

Sociology 6050  
**Sociological Theory Before 1920**

Professor David Fasenfest

Section 001, CR#

Winter 2016

Monday, 5:30-9:20pm

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A Worker Reads History by Bertolt Brecht (1936)

*Who built the seven gates of Thebes?  
The books are filled with names of kings.  
Was it the kings who hauled the craggy blocks of stone?  
And Babylon, so many times destroyed.  
Who built the city up each time? In which of Lima's houses,  
that city glittering with gold, lived those who built it?  
In the evening when the Chinese wall was finished  
where did the masons go? Imperial Rome  
Is full of arcs of triumph. Who reared them up? Over whom  
did the Caesars triumph? Byzantium lives in song.  
Were all her dwellings palaces? And even in Atlantis of the legend  
the night the seas rushed in,  
the drowning men still bellowed for their slaves.  
Young Alexander conquered India.  
He alone?  
Caesar beat the Gauls.  
Was there not even a cook in his army?  
Phillip of Spain wept as his fleet  
was sunk and destroyed. Were there no other tears?  
Frederick the Great triumphed in the Seven Years War.  
Who triumphed with him?  
Each page a victory,  
at whose expense the victory ball?  
Every ten years a great man,  
who paid the piper?  
So many particulars.  
So many questions.*

By “political” I mean having to do with power: who’s got it, who wants it, how it operates; in a word, who’s allowed to do what to whom, who gets what from whom, who gets away with it and how.

Margret Atwood

*Second Words: Selected Critical Prose 1960-1982* (1995, p. 353)

## **COURSE OVERVIEW**

What is theory, why do we need it, what does it do? These are core questions everyone asks as they begin the journey of intellectual inquiry. Why do we need to know about theories that are so old, that do not seem to be current?

Second, we have to ask, what does it mean to be a “sociologist” as a way of identifying ourselves and how we go about exploring and understanding society in all its micro- and macro-dimensions? Furthermore, what informs our “understanding” and the way we get to it?

To answer the first set of questions, we have to consider that theory is a tool we use to construct a model of how society operates. Assessing patterns in society, theories are used a) to anticipate how society functions under different situations, and b) to provide a frame of reference from which to investigate social relationship (in theories with a grand scale using large numbers in big places on one hand, or theories focusing on micro interactions of individuals in close interaction). In this course we will focus on how to understand both the antecedents of contemporary theory, and focus on the more macro aspects of social organization. Theory is important as we make implicit and explicit choices about what we study, how we collect data, and formulate the relationships or mechanisms constraining or promoting social actions and outcomes. Theories are implicit in all we do. By making an *a priori*, but theoretically informed, choice (whether we know it or not), we go about deciding what is “evidence” and then collect data to assess our assumptions (analysis of data is not the focus of this course).

This course is designed to reflect upon a range of core sociological theories that have driven the development of contemporary theories. Identifying traditions underlying contemporary theory helps us to adjudicate when we are faced with contradiction or oppositional explanations.

Consider the following pair of statements:

- 1) You are poor because you are powerless.
- 2) You are powerless because you are poor.

On first glance one can ask “so what?” and assume this is just semantics; what difference does the order of these words make? Be prepared to discuss these two statements in class at our first meeting. Be prepared to argue about the statements’ differences, and why they are important.

## **COURSE ORGANIZATION**

There is no way to avoid reading, lots of reading. Furthermore, there is no point in coming to the lectures unprepared. Each class will begin with a review of readings, posing and answering questions about the readings and discussing past lectures. Each class will be a discussion and an integration of the readings placed into the larger theoretical frame of the author being studied.

This is a theory course and you will be expected to read (I can't say this too often!). The course books are listed below, and the order of assigned readings is detailed in the schedule of classes at the end. Most of the required texts will be available as a PDF on Blackboard. There is, therefore, no excuse for not reading for class. The book for your final essay has been ordered. Books are readily available from Amazon or other online sources, if you want to own your own copy.

The weekly class discussions will be based on the required readings by the theorists (read in advance of the class meeting), and occasionally, on your critical essays provided electronically (by 5pm on the due date). Note: I have assigned only the excerpts by the core theorists. You may find the "modern" essays useful understanding what those theorists have to say. For a full understanding of the theoretical foundations of contemporary sociology you should read these theorists in their entirety. Required readings form the basis of our class discussion and your assignments throughout the semester. The recommended readings should be part of your professional library, and will certainly be useful as you prepare for more advanced courses.

I strongly recommend that you find a way of working in groups—how many in a group is a personal preference. Group participation should be monitored by all the members of the group...that is, how to deal with free loaders who come unprepared is up to you. I have been in groups that have been completely generous and others that have expelled participants for not contributing (and a contribution can take many forms—you decide). Group discussions will help as you struggle with the weekly readings, and as you make your way through the final paper. Groups are useful throughout your career. However, make sure your work is your own.

**Required** (Those titles available as a PDF on Blackboard are indicated with \* below)

- \*Antonio, Robert J. (ed.), *Marx and Modernity, Key Readings and Commentary*
- \*Emirbayer, Mustafa (ed.), *Emile Durkheim, Sociologist of Modernity*
- \*Kahlberg, Stephen (ed.), *Max Weber. Readings and Commentary on Modernity*
- \*Du Bois, W.E.B. Souls of White Folks, in *Dark-Voices from Within the Veil*
- \*Du Bois, W.E.B. *The Philadelphia Negro*
- \*Du Bois, W.E.B. *Black Reconstruction*
- \*Durkheim, Emile, *The Division of Labor in Society*
- \*Durkheim, Emile *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*
- \*Engels, Frederick, *The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State.*
- \*Marx, Karl, *The Civil War in France*
- \*Marx, Karl, *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*
- Morris, Aldon, *The Scholar Denied*
- \*Robinson, Cedric J., *Black Marxism*
- \*Tawney, R. H., *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*
- \*Weber, Max, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*

**Required for the final paper** (Available on campus, perhaps cheaper if ordered online):

Fanon, Franz, 1963 [2004] *Wretched of the Earth*, New York, NY: Grove Atlantic  
ISBN 0802141323

## **Highly Recommended**

Arendt, Hannah *Origins of Totalitarianism*  
Cox, Oliver *Caste, Class and Race*  
Du Bois, W.E.B. *Black reconstruction in America*  
Durkheim, Emile *Rules of Sociological Method*  
Durkheim, Emile, *Suicide, a Study in Sociology*  
Heinrich, Michael, *An Introduction to the Three Volumes of Karl Marx's Capital*  
Marx, Karl *Introduction to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*  
Marx, Karl *Capital (3 vols)*  
Marx, Karl *Grundrisse*  
Marx, Karl *Civil War in France*  
Marx, Karl *Economic and Philisophic Manuscripts, 1844*  
Marx, Karl and Fredrick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*  
Pearce, Frank *The Radical Durkheim*  
Weber, Max 1998 *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*  
Weber, Max *Economy and Society (2 vols)*  
Weber, Max *Theory of Social and Economic Organization*

## **COMMUNICATION**

All course information will be broadcast via the Internet, and posted on Blackboard. I will post any notices, revisions to this syllabus, supplemental material and other information in the Content section of the course's Blackboard.

## **GRADING**

Your final grade: participation (25%), critical essays (25%), and a final paper (50%).

Participation: I expect you to come to class prepared to participate in this seminar. There is no "attendance" policy (nor do I require that you give me an excuse when absent). If absent, you are expected to catch up on your own, and come prepared the following week. You must be ready to engage in class discussions and demonstrate your understanding of (or questions about) the reading and concepts presented. All will get full points for participation unless there is a consistent pattern of missed classes, or if you routinely come to class unprepared to discuss that week's readings. I do not "repeat" lectures during office hours, though I am happy to answer any particular question you might have about material from a class you did not attend. As graduate students I assume everyone will participate and receive full credit.

Short Essays: You will be asked to write 3 essays, each between 3-5 pages. The essay is a critical engagement with the main theorist covered in the module—that means you are to elaborate on some aspect of the readings as it relates to the comments posed. Assignments, due dates and instructions follow at the end of this syllabus. I will count a composite of your grades on the three essay assignments (weighting later essays heavier to reflect an upward trend).

Final Paper: Your final paper, roughly 10-12 pages, will be a critical discussion of Franz Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*, in which you will offer the following: a) provide a statement of Fanon's central thesis, and b) identify how his work has been influenced (implicitly or explicitly) by each of the main theorists we covered this semester. As a graduate seminar paper, you should rely on secondary analysis and readings from a literature review. You will not find obvious acknowledgement by Fanon pointing to one or the other of these theoretical traditions. However, there are clear threads in his arguments you may pick up as you contemplate Fanon's major work.

This is a seminar paper, and so you should begin thinking about the assignment early in the semester. To help motivate you and move your project forward, you are to submit an outline of your paper along with a list of supplemental readings that you will engage as you craft your paper. You don't need to list the assigned readings for the course—that is self-evident. Rather, you should indicate a range of works (by Fanon, analyses of Fanon's work, works by others) that you expect to consult as you craft your analysis. This is due as an email attachment no later than **March 11<sup>th</sup>** by 5pm. I will hold consultations on March 7<sup>th</sup> with each of you to discuss where you are going with that paper, and I am willing to look at your outline sooner if you are making good progress.

You can submit a draft of your final paper by **April 22<sup>nd</sup>**, and I will offer a provisional grade for both the paper and the course; my comments will indicate strengths and weaknesses of your draft. That permits time for you to make any revisions by the May 2<sup>nd</sup> deadline. Two caveats: 1) there is **no guarantee** a revision will improve your grade for the course, and 2) there can be **no extension** to submit a draft for preview. You can choose to accept the provisional grade for the paper and course. Of course, you can submit your final paper at any time up to the deadline.

Grading Criteria: Finally, let me explain my grading scheme. It is necessarily subjective, and as such I am always willing to listen to an appeal. But it is, in the end, my decision. Your final grade will be based on the composite of your performance throughout the semester.

**“A” level work** consists of cogent, well-articulated, and well-developed written presentation, demonstrating insight, originality, and complexity in both form (e.g., language, expression, organization) and substance (e.g., logical argumentation, factual accuracy, and appropriate examples); critical thinking skills are amply demonstrated; sociological imagination is highly active; tasks are completed on time and according to the guidelines, often going “above and beyond”. “A” level work is considered excellent.

**“A-/B+” level work** is thoughtful and developed, but may not be completely original, particularly insightful, or precise. While ideas might be clear, focused, and organized, they are less likely to be comprehensive or dialectical. Critical thinking skills are satisfactory; sociological imagination is active. “A-” level work is considered good and shows some originality. “B+” work is still good, but only goes a little beyond the most basic grasp of concepts and ideas, though with satisfactory levels of communication. This is my most common grade range as you begin your theoretical exploration.

**“B” level work** is reasonably competent, yet may be unclear, inconsistent, and minimally inadequate in form and/or content. Critical thinking skills are minimal; sociological imagination is weak. “B” level work is considered mediocre and barely adequate. Keep in mind that you must get at least a “B” in any one graduate course for a passing grade, and that your overall average in graduate courses has to be better than “B” (so you can’t survive on only getting this grade during your academic career). This grade reflects my concerns about your overall grasp of the material and ability to convey it effectively.

**“B-” level work** is not competent, appropriate, relevant, complete, and/or adequate in form and/or content, thereby not fully meeting the minimum requirements for graduate level work. Critical thinking skills are largely absent; and one’s sociological imagination is lacking. “B-” final grade is not a passing grade at the graduate level, and will require you to retake this course. I generally do not give a grade lower than “B-” to graduates.

**“WN/P/F”** is only given when you withdraw from the course. “WN” is given when no work was done—and I encourage you to quickly withdraw to get a refund if you feel you can’t manage this class. “P” is given when you have completed all work to date in a satisfactory manner but must withdraw from the course (I do not require an explanation from you). “F” is given when you decide to withdraw and you have not been up-to-date with the readings and assignments at the time of your request. Students initiate all requests for withdrawal; please pay attention to the Registrar’s withdrawal deadlines.

## ODDS and ENDS

*...the writer must distinguish between what a particular author says and what he believes he says. This applies even to philosophical systems--what Spinoza considered the cornerstone of his system, namely, that what he thinks and what really is are two different things entirely--Marx to Kovalevsky, April 1879*

*I have only to look at something, anything, and it can instantly give me an idea. Whether a face, an object, or an event, it can immediately suggest a shape to create, in painting, in photography, in sculpture...it isn't a document, it isn't the direct impression of this object or this event, it is the result of this impression, which immediately gushes out.—Man Ray, Interview with Pierre Bourgeade, Paris 1972*

- 1) Writing matters for several reasons. First, it is the way you communicate with the discipline; poor writing will never make it into print. If you have problems with writing there are support systems available to you at WSU (see <http://clas.wayne.edu/writing>). Second, it is not the reader’s responsibility to interpret what you meant; if it is not said coherently it is likely you will not convey your argument well. I will not grade down for writing per se, but, from past experience, poorly written papers generally receive a lower grade at the end of the day. To improve your writing, work in groups and critique each other’s work—something that you will always need.
- 2) Writing is difficult, and writing for publication is central to your existence as a “professional” sociologist. An interesting approach/take can be found at: <https://vimeo.com/110580463>

### 3) FAQ on Plagiarism

The rules are clear: Nothing may be copied from books, articles, websites and other materials written by others UNLESS you give the author (creator) of the idea the credit that is due him or her.

\* *What is plagiarism?* Plagiarism is copying words and ideas and passing them off as your own creation.

\* *What constitutes copying?* Copying is writing down, word for word, something you read, written by someone else. Copying is stringing together bits and pieces from published sources to create a paragraph that reads as if you wrote it yourself.

\* *When can a researcher copy?* Copying is allowed if the researcher indicates she has copied the words. This takes the form of a direct quote, for example: **Jensen argues, “Only one objective function can be maximized by managers” (Jensen, 2001, p.45).**

\* *What if I don’t copy the words, just the idea? Do I still need to reference the original work?* When you put someone else’s idea into your own words, you are paraphrasing the idea. You MUST reference the creator of the ideas. This takes the following form: **According to Jensen (2001) there is less moral hazard if managers have only one objective function to maximize.**

\* *What is the best way to reference where I got the idea?* There are many books on the subject. An easy guide is provided by the articles you read; while there are small differences in ‘styles’, all published research articles will follow the rules on referencing; follow their lead.

\* *If everything I write is taken from something I have read, won’t I have a reference after every sentence?* Yes. This is good. It demonstrates you understand the rules. It also demonstrates that you have not done much original thinking. In that case, start doing some original thinking.

The central rule of scholarly work is that individual authors are given credit for any ideas they have communicated in written form, (e.g. published in books, articles, newspaper articles and working papers). There are many STYLES for assigning credit but all of them will allow the reader to know who wrote the idea and where you (the author) found it (e.g. the citation or reference).

When you submit your work for assessment, you give your word that what you have written is your own work EXCEPT for any statements or ideas that are attributed to another author (e.g. citation or reference to another author).

Departmental, College and University rules and requirements with regard to plagiarism and falsification of work will apply. They will govern any action I will take, and outline any rights and responsibilities you may have. All references (whether you quote directly or paraphrase) and a list of works must be cited. Those that fail to observe a recognized citation convention will receive an F for the assignment. **Failure to acknowledge the source of one’s ideas, or to indicate paraphrases, ideas, or verbatim expressions not one’s own through proper use of quotations and footnotes constitutes plagiarism (intentional or otherwise), which is a form of academic dishonesty.**

- 4) Submit your assignments and papers to me as attachments via email. The filename should include your last name and which assignment (e.g. “Smith Essay1, Jones Essay2, etc), and make sure your name appears on top of the first page of any response (no special title page is required).
- 5) **Late assignments will be graded but will not receive written comments. No late final is allowed.**
- 6) “Pages” mean double spaced, 12 pitch fonts, with no less than 1” and no more than 1.25” margins. Use Arial or New Times Roman 12 point only; a page consists on average of 250 words.
- 7) As a rule, collected readers of any theorist summarize and excerpt their work, but it is a mistake to rely on another’s interpretation of the original texts. Summaries by others provide you with an interpretation of the work; but you won’t develop your own understanding or interpretation.
- 8) In my experience you will learn more from each other than you will just from my lectures. As a result, I encourage and facilitate the formation of study and reading groups. As scholars we learn to draw a line between exchanging ideas and getting feedback on one hand, and copying or taking the ideas of others. Use the group to discuss readings, get reactions to what you are writing, and help formulate your questions for me. In the end you have to do your own work!
- 9) **THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A BAD OR INAPPROPRIATE QUESTION!** If you have a question and do not ask, I cannot know you are confused. If you are uncertain about any question, ask it—if I think it should be addressed outside of class I will tell you. Perhaps not so obvious, it is hard to ask questions if you don’t read the material beforehand.
- 10) All reading should be completed **prior** to the corresponding class meeting for maximum benefit and the best use of our time in class. It is much harder, after the fact, to read the material and, on your own, figure out what is going on. I do not repeat lectures. Come to class prepared. And consider that most things require two readings—the first time to get a general sense of what was being presented, the second time after discussion to more fully comprehend the material.
- 11) Consider the recommended reading as more than just a suggestion. This is just the tip of the proverbial iceberg. While some of you might choose to supplement your readings with the many excerpts and collected works, there is no substitute for reading the original text. [These theorists wrote in either German or French—many translations exist, some better than others. There is a benefit to reading in the original language.]
- 12) At the end of the day, this course is guided by the idea that theory is a tool, much like your methods and statistics courses. Therefore, it is up to you to learn how to use the tool wisely and when to apply it. And just as there are different methods to be used according to the kind of problem examined (requiring you to decide on the appropriate method) so too are there different levels of theory, and you must assess which level and what focus is required for your purposes. This course is an introduction to theory and consequently somewhat of a survey course...it is now up to you to pursue your studies in other courses and seminars, and to focus your inquiry into specialized theories rooted in each of the theoretical traditions we have explored.

## SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

<u>WEEK</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>READING</u>
Jan 11	Introduction: What is Theory and Why We Should Care?	
Jan 25	Karl Marx	<i>Marx and Modernity</i> (Parts 1-4)
Feb 1	Karl Marx	<i>Marx and Modernity</i> (Parts 5-8)
Feb 8	Emile Durkheim	<i>Emile Durkheim, Sociologist of Modernity</i> (Durkheim selections in Parts I and II) <b>Essay 1 due</b>
Feb 15	Emile Durkheim	<i>Emile Durkheim, Sociologist of Modernity</i> (Durkheim selections in Parts III, IV and Appendix)
Feb 22	Max Weber	<i>Max Weber, Readings and Commentary on Modernity:</i> (Chapters 1, 2, 4, 5, 8) <b>Essay 2 due</b>
Feb 29	Max Weber	<i>Max Weber, Readings and Commentary on Modernity:</i> (Chapters 11-20)
Mar 7	Scheduled Office Meetings and Consultations, Monday (Final Paper Outlines Due Mar 11 5pm) <b>Essay 3 due</b>	
Mar 14	<b>Spring Break</b>	
Mar 21	W.E.B. Dubois	Morris, <i>The Scholar Denied</i> Du Bois, <i>Souls of White Folk</i>
Mar 28	W.E.B. Dubois	Robinson, <i>Black Marxism, Parts I and III</i> Du Bois, <i>Black Reconstruction Chapters 1 &amp; 2</i> Du Bois, <i>The Philadelphia Negro</i>
Apr 4	Scheduled Office Meetings and Consultations, Monday	
Apr 11	Religion and Social Organization	Weber, <i>The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism</i> Tawney, <i>Religion and the Rise of Capitalism</i> Durkheim, <i>Elementary Forms of Religious Life</i>
Apr 18	Class Structure and the State	Engels, <i>The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State</i> Marx, <i>Civil War in France</i> Marx, <i>Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte</i> Durkheim, <i>Division of Labor in Society, Chapters 1-3</i>
Apr 22	<b>(Optional: Draft final papers for preview due by 5pm)</b>	
May 2	<b>FINAL PAPER DUE (5pm as email attachment)</b>	

## ESSAY ASSIGNMENTS

### I. Due: February 8: Marx (750-1250 words maximum)

Sociological theory was born from philosophy, so we begin with the German philosopher, Karl Marx. Marx helped frame the “problem” of our science and all subsequent social theory had to contend with Marx and Marxism. Marx sees history as the perpetual conflict between contending social groups, strata and classes. Marx’s theory of history applies the “transition” from feudal society to the capitalist mode of production.

**Some Key Terms:** *mode of production, means of production, class struggle, capitalism, feudalism, bourgeoisie, proletariat, ideology, conflict theory, social relations*

### II. Due: February 22: Durkheim (750-1250 words maximum)

Durkheim was the first semiotic sociologist. He studied the life of symbols in society and the power of language over the human mind. Examine the differences and similarities between “science” and “religion.”, and the way society “marks” its members, through totems, tattoos, and various symbols of social life. For Durkheim, the human being is a “sign” in his theorizing about social development and transition.

**Some Key Terms:** *conscience collectif, social fact, organic solidarity, mechanical solidarity, moral society*

### III. Due March 7: Weber (750-1250 words maximum)

We concluded our study of Marx with an examination of the theory that all ideas or ideologies are the result of economic forces and transformations (the “base-superstructure” model). The German sociologist, Max Weber, uses his study of the relationship between the Protestant religions and the origin of modern capitalism to criticize and revise this Marxian theory of history. Max Weber’s tells a story about the emergence of capitalism within a single community, and then its extension across the globe. Capitalism, as a new social movement for liberation, ends up with the “iron cage” of bureaucracy.

**Some Key Terms:** *protestant ethic, predestination, charisma, rationalization, bureaucracy, iron cage, power, authoritarianism*