Classical Sociological Theory
SOC 221, Hunter College, Spring 2020
Tuesdays and Fridays 12:45am – 2:00pm, West Bldg W424
Tom Buechele
Office Hours: Tuesdays 2:30pm – 3:30pm, or by Appointment
Email: tbuechel@hunter.cuny.edu

Course Description:
The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the “classical” sociological canon, including the writings of Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Emile Durkheim. We will consider these and other theorists’ work (e.g. Georg Simmel, W.E.B. Debois, George Herbert Mead, Freud) in their historical and intellectual contexts while critically assessing their ongoing relevance today. Since we will be reading primary texts which can be difficult, students are required to read consistently and come to class prepared with questions and comments and class time will be spent discussing the presentation and the reading. YOU MUST BRING THE PRINTED TEXTS WITH YOU TO CLASS.

FURTHER DISCRIPTION: Sociological Theory is the core and scaffolding of Sociology. When anyone is asked to describe a discipline as important as sociology, three deceptively simple but in reality quite complex questions arise. The first, “What is sociology?” can only be answered sociologically along with the second: “What is society?” Finally, a third question arises from the title of the first sociology course taught in America, what are the “ends and uses of society?” In order to understand sociology and its objects in context, we will examine many key texts in the development of sociological theory. This class is based on a close reading of sociological theory texts, with a heavy emphasis on what it means to produce CONCEPTS as the building blocks of sociological theory. We will read direct passages from the assigned texts in class so once again I emphasize that you must BRING THE PRINTED TEXT(S) with you to class in order to participate (more on the participation below).

Consider these questions as you read and write:

* What are the institutions and logics that organize modern society? What makes “modern” society different from those of the past?

*What is the individual’s relationship to society? In what ways is her/his consciousness shaped by social structures and social relationships?

*What is power? Where is power located? Who exercises it and how?

*How and why does society change over time?

*How are these author’s ideas relevant today? Why have they become canonical in the field?
Course Goals

This course will:

A. Familiarize students with some of the important concepts and theories in Sociology and the Social Sciences.

B. Provide students with the opportunity to directly engage some of the primary texts in sociological theory.

C. Deepen students understanding of the continuities and discontinuities of the sciences of life and society.

F. Provide students with a foundation for study in sociology and the liberal arts.

Student Learning Outcomes

At the end of this semester, students will:

• demonstrate familiarity with the key concepts in classical Sociological theory and the historical context of their development.

• recognize many of the important theoretical tendencies in Sociology and the Social Sciences the sources of some of our most fundamental social and political questions.

• apply the methods of inquiry and analysis of sociological theories to address problems, answers questions, and construct arguments.

• apply a variety of reading practices, e.g., close reading, interpretation, skepticism, mapping, critique.

• demonstrate the ability to make an argument, develop a thesis and support it with well-reasoned argument and relevant evidence

• communicate arguments persuasively using oral and written communication.

• address awareness of reader or audience for their work.

Course Requirements and grading

Critical Response Question and Answer Paragraphs (35%)

Homework will take the form of critical response questions and answers of approximately a paragraph long each question with answer. The questions MUST be based on the text itself and must reference the specific section/s of the text that you are deriving your question/s from. Questions can include things that confused you in the text that you'd like clarification of and/or questions that you think the text raises about society. You need to cite the page and specific passage you are deriving your question from, i.e. the question should be specific and demonstrate that you've engaged with the text and have attempted to make sense of the reading
even if it was unclear to you, hence the basis of the question/s. You should also attempt to answer the questions you pose, even if you are unsure that you have a correct answer. Critical response question posts that do not demonstrate this clearly will not be accepted.

Examples of what this could look like include: "On page 5, Marx says "..." by this I think he means X…and also Y…but it was unclear because of Y so could you clarify?"

“Weber states on page 9 that labour is X. Does this still apply today since much work is Y? I think/don’t think so because of A(explanation)…B(explanation)…and C(explanation).” etc.

Late submissions will result in a deduction of points. It is your responsibility to let me know if you run into problems with completing your assignments on time. Gratuitous spelling and grammar mistakes will negatively affect your grade so do make sure that you edit your work before you post!

(*Note: Save your homework responses and back them up in a word document as to not lose your work. SAVE your word documents! It is your responsibility to complete your assignments on time and losing your homework because you neglected to back it up is not a valid excuse, i.e. BACK UP ALL YOUR WORK.)

