Practical information:

We will be meeting on Tuesdays between 2:30 and 5:30 in Wallace 190. If you wish to meet with me outside seminar hours, please contact me at mlamont@princeton.edu.

Objectives:

This seminar offers an introduction to classical sociological theory. We will explore several topics, namely: 1) what are the major themes of the foundational texts of sociology; 2) how these texts were shaped by the social context in which they were produced; 3) how do these texts connect with broader development in social and economic thoughts in the nineteenth and early twentieth century; 4) how do the key authors compare with one another; and 5) how do they influence sociological theorizing today. The more general objective is to learn about and reflect on the role of theory in sociological research. This seminar is required of first-year graduate students in sociology. It is also open to graduate students in the humanities and the social sciences, and to senior-year sociology major.

Structure:

We will begin with two introductory sessions that will discuss the usefulness of classical sociological theory today, outline some of the key ideas to be explored throughout the semester, compare various approaches to classical theory, and learn about the prehistory of sociology and disciplinary institutionalization. The remaining sessions will be organized as follows: Each week will be dedicated to a particular author, or, in the case of Marx, Durkheim, and Weber, to an important theme in their work (with at least two sessions consecrated to each of these sociologists). These sessions will begin with an hour-long presentation by one of our faculty member on an author’s key ideas and how they inform ongoing sociological research (including the faculty member’s own). During the remaining two hours, seminar participants will present and discuss readings and I will situate them within their broader theoretical and social context. The concluding session will give us the opportunity to systematically compare authors along key analytical dimensions.

Course requirements:
1) Three memos on weekly readings (to be selected at the end of the first session). These memos, of a maximum length of five pages (double-space), should be emailed to all seminar participants at least 24 hours prior to our meetings. They should raise substantive and critical issues to be discussed in class (10% of final grade each).

2) Two class presentations: you will share the responsibility with one other graduate student for introducing key concepts and leading one weekly discussion (20% of final grade each).

3) Final exam in class (open books), to be scheduled in January. Students who have a strong background in classical theory can opt to write a term paper in lieu of taking the exam, with my prior approval (30% of final grade).

4) Participation: This seminar involves very heavy reading. Plan your weekly schedule accordingly. You are expected to be an active seminar participant and to come to meetings fully prepared according to graduate school standards.

Readings:

The following books are available at the U-Store (36 University Place, 3rd floor). I strongly recommend that you buy them: they should be part of every sociologist’s personal library. The books marked with an asterisk are not required. All books are also available at the reserve of Firestone Library:


Two copies of a few additional readings will be available for copying purposes in a box marked “Classical Sociological Theory” located in the mailroom of the Department of Sociology, Wallace Hall. You are asked to promptly return the readings in the box after having completed your copying, so that they remain available to other seminar participants.

**Week 1 (September 18): Introduction: Classical Sociological Theory for What?; Key Concepts; Approaches to the Topic.**


**Week 2 (September 25): The Prehistory of Sociology; The Logic of Disciplinary Institutionalization**


Recommended:


**Week 3 (October 2): Tocqueville, the Macro-Sociologist and Student of Civil Society**

*Guest: Robert Wuthnow.*

Please spend some time looking at the website
http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/DETOC/home.html

Volume 1, Part 1: author’s introduction; chs. 2-4, 5 (pp. 61-63, 68-70, 87-98)
Volume 1, Part 2: Chs. 4, 5 (pp. 197-99, 224-226), 6-9/.
Volume 2: author’s preface, Part 2, chs. 1-5, 7-8, 13, 20
Volume 2, Part 3, chs. 1-2, 5, 7-13, 17-18
Volume 2, Part 4: All


Recommended reading:


**Week 4 (October 8): Marx the Humanist and the Theorist of Revolution**

*Guest: Marvin Bressler*

*The German Ideology*, pp. 146—200
*The Communist Manifesto*, pp. 469-500
*The Class Struggle in France*, pp. 586-93

Recommended:


**Week 5 (October 15): Marx the Political Economist**
Guest: Bruce Western

The *Grundisse*, pp. 222-294
*Capital*, Volume 1, pp. 302-308; 319-61; 392-403; 419-38.

Recommended: see week 4

**Week 6 (October 22): Durkheim the Evolutionist and Student of Modernity**

Guest: Frank Dobbin

Emile Durkheim, 1984. *The Division of Labor in Society*, New York: Free Press. Preface to First Edition; Introduction. Book 1: Chs. 1-2, 3 (pp. 68-72; bottom of p. 81-87); 5 (pp. 101-106, 118-23); 7; Book 2: ch.1 (pp. 179-95); 2; 5 (pp. 283-87); Book 3: chs. 1-2; Conclusion; Preface to Second Edition.

Emile Durkheim, 1951. *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*. New York: Free Press. Preface; Introduction; Book 2: Chs. 1-2; 3 (pp. 208-16); 4-5; Book 3: chs. 1; 2 (pp. 326-38); 3 (pp. 386-92).

Recommended:


**Week of October 29: Break**

**Week 7 (November 6): Durkheim the Cosmologist and the Student of Norms**

Lecturer: Michèle Lamont

Emile Durkheim, 2001. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. New York: Oxford University Press. Introduction; Book 1, chs. 1, 4; Book 2, chs. 1, 3 (pp. 165-73); chs. 6-7, Book 3, ch. 3. Conclusion.

(reread TBA passages from *Suicide* discussed during week 6)

Recommended: see week 6

**Week 8 (November 13): Weber, the Student of Religion and Capitalism**
**Guest: Alejandro Portes**


Recommended:


**Week 9 (November 20): Weber, the Student of Power and Inequality**

**Guest: Miguel Centeno**


“Basic Sociological Terms” pp. 24-56
“The Types of Legitimate Domination” pp. 212-31; 237-54; 262-71.
“Status Group and Class” pp. 302-307
“Ethnic groups” Pp. 385-398
“Class, Status, Party” etc. pp. 926-938

**Week 10 (November 27): Weber, the Student of Bureaucracy and Political Power**

**Guest: Paul DiMaggio**


“Domination and Legitimacy” pp. 941-954
“Bureaucracy” pp. 956-1003


Recommended:

Week 11 (December 4): Simmel, the Student of Social Relations

Guest: Viviana Zelizer


Recommended:


Week 12 (December 10): Synthesis and Conclusion