available at [here](#).
- MacLean, Lee. 2018. "Beyond the Established Categories: An Alternative Approach to Feminist Thought Starting from Debates about Women and the Rise of the Market Economy." *Feminist Theory*.

### **Class 13: Synthesis, Reflections, and the Politics of the Canon (12/6)**

- Davis, Murray S. 1986. "'That's Classic!' The Phenomenology and Rhetoric of Successful Social Theories." *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 16(3): 285-301.
- Connell, R.W. 1997. "Why is Classical Theory Classical?" *American Journal of Sociology* 102(6): 1511-1557.
- Collins, Randall. 1997. "A Sociological Guilt Trip: Comment on Connell." *American Journal of Sociology* 102(6): 1558-1564.
- Sprague, Joey. 1997. "Holy Men and Big Guns: The Can[n]on in Social Theory." *Gender and Society* 11(1):88-107.
- Bargheer, Stefan. 2014. "The Usefulness of Theory."
- Burawoy, Michael. 2016. "Sociology as a Vocation." *Contemporary Sociology* 45(4): 379-393.

*Final Paper due Monday, 12/17.*