Course Title

Sociological Theory

Course Number
SOC-UA 9111001

Instructor Contact Information
Dr. Jochen Steinbicker
js152@nyu.edu

Course Details
Thursdays, 3:00pm to 5:45pm
Location of class: NYUB, Room "Pankow"

Prerequisites
n/a

Units earned
4

Course Description
This course introduces the distinctive concerns and main perspectives of sociological theorizing, and examines the value as well as the problems of 'theorizing' modern (global) society through an introduction to the major contributions of Tocqueville, Marx, Durkheim, Simmel and Weber. Attention will be paid to the social and intellectual context of these thinkers, but the primary focus will be on reconstructing and discussing their ideas and thinking about their relevance to the analysis of modern society and social processes.

Course Objective
Even though this course might seem set for the theoretical heavens, its objectives are quite down to earth. Put simply, if you are not a singular genius, theorizing about society is not just a matter of original ideas, but just as much of disciplined study. Intensive reading is a necessary requirement to get even a basic idea of the scenery of sociological theory. And as the medium of such theory is a rather abstract, yet not really formalized language, this reading will be very demanding – not only in terms of comprehension, but also of interpretation.

Thus, the objectives of this course are (1) to give a solid introduction to principal theoretical perspectives on society, while at the same time (2) training basic skills of reading, comprehending, interpreting and critically discussing sociological theory. It is due to this second objective that the course employs primary readings throughout, not taking short cuts by way of introductions and piecemeal selections.
Assessment Components

- Class Participation counting 15% of total grade.
- Assignments and Class Presentation counting 20% of total grade.
- One Essay 1200-1500 words counting 20% of total grade.
- Final in-class Exam (120 min.) counting 45% of total grade.

Class participation includes, of course, what the student does when he/she is in class. Students are expected to have read the material, reviewed notes from the previous class, and be ready and willing to discuss the readings and contribute to class debates. Students are expected to attend to the comments of other students and the instructor.

For each session (excluding final exams and session 1), there will be small assignments directly related to the reading, normally having to do with preparing a short text of no more than ½ to 1 page. If not indicated otherwise, these will be memos on your course reading, stating (1) the central topic/problem/hypothesis and (2) the issues you would like to discuss in class. Mostly, there will be other, more specific tasks. Details will be given in class or through NYU Classes. The assignments have to be submitted electronically through NYU Classes no later than 2:00pm on the day of class. Please also bring a hard copy to submit after class. You need to be prepared to give a short class presentation on how you answered the assignment.

The short essay constitutes your midterm exam. It will focus on your comprehension of the course readings and your ability to clearly structure your reasoning (the deadline is 15 Oct in class).

On the last day of class (17 Dec), there will be a final in-class exam on the subject matter of the class (120 min., books closed, more details in class).

Failure to submit or fulfill any required component may result in failure of the class, regardless of grades achieved in other assignments

Assessment Expectations

**Grade A:** The student makes excellent use of empirical and theoretical material and offers well-structured arguments in his/her work. The student writes comprehensive essays/answers to exam questions and his/her work shows strong evidence of critical thought and extensive reading.

**Grade B:** The candidate shows a good understanding of the problem and has demonstrated the ability to formulate and execute a coherent research strategy.

**Grade C:** The work is acceptable and shows a basic grasp of the research problem. However, the work fails to organize findings coherently and is in need of improvement.

**Grade D:** The work passes because some relevant points are made. However, there may be a problem of poor definition, lack of critical awareness, or poor research.

**Grade F:** The work shows that the research problem is not understood; there is little or no critical awareness and the research is clearly negligible.
Grade Conversion
Your professor may choose to use one of the two following grading scales:

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\begin{align*}
A &= 94-100 & B &= 84-86 & C &= 74-76 & D &= 65-66 & F = below 65 \\
A- &= 90-93 & B- &= 80-83 & C- &= 70-73 \\
B+ &= 87-89 & C+ &= 77-79 & D+ &= 67-69
\end{align*}
\]

Alternatively, your professor may give your grades on a scale of 0 to 4:

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\begin{align*}
A &= 4.0 & A- &= 3.7 \\
B+ &= 3.3 & B &= 3.0 & B- &= 2.7 \\
C+ &= 2.3 & C &= 2.0 & C- &= 1.7 \\
D+ &= 1.3 & D &= 1.0 & F &= 0.0.
\end{align*}
\]

Attendance Policy
Participation in all classes is essential for your academic success, especially in NYU Berlin’s content courses that, unlike most courses at NYU NY, meet only once per week in a double-session for three hours. Your attendance in both content and language courses is required and will be checked at each class meeting. As soon as it becomes clear that you cannot attend a class, you must inform your professor by e-mail immediately. Absences are only excused if they are due to illness, religious observance or emergencies. If you want the reasons for your absence to be treated confidentially and not shared with your professor, please approach NYUB's Director or Wellness Counselor. Your professor or NYUB's administration may ask you to present a doctor's note or an exceptional permission from the Director or Wellness Counselor.

Unexcused absences affect students’ grades: In content courses each unexcused absence (equaling one week's worth of classes) leads to a deduction of 2% of the overall grade and may negatively affect your class participation grade. Three unexcused absences in one course may lead to a Fail in that course. In German Language classes three (consecutive or non-consecutive) unexcused absences (equaling one week's worth of classes) lead to a 2% deduction of the overall grade. Five unexcused absences in your German language course may lead to a Fail in that course. Furthermore, faculty is also entitled to deduct points for frequent late arrival to class or late arrival back from in-class breaks. Being more than 15 minutes late for class counts as an unexcused absence. Please note that for classes involving a field trip or other external visit, transportation difficulties are never grounds for an excused absence. It is the student’s responsibility to arrive at the announced meeting point in a punctual and timely fashion.

