

Steven Lopez

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SOC 488: SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

Autumn 2006

Tuesday-Thursday 11:00 am-1:18 pm

Room: 383 Arps Hall

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 COURSEPACK #1. 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. Collins, Randall (1986). *Max Weber: A Skeleton Key*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
3. Randall Collins (1992). *Sociological Insight: An Introduction to Non-Obvious Sociology*, 2nd Edition. New York: Oxford University Press.
4. Zip Notes Coursepack #2 – selected readings.

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. 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.

If you aren't familiar with CARMEN, just go to the Sociology web page, select "courses" and look for Soc 488 Lopez. Clicking on that link will take you to CARMEN.

You should use these discussion questions, before coming to class, to help you read the material. Try to take a stab and figuring out the answers as you read. 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.

2. Reading Summaries.

Each of you will turn in **6 reading summaries** during the quarter. You can choose any six class sessions to turn in a reading summary. You are still expected to do the reading and come to class, even when you are not turning in a reading summary. The reading summaries should be typed so I don't have to struggle to decipher people's handwriting.

The reading summaries should be short. The purpose of the summary is simply to convince me that you read **all of the assigned reading for that day** all the way through at least once. You don't have to go into great loads of detail, nor do you have to break down a nuanced argument into all its component pieces – we'll do that together in class. There is no specific minimum, but here's a maximum limit not to exceed: never turn in more than half a page (single spaced, Times New Roman, 12 point type) for a given class session.

READING SUMMARIES ARE DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS!!

I will not accept any late reading summaries under any circumstances. Don't bother putting them under my office door, or in my mailbox, or emailing them to me. I will not accept any excuses for late or missing reading summaries. If you turn in fewer than 6, it will affect your grade.

NOTE: You will not usually receive comments on your reading summaries. You will simply get the points or not get them. If you convince me that you have read the material before class then you get full points – even if you misunderstand something. **THEREFORE IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT YOU DO NOT USE YOUR SUMMARIES AS A BASIS FOR PREPARING FOR THE EXAMS.** The summaries are your first attempt to grapple with the ideas but you can't rely on them later.

The summaries are worth 5 points each, for a total of 30 possible points. You get 0 if you didn't turn it in (or you didn't turn it in on time) OR you did turn it in but I can't tell from what you wrote that you actually read the material. Full points if the grader can tell that you read the entire assignment, carefully, at least once.

Your reading summaries are worth 15% of the final course grade.

If you do an extra summary I will drop the lowest grade from one of your completed summaries. (But you can't turn in separate summaries and reaction papers for the same class period – see below.)

3. Reaction papers.

In addition to the reading summaries, each of you will turn in **5 short reaction papers** during the quarter. You can choose any six class sessions to turn in a reading summary, but you cannot turn in a summary and reaction paper for the same class period. **This means that you have to turn in either a summary or a reaction paper at 11 (again, you get to choose) of the 17 class sessions for which there are reading assignments.**

The reaction paper is more extensive than the summary, it is worth more, and you will need to put more effort into doing it.

Reaction papers need to begin with summaries of the arguments from the assigned readings, but then they go on to include your reactions, critiques, and questions. How do you think the reading applies to your life or to our society? What do you think of the argument and why? What questions does the reading raise for you?

The reaction papers will be graded differently from the summaries. You will be graded on your understanding of the reading and the quality (logic, thoughtfulness, creativity) of your response to it.

You WILL receive comments from the grader on your reaction papers.

Reaction papers are also to be turned in at the beginning of the class in which those readings are to be discussed.

The reaction papers are worth 10 points each for a total of 50 possible points. Just like the reading summaries, if you do an extra one I will drop the lowest grade for one of the ones you completed. But again, you can't get credit for a reading summary AND a reaction paper for the same day.

The reaction papers are equal to 25% of your final course grade.

3. A note on attendance.

There is no grade for attendance. However, I will take attendance at the beginning of every class, so I have an idea of who has been coming and who has not.

NO LEAVING EARLY. If you have to use the bathroom or something, go ahead. If you have a valid reason for leaving early (or for being late), **I expect you to let me know ahead of time.**

3. Exams.

There will be two exams – a midterm (**Thursday, October 26**) and a final (**Thursday, December 7**). 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

Your grade in this course will result from the following:

1. Reading Summaries:	30 points (15% of final grade)
2. Reaction Papers	50 points (25% of final grade)
3. Mid-term Exam (Thursday, October 26):	60 points (30% of final grade)
4. Final Exam (Thursday, December 7):	60 points (30% of final grade)
 TOTAL	 200 points (100% of final grade)

Grading Scheme:

186-200	=	A
180-185	=	A-
174-179	=	B+
166-173	=	B
160-165	=	B-
154-159	=	C+
146-153	=	C
140-145	=	C-
134-139	=	D+
126-133	=	D
120-125	=	D-
<120.00	=	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, September 21.

Introduction to the Course -- No Readings

PART ONE: KARL MARX AND THE CRITIQUE OF CAPITALISM

Tuesday, September 26. Human Nature and Individualism.

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

Thursday, September 28. Historical Materialism and Ideology

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

Tuesday, October 3. Capitalism and Exploitation.

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

Thursday, October 5. Alienation and the Fetishism of Commodities.

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

Tuesday, October 10. Classes.

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

Thursday, October 12. The Capitalist State.

- IME pp. 171-181 (Chapter 17)

Tuesday, October 17. The Predictions.

- IME pp. 111-123 (Chapter 11)

PART TWO: MAX WEBER AND RATIONALIZATION IN MODERN SOCIETY

Thursday, October 19. Weber's Methodology and Theory of Social Action.

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

Tuesday, October 24. Capitalism in Europe.

- Collins, *Skeleton Key* (Hereafter SK) pp. 47-59 (Chapter 3)
- Zip Coursepack, pp. 21-35. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, excerpt.

Thursday, October 26. **MIDTERM EXAM**

Tuesday, October 31. Origins of Capitalism, continued.

- SK pp. 81-124 (Chapters 5-6).

Thursday, November 2. Rationalization of the Modern World.

- Zip Coursepack, pp. 37-55. Max Weber, "Religious Rejections of the World and their Directions."

Tuesday, November 7. Structures of Authority and Domination.

- Zip Coursepack, pp. 57-78. Max Weber, "The Types of Legitimate Domination."

Thursday, November 9. Structures of Authority and Domination, Continued.

- Zip Coursepack, pp. 79-88. Max Weber, "Bureaucracy." (Excerpts).

PART THREE: EMILE DURKHEIM AND THE FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIAL ORDER

Tuesday, November 14. The Nonrational Foundations of Rationality.

- Randall Collins, *Sociological Insight* (hereafter SI) pp. 3-29 (Chapter 1).
- Zip Coursepack, pp. 89-96. Anthony Giddens, "Early Work: The Division of Labor."

Thursday, November 16. Durkheim's Theory of Religion.

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

Tuesday, November 21. Durkheim's theory of Religion, Continued.

- Zip Coursepack, pp. 97-112. Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, excerpt.
- Zip Coursepack, pp. 113-120. Anthony Giddens, "Sociological Method; Its Application in *Suicide*."

Thursday, November 23. THANKSGIVING – NO CLASS

Tuesday, November 28. Power Re-Examined.

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

Thursday, November 30. Love and Property.

- Collins, SI pp. 119-154 (Chapter 5).

FINAL EXAM: Thursday, December 7 at the regular class time