

Steven Lopez

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Office Hours: TR 1:30 – 2:30pm or by appointment

SOC 488: SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

Winter 2007

Tuesday-Thursday 9:30am-11:18am

Room: 311 Boyd Laboratory

This course focuses on the ideas of three seminal theorists of sociology who wrote in the 19th and early 20th centuries – Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Emile Durkheim. This is a somewhat arbitrary decision, as there are dozens of other important social theorists who could be, and sometimes are, included in introductory social theory courses. However, the ideas of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim have influenced the discipline of sociology more than any others. And their ideas are of more than simply historical interest: they raise issues that are of vital contemporary importance to everyone, not just professional sociologists. Without studying these three theorists, we cannot understand very much at all about the society we live in, how it works, or what its central problems and tensions are. The ideas of these theorists are, I believe, as relevant today as ever. Therefore a major focus of this course is to understand how the ideas of these classic theorists can give us a whole new set of conceptual tools for understanding our contemporary world. But social theorists do not produce holy scripture: their ideas, once grasped, are meant to be debated, criticized, and revised in light of the reality of the world we live in. Therefore our exploration must also be a critical one.

REQUIRED READING:

1. Zip Notes Coursepack #2460. This is the out-of-print first edition of *Introduction to Marx and Engels: A Critical Reconstruction*, by Richard Schmitt. It is very different from the 1997 Second Edition, so DO buy this coursepack and DON'T buy the second edition.
2. Zip Notes Coursepack #2 – selected readings.
3. Randall Collins (1992). *Sociological Insight: An Introduction to Non-Obvious Sociology*, 2nd Edition. New York: Oxford University Press.

NOTE: *All required readings are available for purchase at Student Textbook Exchange (SBX), 1806 North High Street, tel. 291-9528.*

STUDENT REQUIREMENTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Reading Assignments and class discussion.

Although I will give some lectures, I don't teach this course as a series of lectures. Instead, we're going to read the assigned readings together and decide through discussion and debate what we think of the ideas and evidence they contain. In the main, my role will be to facilitate and guide these discussions. Sometimes lecture is unavoidable, but as much as possible, I will limit lecture to providing necessary background to the readings.

To make this work, you need to read and think about the readings before you come to class, so that we can discuss them together.

In order to assist you with your reading, I have prepared discussion questions for each week's readings. I will pass these out in advance of each class, but if you lose them or miss a class you can download the discussion questions from CARMEN.

You should use these discussion questions, before coming to class, to help you read the material. We will generally use the study questions to structure our discussions.

THE STUDY QUESTIONS ARE A VERY IMPORTANT PART OF THE COURSE. They will not only structure our discussions and my own presentation of the material, *they capture what I want you to know about the material.* We will be putting together answers to these questions in class, and taking time to discuss issues that they bring up. YOU SHOULD TAKE GOOD NOTES IN CLASS as we answer the study questions together. IF YOU HAVE GOOD GRASP OF THE ANSWERS TO THE STUDY QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO VERY WELL ON THE EXAMS. I cannot emphasize this enough. Whenever I am asked, "What do we need to know for the exams?" the answer is that you need to be able to give detailed answers to the study questions and you need to be able to reflect thoughtfully on the issues raised by them.

ALL STUDENTS NEED TO BRING THEIR ASSIGNED READING TO CLASS EVERY TIME.

Rules for class discussion: The key thing here is to respect one another. The classroom should be a safe place to try out new ideas. We don't have to agree – hopefully we'll have all kinds of disagreements – but we have to treat one another with respect. That means listening while other people are talking, and taking their ideas seriously, even if they are half-formed.

3. Attendance.

There is no grade for attendance. However, I will take attendance.

LEAVING EARLY / COMING LATE. If you have a valid reason for leaving early (or for being late), **I expect you to let me know ahead of time.** Otherwise I will take a very dim view of it. If you arrive late without letting me know ahead of time, I will treat it as an absence.

2. Quizzes – 40% of final grade

At the beginning of each class, there will be a short, 5-item quiz on the assigned readings for the day. These quizzes will be designed to test basic reading comprehension.

You will have 5 minutes to complete the quiz. The quiz will be worth 5 points. At the end of each class – i.e., after our class discussion covering the material – you will take the same short quiz again. The second quiz will also be worth 5 points. I will add the two scores together for a total of 10 possible points. So, for example, if you get 3/5 at the beginning of class and 5/5 at the end, you get a total of 8/10.

The point of this is that if you pay attention in class, you should be able to figure out which questions (if any) you got wrong initially, and get them right the second time round.

There will be 17 quizzes, one for each class session with a reading assignment. **I will drop your 5 lowest combined scores.**

If you miss class for any reason, you get zero, and it will automatically count as one of your 5 lowest scores (unless you miss more than 5 classes, in which case the zeros start to count).

A word of advice: the best strategy will be to try not to miss any quizzes, so that if you do poorly sometimes, those scores can be dropped.

4. Exams – 60% of final grade

There will be two exams – a midterm exam (Thursday, February 4) and a comprehensive final exam (Thursday, March 15). Each exam will consist of two long-essay questions to be answered in class. One week before the midterm and two weeks before the final, I will provide you with a list of potential exam questions. The actual questions will be drawn from these lists.

If you miss an exam, you will be permitted to make it up IF the following three conditions are met: (1) you have a legitimate excuse, like a serious illness or a close encounter with aliens; (2) you can document the reason for missing the exam (that probably rules out the alien encounter); and (3) you contact me by email or phone as soon as you find out there is a problem, or as soon as is practically possible thereafter.

COURSE GRADES

I will use a weighted grading scheme. Each quiz and exam will have a point value (10 points each for quizzes, 100 points each for exams) but these are arbitrary values.

The grade calculation formula will be visible to you on Carmen.

Your grades in this course will be weighted as follows:

1. Quizzes:	40% of final grade
2. Mid-term Exam (Thursday, February 4):	30% of final grade
3. Final Exam (Thursday, March 15):	30% of final grade
TOTAL	100% of final grade

OSU Standard Grading Scheme:

Starting %	Grade
93	A
90	A-
87	B+
83	B
80	B-
77	C+
73	C
70	C-
67	D+
63	D
60	D-
0	E

ADMINISTRATION:

Academic Misconduct: It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term "academic misconduct" includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct.

Disability Statement: Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated, and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150

Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901;
<http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>.

Unpaid Fees: Faculty rules specify that students are to have their fees paid by the first day of enrollment for the quarter. [Faculty Rule 3335-9-12]. If you have not paid your fees, you will not be allowed to continue attending class until:

1. your fees are paid, OR
2. you have a signed letter from Financial Aid stating that you are working with them to get your fees paid.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES:

Thursday, January 4.

Introduction to the Course -- No Readings

PART ONE: KARL MARX AND THE CRITIQUE OF CAPITALISM

Tuesday, January 9. Human Nature and Individualism.

- Schmitt, *Introduction to Marx and Engels* (hereafter IME): pp. xiii to 21 (Preface, Introduction + Chapters 1 and 2)

Thursday, January 11. Historical Materialism and Ideology

- IME pp. 30-42 and 52-60 (Chapters 4 and 6).

Tuesday, January 16. Capitalism and Exploitation.

- IME pp. 63-85 (Chapters 7-8).

Thursday, January 18. Alienation and the Fetishism of Commodities.

- IME pp. 151-159 and 86-97 (Chapter 15 and Chapter 9).

Tuesday, January 23. Social Classes.

- IME pp. 127-150 (Chapters 12-14)

Thursday, January 25. The Capitalist State.

- IME pp. 171-181 (Chapter 17)

Tuesday, January 30. The Predictions.

- IME pp. 111-123 (Chapter 11)

PART TWO: MAX WEBER AND RATIONALIZATION IN MODERN SOCIETY

Thursday, February 1. Weber's Methodology and Theory of Social Action.

- Zip Coursepack, pp. 1-20. Max Weber, “The Nature of Social Action.”

Tuesday, February 6. Structures of Authority and Domination.

- Zip Coursepack, pp. 81-102. Max Weber, “The Types of Legitimate Domination.”

Thursday, February 8. **MIDTERM EXAM**

Tuesday, February 13. Structures of Authority and Domination, Continued.

- Zip Coursepack, pp. 103-112. Max Weber, “Bureaucracy.” (Excerpts).

Thursday, February 15. Rationalization of the Modern World.

- Zip Coursepack, pp. 61-80. Max Weber, “Religious Rejections of the World and their Directions.”

Tuesday, February 20. Capitalism in Europe.

- Handout
- Zip Coursepack, pp. 45-60. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, excerpt.

Thursday, February 22. Origins of Capitalism, continued.

- Zip Coursepack, pp. 21-44. From Randall Collins, *Max Weber: A Skeleton Key*. Chapter 5, “Weber’s Vision of Social Change.” Chapter 6, “The Comparative Studies of World Religions.”

PART THREE: EMILE DURKHEIM AND THE FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIAL ORDER

Tuesday, February 27. The Nonrational Foundations of Rationality.

- Randall Collins, *Sociological Insight* (hereafter SI) pp. 3-29 (Chapter 1).
- Zip Coursepack, pp. 113-120. Anthony Giddens, “Early Work: The Division of Labor.”

Thursday, March 1. Durkheim’s Theory of Religion.

- Collins, SI pp. 30-59 (Chapter 2).

Tuesday, March 6. Durkheim’s theory of Religion, Continued.

- Zip Coursepack, pp. 121-136. Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, excerpt.
- Zip Coursepack, pp. 137-145. Anthony Giddens, “Sociological Method; Its Application in *Suicide*.”

Thursday, March 8. Power Re-Examined.

- Collins, SI pp. 60-85 (Chapter 3).

FINAL EXAM: Thursday, March 15, 9-30am-11:18am.