

THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

Department of Sociology

SOCI 3003 Classical Sociological Theory

Second Term 2024-25

Instructor: Dr. LI Hang 李鏗
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Time: 8:30am – 10:15pm Tuesday
Venue: YIA 505
Course website:
<https://blackboard.cuhk.edu.hk/>

Teaching assistants:
Ms. Lee Tsz Shun Joanna
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Course Description

This course explores the foundational works of classical sociological theory through the writings of Émile Durkheim (French, 1858-1917), Karl Marx (German, 1818-1883), and Max Weber (German, 1864-1920). Students will examine how these theorists addressed fundamental social issues and developed frameworks for analyzing social phenomena. The course emphasizes critical reading, analytical thinking, and understanding the historical context of sociological concepts. This course will explore the following questions: 1. What key themes and ideas emerge from classical sociological theory? 2. How does their social and intellectual context shape these ideas? 3. How can these theories inform our sociological way of questioning?

Learning Outcomes

After completing this course, students should be able to:

1. Explain the key ideas of major classical sociological theories and perspectives
2. Apply foundational concepts and frameworks of sociological theory
3. Examine historical and contemporary social issues from sociological perspectives
4. Evaluate critically theoretical arguments and their connections to empirical evidence

Recommended Textbooks

Appelrouth, S., & Edles, L. D. (2022). *Classical and contemporary sociological theory: Text and readings* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications, Inc.

Aron, R. (2019). *Main currents in sociological thought: Volume One and Volume Two*. Routledge.

Giddens, A. (1971). *Capitalism and modern social theory: An analysis of the writings of Marx, Durkheim and Max Weber*. Cambridge University Press.

- All textbooks are ***accessible online*** via the library website.

Course Syllabus

1. Introduction
 - Course Orientation
 - The Birth of the Sociological Way of Thinking
2. Émile Durkheim
 - Social Transformation and Solidarity
 - Durkheim's Methodological Rules
 - Suicide and Modernity
 - Religion and Moral Order
3. Karl Marx
 - Human Nature, Labor, and Alienation
 - Marx's Theory of History
 - Classes and Class Struggle
 - Dynamics of Capitalism
4. Max Weber
 - Weber's Conception of Sociology
 - Cultural Origins of Capitalism
 - Rationalization of Legitimate Authority
 - Rationalization of Everyday Life
5. Conclusion

Teaching Modes and Learning Activities

The lecturer, in person, will conduct all lectures according to the schedule provided above. The teaching assistant will help students understand the course content by leading various learning activities during tutorials. The teaching assistant will schedule the class time for tutorials early in the term.

Assessment Tasks

- (I) Tutorial Participation 20%
- (II) Mid-term Essay 30%
- (III) Take-home Final Exam 50%

Assessment Rubrics

Grade descriptors

- A A thorough understanding of the course materials and an outstanding performance on all learning outcomes.
- A- A solid understanding of the course materials and an outstanding performance on almost all learning outcomes.
- B An adequate understanding of the course materials and a substantial performance, on average, on all learning outcomes.
- C A basic understanding of the course materials and a satisfactory performance on the majority of learning outcomes, possibly with a few weaknesses.

- D A partial understanding of the course materials and an inadequate performance on a number of learning outcomes
- F A poor understanding of the course materials and an unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes.