SOC 22400: Sociological Theory

Institution: CUNY-Hunter College
Semester: Fall 2025

Department: Sociology
Class: 4089
Section: 03-LEC Regular
Time: Monday/Thursday, 2:30-3:45 PM
Location: North Building, C113

Instructor: Adam Koehler Brown
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Office Hours: Monday/Thursday, 1:00-2:15 PM, 16th floor, Adjunct Office. Also, by appointment.

Course Description: This course is an undergraduate introduction to sociological theory. Students will learn how to read, write about, and speak about the major theoretical traditions in the discipline of sociology. We will begin with six 'classical' theorists: Karl Marx, Max Weber, Émile Durkheim, Sigmund Freud, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Georg Simmel. We will then move to a number of 'contemporary' theorists, including Pierre Bourdieu, Theodor Adorno, Orlando Patterson, and Erving Goffman. We will discuss economics, politics, culture, identity, social interaction, violence, sexuality, and more. This is a 'Writing Intensive' course.

Session 1 (August 28th): Syllabus
No class September 1st (Labor Day)
Session 2 (September 4th): Marx 1/3
Session 3 (September 8th): Marx 2/3
Session 4 (September 11th): Marx 3/3
Session 5 (September 15th): Weber 1/3
Session 6 (September 18th): Weber 2/3
No class September 22nd (Rosh Hashanah)
Session 7 (September 25th): Weber 3/3
Session 8 (September 29th): Durkheim 1/2
No class October 2nd (Yom Kippur)
Session 9 (October 6th): Durkheim 2/2
Session 10 (October 9th): Freud 1/2
No class October 13th (Indigenous Peoples' Day)
No class October 14th (Hunter schedule change)
Session 11 (October 16th): Freud 2/2, Paper #1 due
No class October 20th (Diwali)
Session 12 (October 23rd): Du Bois 1/2
No class October 24th (Hunter schedule change)
Session 13 (October 27th): Du Bois 2/2
Session 14 (October 30th): Simmel
Session 15 (November 3rd): Foucault
Session 16 (November 6th): Adorno & Habermas
Session 17 (November 10th): Benjamin, Paper #2 due
Session 18 (November 13th): Geertz
Session 19 (November 17th): Goffman
No class November 20th (Adam's Workshop)
Session 20 (November 24th): Bourdieu
No class November 27th (Thanksgiving)
Session 21 (December 1st): Zerubavel & Wagner-Pacifici*
Session 22 (December 4th): West & Zimmerman
Session 23 (December 8th): de Beauvoir & Crenshaw **Session 24** (December 11th): Patterson & Fanon
Session 25 (December 15th): Semester in Review, Paper #3 due, Final Commentary check

Classroom Rules: I expect everyone to get to class on time, be present, and be ready to engage with the material during class. I have a strict no phones or headphones policy. I do not allow the use of AI in the classroom, and especially not in the reading and writing process.

Readings: This class has a heavy reading list. I expect all students to read and take notes on each reading before class. I do not expect full mastery of the text. Rather, I want you to come to class with interpretations and questions. I have taken the effort to select only the most important readings for our limited time together. This means that we will be reading a lot of excerpts. These selections may throw you into the thick of a text without warning, or they may provide you an introduction or conclusion without the intermediary chapters. It is your job to make your way through the text, working through difficult concepts and unfamiliar references. Students do not need to buy any materials for this course. I strongly recommend that you print and annotate each reading.

- **Marx 1/3:** "Marx on the History of His Opinions" (Tucker's *Marx-Engels Reader*)
- **Marx 2/3:** "Theses on Feuerbach", "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844", "The German Ideology" (Tucker's *Marx-Engels Reader*)
- **Marx 3/3:** "Society and Economy in History", "Manifesto of the Communist Party" (Tucker's *Marx-Engels Reader*), "Capital: The Commodity", "Capital – Relative Surplus Value" (*Capital*)
- **Weber 1/3:** "Basic Sociological Terms" (*Economy and Society*)
- **Weber 2/3:** *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Entire Text)
- **Weber 3/3:** "Politics as a Vocation" (*The Vocation Lectures*), "The Distribution of Power Within the Political Community: Class, Status, Party" (*Economy and Society*)
- **Durkheim 1/2:** "Excerpts from *The Division of Labor in Society*" and "Excerpts from *Suicide*" (Emirbayer's *Emile Durkheim: Sociologist of Modernity*)
- **Durkheim 2/2:** "Introduction" and "Origins of These Beliefs (Conclusion)" (*The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*)
- **Freud 1/2:** "An Outline of Psychoanalysis" (Entire Text) and *Five Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (Entire Text)
- **Freud 2/2:** "Mourning and Melancholia" (Entire Text), "Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego – Identification" (*Group Psychology*), "Civilization and its Discontents - Ch. 7" (*Civilization and its Discontents*)
- **Du Bois 1/2:** "The Souls of Black Folk – Ch. 1, 4, 14" (*The Souls of Black Folk*)
- **Du Bois 2/2:** "Black Reconstruction – Ch. 9, 16" (*Black Reconstruction*), "The Negro and the Warsaw Ghetto" (Entire Text)
- **Simmel:** "The Metropolis and Mental Life" and "The Stranger" (Entire Texts)
- **Foucault:** "Discipline and Punish – Ch. 1.1 and 3.3." (*Discipline and Punish*) and "The History of Sexuality – Part 5" (*History of Sexuality*)
- **Adorno & Habermas:** "Dialectic of Enlightenment – Ch. 1, 4" (*Dialectic of Enlightenment*), "Minima Moralia – Refuge for the Homeless" (*Minima Moralia*), "Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere – Part 2" (*The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*), and *A New Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Entire Text)

