

**Classical Social Theory**  
**MWF 2:10 – 3:00 pm**  
**Room SS344**

**Instructor: Amit Kapoor**  
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**Office: SS 319**  
**Hours: M-W 11:00am to 1:00pm, and by appointment**

**Teaching Assistant**  
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**Office SS332**  
**Office hours: 2:15pm to 3ish TTH**

## **I. Course Objectives**

### Description:

This course provides an introduction to the sociological theory and explores how sociological theory can be used to examine human nature, human society, and human problems. The goal of this class will be to use classical sociological theory in two ways: 1) to gain an understanding of classical theory itself in its original historical-cultural context, and 2) to examine the substance of classical theory in the contemporary social context. The focus of the class will be on science, ideas, dialog, and critical analysis.

In this course we will work together to examine the works of various theorists. We will consider some of the major theoretical ideas that have been advanced in the last two hundred years in the context of empirical, historical, and critical research.

### Expectations:

My expectations of students are to: 1) learn key concepts; 2) be able to apply concepts in class discussion and in student work; 3) think critically and analytically about how these concepts relate to you and others; 4) treat everyone in class (including me) with professional respect and courtesy; 5) be honest and honorable in fulfilling all course work; and 6) refrain from engaging in rude or disruptive behavior, this also means not using cell phones, etc. during class.

## **II. Grading:**

Your course grade will be determined by the following: 1) two exams worth 100 points each; 2) group presentations, including individual paper, worth 50 points total (WARNING danger ahead); 3) in-class exercises worth 50 points.

I will also give students extra points for participation. Participation does not mean merely stating something. I look for participation that shows active engagement with the lecture and reading materials.

**Exam dates:**

The exams will focus on lecture materials, class discussions, and the readings. Exam dates may have to be adjusted depending on where we are. Roughly, the first exam will be the week of 3-3-08.

**Group Presentations:**

I anticipate there will roughly be six groups. Each group will be given one week prior notice as to the date of their presentation.

Students will work in groups of five (or so). Each group will present the historical-cultural context of the time period we are examining. There are five areas of presentation: religion, political, social, science, and the arts. Each student will be held responsible for her/his area. Each student should have at least about 5 pages of research on her or his area. The more thorough your research is the more points you will earn. Each group will develop a detailed outline of substantive and relevant information for each of the above five areas. The groups will email me their presentation outline the evening prior to their presentation date. Once I have received the outline, I will forward it via email to the class.

**NOTE on class time:**

I expect you to have the reading done **before** you come to class. Class time will NOT be used to simply summarize readings.

**III Rules and Regulations**

**Attendance:**

I will expect you to attend regularly and I will (informally) take attendance (and this will count toward your grade). I understand that sometimes missing class is unavoidable. I will assume you have a good reason to miss and so you do not need excuses. In general there will be no make-up work for missed in-class assignments. However, I will allow each student one no-questions-asked absence.

**Exam make-up:**

If you miss an exam for reasons of official school-related events, serious illness, important family obligations, or death in the family, you will be able to take a make-up

exam. However, in most such cases I will require to be informed ahead of time. Also note that if you do miss an exam, the make-up exam will be different from the one given in class.

#### Student Rights:

Because life just happens and we all have to deal with unexpected situations, I will make myself available to students as much as possible. I invite and encourage you to stop by my office during office hours or make an appointment. I also welcome brief drop-in visits at your convenience. Basically, if you find my office door is open, please feel free to stop in. Please note that if your question or concern has to do with missed course work or exam, it is always better to inform the instructor beforehand whenever possible.

In addition, if your question or concern cannot be resolved by me, please contact the Chair of the department:

Professor James Burfeind  
james.burfeind@umontana.edu  
Social Science 331  
406-243-4811

#### Disability or Need for Special Accommodations:

Students with disability or need for special accommodations who require modification for any course related activity should contact me as soon as possible. If, for any reason, you do not want to contact me about this, please contact the Chair of the department as soon as possible.

#### **IV. Course Materials**

We will use the following books for this class:

Ishmael by Daniel Quinn  
Classical Sociological Theory by George Ritzer

In addition there will be readings on E-reserve, or through the department website. The e-reserve password for this class is: theory

#### **V. General outline:**

Week 1: [1/23] Introduction; how we see the world, the unfamiliar in the familiar  
Begin reading Ishmael

Week 2: [1/28] Understanding social context; the cultural production of knowledge and science; information as authority, information as commodity.

Continue with cultural production of knowledge and science; consider issues of philosophy of science; consider issues relating to patterns of inequality

Read Pandora's Hope by Bruno Latour (E-reserve)

Read chapters 1 and 2

Week 3: [2/4]

Origins of Modern Social Theory in the Enlightenment  
Origins of The French Sociological Tradition: Saint-Simon and Comte.

Read chapter 4

Week 4: [2/11]

Origins of German Social Theory in 19<sup>th</sup> Century: Marx  
Marx and Dialectical; critical social theory  
Marx on social class and class conflict

Read chapter 6

**NO Class** on Monday 2/18!! ☺

Week 5: [2/20]

Continue with Marx  
Herbert Spencer (he is the one who coined the phrase "survival of the fittest")

Read chapter 5

Week 6: [2/25]

Early women Sociologists

Read chapter 10

Week 7: [3/3]

**Exam 1 Monday**

Emile Durkheim and the founding of academic sociology in France

Read chapter 7

Week 8: [3/10]

Continue Durkheim

Begin Max Weber: Method and vision of sociology and the social sciences

Read chapter 8

Week 9: [3/17]

Weber: Major concepts in the study of social and political phenomena; Weber: Religion and the rise of modern capitalism.

Week 10: [3/24]

Spring Break!!

Week 11: [3/31]

The founding of German sociology; Georg Simmel;

Read chapter 9

Karl Mannheim

Read chapter 13

Week 12: [4/7]

W.E.B. Du Bois and the “new” social theory  
Read chapter 11

Week 13: [4/14]

G. H. Mead and Symbolic Interactionism  
Talcott Parsons, Structural Functionalism  
Read chapters 14 and 16

Week 14: [4/21]

Conflict Theory and Critical Theory: Dahrendorf and Habermas

Week 15: [4/28]

Catching up since I will have likely gone on many tangents by now.