**DEVELOPMENT of SOCIAL THOUGHT AND** **CLASSICAL SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY**

**DESCRIPTION:**

This course introduces some of the “classical” theoretical traditions that have guided sociological work. We will read and discuss selections from theorists whose works have shaped the discipline. Those considered will include De Tocqueville, Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Simmel, Mead, Parsons, and Goffman. To the extent possible, we will place these authors’ contributions in their historical contexts; although we can only skim the surface of social thought's rich history. We will focus on the analytical assumptions and implications of each theoretical approach.

Sociological theories try to render the social world understandable. They are logical apparatuses with empirical implications. We will explore both how to grasp the internal logic of a theory and how that theory applies to real social processes and to history. We will also try to improve students' analytical and writing skills.

General Background (Optional):  Giddens and Turner *Social Theory Today*

**Grade breakup:**

Class participation and attendance 10%

Quizzes 20%

Mid-term exam 30%

Final Exam 40%

Week 1 **Introduction.**

Enlightenment and Precursors. What is a theory? (Background reading: Craig Calhoun's “Introduction” to the reader *Classical Sociological Theory*, ed. Calhoun, Gerteis, Moody, Pfaff, Schmidt, and Virk)

Week 2 **Alexis de Tocqueville**.

*Democracy in America* (Required: Volume 1, Part 1, Chaps. 3, 4; Part 2, Chaps. 3, 4, 6-9; Volume 2, Parts 2 and 4;. Read what you can of the rest.). The causes and consequences of democratic political organization. Writing assignment: Prepare an analysis of the theoretical logic as described separately.

Week **3 Max Weber**.

*The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. What is the relationship between religious and economic organization?

     "Class, Status, & Party" and "Bureaucracy". These may be found in *Economy and Society* (Roth & Wittich, eds.; Vol. 2, Ch. IX, Sect. 6 & Ch. XI) or *From Max Weber* (Gerth & Mills, eds.) How does power and authority become organized in modern societies?

 Week 3-4 **Karl Marx**.

*The Marx-Engels Reader*. [read in order] Pp. 3-6, 136-142, 16-125, 143-145, 148-188, 473-483, 594-617, 665-676, 525-541. Marx's broad theoretical agenda and political theory. Pp. 203-217, 294-465, 683-717. Marx's specific theory of capitalism.

 Week 5 **Retrospective**.   
 Comparative reappraisal of Weber and Marx

Week 6-7    **Emile Durkheim**.

*Suicide* (focus on "anomic" suicide) & *Rules of the Sociological Method* (focus on first three chapters). How does social organization systematically influence moral choice and individual actions? How should we apprehend social insights?

*Division of Labor* (focus on Chs. 2 & 3 of Book 1, peruse the detailed table of contents, skim rest as appropriate) and *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (focus on introduction and conclusion). What cement unifies societies under different evolutionary conditions? How does religious belief reflect social organization?

*Week 8 Mid Term Exam*

Week 9    **Generalizations**.   
 Generalizations derived from Weber, Durkheim, and Marx.

Week 10-11     **Georg Simmel**.

*Georg Simmel on Individuality and Social Forms* (Levine, ed.) Introduction & Chs. 1-3, 5-6, 18, 20, 22, 24. A neo-Kantian theory stress the form-content distinction and the relationship between individuals and social structure.

Week 12-13    **George Herbert Mead**.

*Mind, Self, & Society* Chs. 17-42. Symbolic interaction--self and society construct each other.

Week 14-15   **Talcott Parsons**.

:  *Toward a General Theory of Action*; Neil Smelser, *The Theory of Collective Behavior*, Introduction. Systematic functionalism.

**Week 16 Final Exam or final research paper**