

University of Wisconsin, Madison  
**Sociology 475: Classical Sociological Theory**  
**Spring 2021**

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4308

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credits

Office hours: TR, 4-5 or by appt.

Soc      Sci

TR 11:00-12:15  
Section 4 - 3

Honors section

This course is a basic introduction to the writings of Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx, and Max Weber. We will have two goals in reading and discussing this material during the course of the quarter. The first, not surprisingly, is to understand the theoretical arguments that these authors are making — the logic of their arguments, the underlying assumptions, the internal contradictions and difficulties the arguments encounter, and the ways in which the authors (sometimes) support their theoretical arguments with data. The second goal of the class is to use these readings as examples of how to construct theoretical arguments in sociology. Many courses in the social sciences and humanities ask students to use texts as vehicles for criticism — that is, to summarize what particular authors say about a topic and to critique or defend the assertions of those authors. The focus in this course will be on using the readings to begin to learn how to make theoretically coherent arguments and to begin to support those arguments with empirical data (or at least specify how this could be done).

**Honors Accelerated Course**

This section of Soc 475 is an Honors Accelerated course. This means that the course operates at an honors level, and you will receive credit for taking an honors course. It also means that reading and writing assignments operate at a relatively high level. The class is writing centered and requires highly analytical writing assignments that are part and parcel of the honors designation.

**Formal Prerequisites**

Completion of introductory Sociology course Soc/C&E Soc: 140, 181, 210, or 211

**Course Requirements**

Students are required to do all course readings in advance of the class, to attend and to participate in discussions and lectures. **PLEASE BRING THE BOOK THAT WE ARE READING IN A GIVEN WEEK TO CLASS WITH YOU.** We will often pay close attention to passages in the text. Students are also required to complete three take-home assignments — one for each theorist.

Grading is as follows:

|                          |     |
|--------------------------|-----|
| Paper #1 (Durkheim)      | 30% |
| Paper #2 (Marx)          | 30% |
| Paper #3 (Weber)         | 30% |
| Attendance/Participation | 10% |

**IMPORTANT NOTE ON PAPER ASSIGNMENTS:** The papers will be in the form of essays in response to a prompt. **It is extremely unlikely that you will be able to do a good job on the papers if you do not attend class.** For all papers, I require that you turn in both: a) a hard copy (typed) of the paper; b) a computer file version of the paper. The latter can be emailed to me. YOU WILL NOT RECEIVE CREDIT OR A GRADE FOR THESE ASSIGNMENTS UNTIL YOU TURN IN BOTH COPIES -- HARD COPY AND COMPUTER FILE!!!!

## Books for Course

Emile Durkheim. Suicide.

Emile Durkheim. The Division of Labor in Society.

Emile Durkheim. The Elementary Forms of Religious Life. (Karen Fields translation only!)

Karl Marx. The Marx-Engels Reader. (Robert Tucker, ed.)

Max Weber. The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.

Max Weber. The Theory of Social and Economic Organization.

## I. Emile Durkheim (1858-1917)

### Week of January 26-28 – Suicide

Emile Durkheim. Suicide. New York: Free Press,

Reading: pp. 175-186; 105-114; 124-146; 154-160; 167-174

Questions to consider:

What does it mean to say that suicide is a social fact?

What is social integration? (208-210); What indices or measures does D use for integration?

What is altruistic suicide, and what are its causes? (221)

What is egoistic suicide, and what are its causes? (159)

Why is women's suicide rate lower than men's? How is women's suicide rate related to their degree of social integration? (215-216)

### Week of Feb 2-4 – Suicide

Emile Durkheim. Suicide. New York: Free Press,

Reading: pp. 201-239; 261-264; 345-353.

Questions to consider:

What is social regulation? What indices or measures does D use for regulation?

What is anomic suicide and what are its causes? (246, 258)

Why is women's suicide rate lower than men's? How is women's suicide rate related to their degree of social regulation?

What is the difference between anomie and egoism? Why do we often see both together?

Based on Durkheim's theory, would you expect suicide rates in the U.S. to be high or low compared to the rest of the world?

### Week of February 9-11 – The Division of Labor in Society

Emile Durkheim. *The Division of Labor in Society*. New York: Free Press.

Reading: Simpson edition, pp., 50-110; 168-181;

Coser or Halls ed., pp. 1-2; 11-29; 31-64; 68-86; 149-165; 172-174.

Questions to consider:

What are the functions of the division of labor? (pp. 41-56)  
What is the relation between the division of labor and solidarity? (pp. 41-56)  
What is a crime and what is the function of punishment? (pp. 57-84)  
What is mechanical solidarity? (p. 57-84)  
What is organic solidarity? What is restitutive law? (pp. 88-103)  
What are the "non-contractual elements of contract"? What on earth does this have to do with organic solidarity? (pp. 158-171)  
Why does organic solidarity become more common in modern society? (pp. 177-179)

### **Week of February 16-18 – The Division of Labor**

Reading: *The Division of Labor in Society*.

Lukes edition: pp. 131-137; 201-206; 215-220; 223-237; 293-302

Coser or Halls ed.: pp. 118-123; 200-205; 217-223; 226-244; 310-322.

Simpson: 111-115;; 200-1st paragraph of 216; 283-291; 374-388.

Questions to consider:

What is the relationship between mechanical and organic solidarity? (pp. 131-135 vs. 226-237)  
What happens to the content of collective consciousness under organic solidarity? (226-237)  
What is the forced division of labor? (293-302);  
What consequences does a forced division of labor have for society and solidarity? Why? (300-302)

### **Week of February 23-25 – The Elementary Forms of Religious Life**

Emile Durkheim. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. New York: Free Press.

Reading: pp. 1,2; 8-45; 190-193; 207-241.

Questions to consider:

What are the three elements of religion? (21-44)  
What are the sacred and the profane? What factors cause an object to be classified in one of these categories or another? (33-39)  
What does Durkheim mean when he argues that the totem is a symbol? What is it a symbol of? (191-193)  
What is the function of religion in a society, for Durkheim? (211-216)  
What does Durkheim mean when he says that god and society are one and the same? Why is it important that god/society is a moral force, and not simply a physical one? (207-224)  
Why is it necessary to symbolize the relationship between individual and god/society in the form of a totem? (221-241)

**FIRST ASSIGNMENT HANDED OUT IN CLASS THURSDAY 2/25; DUE THURSDAY 3/4**

## **II. Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820-1895)**

### **Week of March 2-4 – Marx & Engels – Critique of the German Ideology**

Karl Marx. Theses on Feuerbach and The German Ideology. *The Marx-Engels Reader*.

Readings: pp. 143-163.

Questions to consider:

What is the German Ideology? (p. 147-149)

What is Marx's criticism of the German Ideology? (p. 165; 11th thesis on Feuerbach, p. 145)

What are the premises of all history? (146-63)

### **Week of March 9-11 – What is Historical Materialism?/Class, Division of Labor, & Modes of Production**

Readings: Marx-Engels Reader., pp. 176-193; 738-741 (Origin of the Family, Engels); pp. 441-442 (excerpt from Capital, v 3.);

#### **Questions to consider:**

What does Marx mean when he says that history is a succession of modes of production? (151-155)

What are classes? (738-40; 441-442)

What are the two components of the division of labor? (158-63)

What are the natural and voluntary divisions of labor? (160-1)

What is the difference between the civilized and natural division of labor? (185)

### **Week of March 16-18 – Capitalism as a Mode of Production**

Readings: Marx-Engels Reader., pp. 203-217 (from Wage Labour and Capital)

p. 297 single paragraph in middle of page (from Intro to Capital v. 1)

pp. 302-361 (from Capital, v. 1)

#### **Questions to consider:**

What are use value and exchange value? (303-305)

What is the source of exchange value? (305-306)

What is labor power? (310)

What is the value of labor power? (p. 339)

What is the source of surplus value? (p. 357))

### **Week of March 23-25 – The Dynamics of Capitalism/Ideas Reconsidered**

Readings: Marx-Engels Reader, pp. 361-384; 163-175; 473-491 (from Capital, v. 1)

#### **Questions to consider:**

What is absolute surplus value and how is it produced? (p. 362)

What is relative surplus value and how is it produced? (p. 379 ff.)

How does Marx understand the relationship between ideas and material constraints? What is the role of the "theorist" in effecting social change? (164-175; 481)

## **SECOND ASSIGNMENT HANDED OUT IN CLASS 3/25; DUE 4/1**

## **III. Max Weber (1864-1920)**

### **Week of March 30-April 1 – The Protestant Ethic**

Max Weber. The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism. New York: Routledge.

Reading: pp. Xxviii-xlii; 3-124.

#### **Questions to consider:**

How does modern capitalism differ from traditional capitalism? (pp. Xxxv-xlii).

What is the Spirit of Capitalism? (Chapter 2, and esp. pp. 18-21 & 30-33).  
What is the Protestant Ethic? Asceticism? What is the difference between the doctrines of Luther and Calvin in this regard? (Ch. 3 vs. pp. 53-80)  
What is the connection between the Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism? (Ch. 5)  
How do the Baptist sects strengthen the connection between Protestantism and capitalism? (pp. 92-101).  
What happens to the Protestant Ethic over time? How does this affect capitalism? (pp. 119-125).

### **Week of April 6-8 – Subjective Understanding and Causal Explanation**

**Finish discussion of Protestant Ethic PLUS read**

Max Weber. The Theory of Social and Economic Organization. New York: Free Press.

Reading: **pp. 87-100.**

Questions to consider:

What is explanatory understanding? (p. 95)  
What is adequacy at the level of meaning?(p. 98)  
What is a causal explanation? (p. 98)  
What is the relationship between adequacy at the level of meaning and causal explanation?  
Why do we need to understand subjective meaning to arrive at a correct causal explanation?

### **Week of April 13 -15 – The Types of Action and the Concept of Rationalization**

Readings: The Theory of Social and Economic Organization, **pp. 115-123;**

Questions to consider:

What are the four types of action? (pp. 115-117)  
What is the “subjective orientation” associated with each type of action?  
What are the varieties of rationalization, and what does each mean? (p. 123)

### **Week of April 20-22 – Types of Legitimate Authority & Bureaucracy**

Readings: –The Theory of Social and Economic Organization, **pp. 124-126; 130-132; 324-329**

**<go to 336> ; 341-345; 358-366**

Bureaucracy., in From Max Weber, pp. 196-199; 204-216; 221-235; 240-244. (will be distributed)

Questions to consider:

What are the three types of authority? (p.328)  
What is the source of moral authority in each?  
What are the characteristics of bureaucracy, and how do they lead to effectiveness?  
How is bureaucracy related to the legitimate forms of authority?

### **Week of April 27-29 – Finish Weber**

No readings assigned. (I routinely run behind schedule. We'll use this week to catch up.)

**THIRD PAPER ASSIGNMENT HANDED OUT IN CLASS 4/29; DUE 5/6 by 5 pm**

## Expectations, Information, Statements of Symbolic Compliance to Institutional Rules

Remaining points cover a number of rules and directives promulgated by the university and higher-level institutions that increasingly regulate the classroom, or at least the construction of syllabi. (Except for point I, which is entirely mine.) For a discussion of the origins and functions of such rules, see John Meyer and Brian Rowan. 1977. "Institutionalized Organizations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony," *American Journal of Sociology*, v. 83: 340-363. Note that Meyer and Rowan's discussion of decoupling and ceremonial compliance is often apposite. Note too that the university's "generic course template" now runs three pages long – before any substantive intellectual requirements are outlined – thus emphasizing that maintaining legitimacy in an increasingly rationalized world entails costs.

**A. Course Policies.** The professor adheres to all department, college, and university policies regarding accommodations for students with disabilities, religious holidays, incompletes, plagiarism, and student evaluation of the course and its instruction.

**B. Accommodations.** Please send me an email by the end of the second week of the course if you are eligible for special arrangements or accommodations for testing, assignments, or other aspects of the course. This may be the case if English is your second language or you experience a physical or psychological condition that makes it difficult for you to complete assignments and/or exams without some modification of those tasks. Accommodations are provided for students who qualify for disability services through the [McBurney Center](http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu/). Their website has detailed instructions about how to qualify: <http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu/>. Provide a copy of your accommodations request (VISA) to the instructor by the end of the second week of class. We try to reserve rooms and proctors by the third week in class, so we must know of all accommodations by then.

If you wish to request a scheduling accommodation for religious observances, send an email by the end of the second week of the course stating the specific date(s) for which you request accommodation; campus policy requires that religious observances be accommodated if you make a timely request early in the term. See the university's [web page](https://kb.wisc.edu/page.php?id=21698) for details: <https://kb.wisc.edu/page.php?id=21698>

**C. Writing Center.** Students are encouraged to take advantage of the resources and classes offered by the Writing Center (located at 6171 Helen C. White Hall) to help with organization, thesis statements, grammar, sentence structure, and appropriate citations. See: <http://www.writing.wisc.edu>. Before submitting your short paper, you are expected to be familiar with the guidelines on the Writing Center website about "Quoting and Paraphrasing Sources" (see: <http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QuotingSources.html>). See next section regarding 'Academic Integrity.'

