

SOCI 503 ¹

Foundations of Sociological Explanations

Instructor: Dr. Simon Carroll

Course Description:

This course offers an in-depth study of some of the key contributions to classical sociological theory, including the canonical 'founding' figures of Karl Marx, Max Weber and Emile Durkheim. However, the course will also attempt to follow through on some of the key sociological themes (e.g. class, capitalism, power, the state) developed by these thinkers, and trace how they have been transformed and still influence contemporary theoretical issues and debates within sociology and social theory more broadly. Of particular interest, will be how contemporary sociological explanation considers the intersection of class, race and gender in understanding current structural patterns of inequality, and how these complex, interrelated dimensions of social power form the basis for ongoing political and social struggles. A Key question for the course is: how can a deeper understanding of classical sociological theory help to inform our interpretations of contemporary political, economic, social and cultural phenomena? Furthermore, what is to be done, given these insights?

Course Outcomes/Objectives:

Students will learn to closely read key classical texts in sociological theory, place them in their original historical context, and relate them to current developments, including unfolding real-time historical phenomena (e.g. increasing socio-economic inequality within and between countries, the rise of reactionary right-wing nationalism in Europe and North America, and the renewal of radical left-wing politics in the UK and the USA), along with contemporary theoretical engagements with these phenomena.

Course Pre/Co-requisites:

N/A

Topics May Include:

Theories of capitalism
Understanding 'class' as a sociological concept
Social integration vs. Systemic integration
Primitive accumulation, colonialism, slavery and racism
State theory

¹ This online outline is only intended to give an overall sense of the course. Detailed course outlines will be made available for all registered students on the first day of class. Only those outlines are to be considered official.

Ideology
Hegemony
Intersectionality
Identity politics
Social movements

Required Resources May Include:

Freely available resources will be posted on Coursespaces, particularly selections for the classical theorists and academic articles.

These may include:

Karl Marx: 'The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte'; 'Commodity fetishism' Ch. 1. Vol. 1. Das Kapital; 'So-Called Primitive Accumulation', Part VII, Das Kapital

Max Weber: 'Class, Status, Party'; 'Politics as a Vocation'

Emile Durkheim: 'Division of Labour in Society'

Aimé Césaire, 'Discourse on Colonialism'

Frantz Fanon. 'White skin, Black Masks'

Two recent texts will be required reading:

Horne, Gerald (2018). *The Apocalypse of Settler Colonialism*. Monthly Review Press

Haider, Asad (2018). *Mistaken Identity: Race and Class in the Age of Trump*, Verso Books.