- **Benjamin:** "Illuminations – Unpacking My Library", "Illuminations – The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", and "Illuminations – Theses on the Philosophy of History" (*Illuminations*)
- **Geertz:** "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight" and "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture" (Entire Texts)
- **Goffman:** *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Entire Text)
- **Bourdieu:** "Distinction – Introduction, Ch. 3" (*Distinction*) and "Forms of Capital" (Entire Text)
- **Zerubavel & Wagner-Pacifici:** "The French Republican Calendar" and "Theorizing the Restlessness of Events" (Entire Texts)
- **West & Zimmerman:** "Doing Gender" (Entire Text)
- **De Beauvoir & Crenshaw:** "Second Sex – Introduction" (*Second Sex*) and "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex" (Entire Text)
- **Patterson & Fanon:** "Slavery and Social Death – Introduction" (*Slavery and Social Death*), "Wretched of the Earth – Ch. 1" (*Wretched of the Earth*), and *Black Skin White Masks* (Entire Text)

Grading: Participation (10%); Commentaries (18%); Paper 1 (20%); Paper 2 (20%); Paper 3 (32%)

- **Note:** All assignments should be submitted online and written in 12pt Times New Roman with double-spaced, standard 1-inch margins, any citation style (ASA preferred). All assignments are due <u>before</u> class begins.
- **Participation:** Come to class, listen to the lecture, ask questions, and engage in group activities. Students will be rewarded for active participation.
- **Commentaries:** Six 250-word reflections on *any part* of six *different* readings across the semester. I am looking for initial thoughts, criticisms, and questions. Commentaries must be submitted *before* the lecture on the referenced reading.
- **Paper #1:** 6 pages. Choose 2 of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim. Pages 1 and 2 should summarize (at least one of) Theorist #1's arguments. Use at least one quote, interpret it in your own words, and use your own examples. Pages 3 and 4 should repeat this process for Theorist #2. Pages 5 and 6 should compare and contrast these two summarized arguments and explain why they matter. Students should conclude with their own personal thoughts on the two theorists. I reward originality and creativity. Do <u>not</u> bring in texts outside the syllabus.
    - Example Topics: Marx and Weber on 'class'; Weber and Durkheim on 'religion'; Durkheim and Marx on 'social solidarity'.
- **Paper #2:** 6 pages. Choose 2 of Freud, Du Bois, and Simmel. Follows Paper #1 instructions.
    - Example Topics: Freud and Du Bois on 'the mind'; Du Bois and Simmel on 'otherness'; Simmel and Freud on 'love'.

- **Paper #3:** 8 pages. Choose 3 'Contemporary Theorists' (Foucault through Fanon). Pages 1 and 2 should summarize (at least one of) Theorist #1's arguments. Pages 3 and 4 should summarize (at least one of) Theorist #2's arguments. Pages 5 and 6 should summarize (at least one of) Theorist #3's arguments. Each of these should follow the instructions from Paper #1. Pages 7 and 8 should compare and contrast these three summarized arguments, again following the instructions from Paper #1. Students are strongly encouraged to reference the classic theorists (Marx through Simmel) throughout the paper.
    - Example Topics: Foucault, Adorno, and Zerubavel on 'politics'; Benjamin, Geertz, and Goffman on 'culture'; West & Zimmerman, Crenshaw, and Patterson on 'identity'.

Learning Outcomes (Hunter): Students will be able to understand and apply basic concepts in sociology such as power, culture, the sociological imagination, social change, socialization, stratification, social structure, and social institutions and the theoretical perspectives used to understand them. Students will be able to identify and analyze the influences of social structure on individuals and groups (based on age, religion, gender and sexuality, race and ethnicity, class, and economic inequality), and the effects of individual thought and behavior on society. Students will be able to identify, analyze, and critique sociological arguments in research papers and monographs and be able to discuss their primary claims, strengths, and weaknesses. Students will be able to identify major sociological theories; compare and contrast the underlying assumptions of those theories; and apply those theories to social phenomena. Students will be able to construct a sociological argument orally and in writing.

Statements (Hunter): Hunter College Policy on Academic Integrity "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 [?]. Hunter College Policy on Sexual Misconduct "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 or 212-650-3262) or Colleen Barry (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: https://www.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/si ADA Policy "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."