**D. Academic integrity.** By enrolling in this course, each student assumes the responsibilities of an active participant in UW-Madison's community of scholars in which everyone's academic work and behavior are held to the highest academic integrity standards. Academic misconduct compromises the integrity of the university. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and helping others commit these acts are examples of academic misconduct, which can result in disciplinary action. This includes but is not limited to failure on the assignment/course, disciplinary probation, or suspension. Substantial or repeated cases of misconduct will be forwarded to the Office of Student Conduct & Community Standards for additional review. For more information, refer to [studentconduct.wiscweb.wisc.edu/academic-integrity/](http://studentconduct.wiscweb.wisc.edu/academic-integrity/).

**I take plagiarism and academic misconduct very seriously, and it is not uncommon for me to refer cases to the dean's office, so please don't do it!!** If you have questions or concerns about the rules for any of the assignments or exams, or if you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please feel free to ask me about it.

**E. Sexual harassment and misconduct.** Professional conduct and appropriate behavior are critical to create a safe learning environment for students and instructors alike. Here is a statement about sexual harassment

from the University: **What is Sexual Harassment?** Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

- submission to such conduct is a condition of employment, academic progress, or participation in a university program; or
- submission to or rejection of such conduct influences employment, academic or university program decisions; or
- the conduct interferes with an employee's work or a student's academic career, or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work, learning, or program environment.

Tangible Action or Quid Pro Quo (This for That) Sexual Harassment and Hostile Environment Sexual Harassment are both illegal and unacceptable. One practical implication is that instructors (faculty or graduate students) may not date students to whom they will be assigning grades. If you believe that you have been harassed, contact the chair of the Department of Sociology ([socchair@ssc.wisc.edu](mailto:socchair@ssc.wisc.edu)), The Title IX office ([TitleIX\\_Coordinator@wisc.edu](mailto:TitleIX_Coordinator@wisc.edu)), or see this link for confidential sources (<https://compliance.wisc.edu/titleix/campus-procedures/reporting/complainant/>).

**F. Departmental notice of grievance and appeal rights.** The Department of Sociology regularly conducts student evaluations of all professors and teaching assistants near the end of the semester. Students who have more immediate concerns about this course should report them to the instructor or to the chair, 8128 Social Science ([socchair@ssc.wisc.edu](mailto:socchair@ssc.wisc.edu)).

**G. Course learning outcomes.** Beyond the specific substantive and methodological content covered in this course, it has been designed to achieve the following instructional objectives designated as priorities by the Department of sociology:

- *Critically Evaluate Published Research.* Sociology graduates will be able to read and evaluate published research as it appears in academic journals and popular or policy publications.
- *Communicate Skillfully:* Sociology majors write papers that build arguments and assess evidence in a clear and effective manner.
- *Critical Thinking about Society and Social Processes:* Sociology graduates can look beyond the surface of issues to discover the "why" and "how" of social order and structure and consider the underlying social mechanisms that may be creating a situation, identify evidence that may adjudicate between alternate explanations for phenomena, and develop proposed policies or action plans in light of theory and data.
- *Prepare for Graduate School and the Job Market:* Students use their social research skills to identify opportunities for employment or further study, assess their qualifications for these opportunities, and identify strategies for gaining the necessary knowledge and experience to improve their qualifications. Students are encouraged to develop and maintain portfolios of their written work and educational experiences to aid them in preparing applications and to learn how to present their.

Honors-level specific outcomes

- This class also has the goal of teaching you to begin to *articulate analytically coherent and testable theoretical arguments*, as well as to enable you to answer the specific questions on the syllabus.
- This class has the goal of teaching you to learn to read and assess highly abstract theoretical texts

**H. Institutional statement on diversity:** "Diversity is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW-Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison fulfills its public mission by creating a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background – people who as students, faculty, and staff serve Wisconsin and the world." <https://diversity.wisc.edu/>

**I. Electronics:**

I do not allow audio or video recording of lectures or discussions without express, written permission. Under no circumstances are students allowed to post audio or video recordings on the internet or third party websites.