**Participation (20%)**

This part of your grade will be based on how often you participate in class. This includes asking questions in class. The lowest grade for class participation will be given for poor attendance or for total lack of participation. The highest grade will be given for attending regularly, **bringing the printed reading assignment with you** and participating to advance class in response to the readings. Examples of contributions that advance the class discussion include: answering a question posed by me or another classmate, posing thoughtful questions, stating disagreement with the author/other students/myself and backing that position up with a solid argument. To participate in a thoughtful manner, you must support your opinions with textual references and be open to critique and/or disagreement. In addition, please critique or disagree with others in a respectful way; belittling comments directed to any person will not be tolerated. You should also be prepared to have something to say if I call on you. To fully participate in a class where the texts are instrumental to the class discussion and content, you must bring the readings to class. Failure to do so will result in a reduction of your participation grade and I may ask you to leave the class. An additional way to earn credit toward your participation grade is to look up words in the text you did not know and share the definitions with the class or in your writing. You are expected to be in class **ON TIME, 12:45pm**. Persistent absences or lateness will result in a reduction of your final grade consistent with the policies of the university and of the department of Sociology. More than 6 absences will result in an automatic F.

**(NOTE: Attendance is of paramount importance. If you know in advance that you have an obligation that you cannot get out of let me know ASAP. Too many absences will not only reflect poorly on your participation grade, but will put you at a disadvantage in terms of understanding the material and being prepared to effectively complete writing assignments. I am very thorough in covering the material during class so if you miss that class you also miss my coverage. Also, as has been my experience in previous semesters of teaching, we may fall behind**
the schedule as it may take more than one class to sufficiently cover a text. If this happens I will let you know, and if you miss a class it is your responsibility to contact myself or another classmate to make sure you know what will be covered for the coming class.

3 In Class Quizzes (25% total)

Final Essay (20%)

Academic Honesty

There is a wealth of secondary sources available in the library and on the internet, and students are welcome to consult these texts to aid their understanding. However, if you use another author’s ideas in your papers, you MUST cite the source. If you quote directly from an author (primary or secondary), you MUST put the text in quotes and cite the source. (This includes textbooks, encyclopedia entries, Wikipedia, anything on the internet, TV shows, and more.) Failure to do so will result in an automatic ‘F’ for the assignment. Also, any plagiarized material will result in an automatic ‘F’ for that assignment and possible academic discipline as stated by Hunter College policy. It is your responsibility to know if something is indeed plagiarism, and if you are unsure please ask me.

Grading Breakdown

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<tr>
<th>Quality Points</th>
<th>Grade Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>97.5 - 100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>92.5 - 97.4%</td>
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<td>A-</td>
<td>90.0 - 92.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87.5 - 89.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>82.5 - 87.4%</td>
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<td>B-</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
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<td>60.0 - 69.9%</td>
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<td>F</td>
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Class policies

*Cell phones must be turned off and stowed away during class.

* **NO Laptops, iPads, or Screens of any kind during class.** I you have any out during class I will ask you once to put it away. After that, if you take any out again you will lose credit for that class.

* You also still need to bring the reading materials with you in PRINTED form to class. Failure to do so will reflect negatively on your participation grade.

* If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to find out what happened from another student.
* I will respond to email within 24 hours. Please put the course title and your name in the subject line.

All class readings will be available online at [https://classicalsociologicaltheory.wordpress.com](https://classicalsociologicaltheory.wordpress.com).

Week 1:
- **T Jan 28** Introduction
- **F Jan 31** C Wright Mills. *The Sociological Imagination, Chap.1* “The Promise”

Week 2: **Karl Marx: Historical Materialism, Ideology and The Critique of Capitalist Social Relations**
- **T Feb 4** Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels “*On Alienation: Concerning the Production of Consciousness*” from “Images of Man” ed. C Wright Mills, p.486 – 496
- **F Feb 7** “*Concerning the Production of Consciousness*” Continued
  and
  
  “*Theses On Feuerbach*”

Week 3:
- **T Feb 11** Karl Marx. “*On Alienation: Estranged Labour*” from “Images of Man” ed. C Wright Mills, p.496 - 507
- **F Feb 14** Karl Marx. “*On Alienation: Estranged Labour*” from “Images of Man” ed. C Wright Mills, p.496 – 507 (Continued)

Week 4:
- **T Feb 18** Karl Marx. “*On Alienation: Estranged Labour*” from “Images of Man” ed. C Wright Mills, p.496 – 507 (Continued)
- **F Feb 21** Marx “Species-Being” *from “Estranged Labor”*

Week 5:
- **T Feb 25** Marx. Capital Vol. 1, “*Chap.1, Section 4: The Fetishism of the Commodity and the Secrete Thereof*” p. 163 -177
- **F Feb 28** *Fetishism*, continued
Week 6:

T March 3  Film Lecture: Rick Wolff *Capitalism Hits the Fan*

F March 6  **Max Weber: Religion, Belief and Rationalization in Modern Society**  
(Sociology as a Humanist Science)

Weber. Introduction to "The Foundations of Social Theory" in *Max Weber: Selections in Translation* p.3 – 6 (Value Free Sociology and *Ideal Types* as methodological tools for sociological analysis)

Week 7:

T March 10  Weber “Basic Sociological Terms” (Definition of Sociology and Social Action)

F March 13  Weber “Basic Sociological Terms” (The Ideal Types of Social Action and the definition of Social Relationships)

Week 8:

T March 17  Weber. “Power, and Domination” and “Political Organizations”

F March 20  Weber “Class, Status Groups and Parties”

Week 9:

T March 24  Weber “The Types of Legitimate Organization” from *Economy and Society*:

1. Domination and Legitimacy  (p.212 - 215)
2. The Three Pure Types of Authority  (p.215 - 216)
3. Legal Authority: The Pure Type  (p.217 - p.223)
4. Traditional Authority: The Pure Type  (p.226 - p.228)
5. Charismatic Authority (p.241 - 242.)


Week 10:

T March 31  Anthony Giddens “Introduction to *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*”
F April 3  Weber “Asceticism and The Spirit of Capitalism”, chap. V of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*

Week 11:

T April 7  NO CLASS
F April 10  SPRING BREAK

Week 12:

T April 14  SPRING BREAK
F April 17  Concluding Weber

Week 13:  **Emile Durkheim: Social Evolution and Sociology as the Science of Morality**

T April 21  Emile Durkheim “Social Facts” from *The Rules of Sociological*
F April 24  Robert Bellah’s “Introduction” to *Durkheim On Morality and Society* (1 -17)

Week 14:

T April 28  Bellah Continued (Durkheim on the Division of Labor in Society)
F May 1  Bellah Continued (Durkheim of Suicide and Anomie)

Week 15:

T May 5  Concluding Durkheim
F May 8  Review of Course Material in Preparation of the Final.

Week 16:

T May 12  Final Review

**ADA Policy** (Suggested language from the Office of AccessABILITY)

"In compliance with the American Disability Act of 1990 (ADA) and with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Hunter College is committed to ensuring educational parity and accommodations for all students with documented disabilities and/or medical conditions. It is recommended that all students with documented disabilities (Emotional, Medical, Physical, and/or Learning) consult the Office of AccessABILITY, located in Room E1214B, to secure necessary academic accommodations. For further information and assistance, please call: (212) 772-4857 or (212) 650-3230.”
**Hunter College Policy on Sexual Misconduct** (required on all syllabi by Senate resolution)

“In compliance with the CUNY Policy on Sexual Misconduct, Hunter College reaffirms the prohibition of any sexual misconduct, which includes sexual violence, sexual harassment, and gender-based harassment retaliation against students, employees, or visitors, as well as certain intimate relationships. Students who have experienced any form of sexual violence on or off campus (including CUNY-sponsored trips and events) are entitled to the rights outlined in the Bill of Rights for Hunter College.

a. Sexual Violence: Students are strongly encouraged to immediately report the incident by calling 911, contacting NYPD Special Victims Division Hotline (646-610-7272) or their local police precinct, or contacting the College’s Public Safety Office (212-772-4444).

b. All Other Forms of Sexual Misconduct: Students are also encouraged to contact the College's Title IX Campus Coordinator, Dean John Rose ([jtrose@hunter.cuny.edu](mailto:jtrose@hunter.cuny.edu) or 212-650-3262) or Colleen Barry ([colleen.barry@hunter.cuny.edu](mailto:colleen.barry@hunter.cuny.edu) or 212-772-4534) and seek complimentary services through the Counseling and Wellness Services Office, Hunter East 1123.

CUNY Policy on Sexual Misconduct Link: [http://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/la/Policy-on-Sexual-Misconduct-12-1-14-with-links.pdf](http://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/la/Policy-on-Sexual-Misconduct-12-1-14-with-links.pdf)

**Hunter College Policy on Academic Integrity** (required on all syllabi by Senate resolution)

“Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. The College is committed to enforcing the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures.”

Related to the issue of plagiarism, please be very clear about ewhat you consider plagiarism and discuss with students websites and sources you dod not want them using. Here is some Hunter guidelines [http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/ttlg/toolbox/plagiarism-prevention](http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/ttlg/toolbox/plagiarism-prevention) If you want to penalize a student for academic dishonesty, you must refer them to Office of Academic Integrity, which may result in their expulsion so you may want to contact the Sociology office before doing so. [http://http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/studentaffairs/student-conduct/academic-integrity](http://http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/studentaffairs/student-conduct/academic-integrity)