Exams, tests, deadlines, and oral presentations that are missed due to illness require a doctor's note as documentation. It is the student's responsibility to produce this doctor's note; until this doctor's note is produced the missed assessment is graded with an F. In content classes, an F in one assignment may lead to failure of the entire class.

Attendance Rules on Religious Holidays
Members of any religious group may, without penalty, excuse themselves from classes when required in compliance with their religious obligations. Students who anticipate being absent because of any religious observance should notify the Director or Assistant Director for
Academics in advance of the anticipated absence. If examinations or assignment deadlines are scheduled on the day the student will be absent, the Director or Assistant Director will re-schedule a make-up examination or extend the deadline for assignments.

**Late Submission of Work**

(1) Written work due in class must be submitted during the class time to the professor.

(2) Late work should be submitted in person to the instructor or to the Assistant Director for Academics, who will write on the essay or other work the date and time of submission, in the presence of the student. Another member of the administrative staff may also personally accept the work, and will write the date and time of submission on the work, as above.

(3) Unless an extension has been approved, work submitted late receives a penalty of 2 points on the 100 point scale for each day it is late.

(4) Without an approved extension, written work submitted more than 5 weekdays following the session date fails and is given a zero.

(5) End of semester essays must be submitted on time.

(6) Students who are late for a written exam have no automatic right to take extra time or to write the exam on another day.

(7) Please remember that university computers do not keep your essays - you must save them elsewhere. Having lost parts of your essay on the university computer is no excuse for a late submission.

**Plagiarism Policy**

The presentation of another person’s words, ideas, judgment, images or data as though they were your own, whether intentionally or unintentionally, constitutes an act of plagiarism. Proper referencing of your sources avoids plagiarism (see as one possible help the NYU library guide to referencing styles: [http://nyu.libguides.com/citations](http://nyu.libguides.com/citations)).

NYUB takes plagiarism very seriously; penalties follow and may exceed those set out by your home school. All your written work must be submitted as a hard copy AND in electronic form to the instructor. Your instructor may ask you to sign a declaration of authorship form.

It is also an offense to submit work for assignments from two different courses that is substantially the same (be it oral presentations or written work). If there is an overlap of the subject of your assignment with one that you produced for another course (either in the current or any previous semester), you MUST inform your professor.

For a summary of NYU Global's academic policies please see: [www.nyu.edu/global/academic-policies](http://www.nyu.edu/global/academic-policies)

**Required Text(s)**

Robert C. Tucker (ed.), The Marx-Engels Reader
Emile Durkheim, The Division of Labor in Society (transl. by Hall)
Course Reader

Books can be bought at Saint Georges in Wörther Straße 27 near NYUB. Readers can be bought at Sprintout behind Humboldt University (Georgenstraße/Universitätsstraße – S-Bahn-Bogen 190 – Please allow five hours between booking and collecting readers).

Supplemental Text(s) (not required to purchase)

Primary texts
Émile Durkheim, Suicide: A Study in Sociology
Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism

Secondary texts
Jonathan Turner, The Structure of Sociological Theory
Randall Collins, Four Sociological Traditions
Lewis Coser, Masters of Sociological Thought

Internet Research Guidelines
Please be advised to use Internet resources with care, both in terms of plagiarism (see above) and authority, as not everything that is published online accords with academic standards (to say the least).

Additional Required Equipment
None

Session 1 – 03 Sep 2015
Introduction: Sociological Theory and the Classics

Session 2 – 10 Sep 2015
Sociological Imagination

ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE
The Democratic Revolution

Session 3 – 17 Sep 2015
The Democratic Revolution (continued)
KARL MARX
Alienation

Session 4 – 24 Sep 2015
Historical Materialism

Session 5 – 01 Oct 2015
The Analysis of Capitalism

Session 6 – 08 Oct 2015
EMILE DURKHEIM
A Science of Morals
(Read: Preface to the First Edition; Introduction, Book I, Ch. 1; Book I, Ch. 2, sections 3 and 4; Book I, Ch. 3, section 4; Book I, Ch. 6, section 1; Book III and Conclusion.)

Session 7 – 15 Oct 2015
How to Proceed Sociologically
Durkheim, Emile (1897), *Suicide*. New York: The Free Press 1951. (Read the Introduction by Durkheim)

Midterm essays due!!

22 Oct 2015 – Fall Break – No Class
Session 8 – 29 Oct 2015
Suicide and the Dissolution of the Moral Bond
Durkheim, Emile (1897), *Suicide*, ibid. (Read Book 2, Ch. 1, 2, 4, 5 and Book 3, Ch. 3)

Session 9 – 05 Nov 2015
The Metropolis, Money, and Modern Culture

Session 10 – 12 Nov 2015
INTERMEZZO
Comparative Reappraisal: Tocqueville, Marx, Durkheim and Simmel on Modernity
Structured Misunderstandings between Americans and Germans

Session 11 – 19 Nov 2015
MAX WEBER
A Conceptual Foundation for Sociology

Session 12 – 26 Nov 2015
The Sociology of Power and Domination

Session 13 – 03 Dec 2015
The Protestant Ethic and Capitalism
Session 14 – 10 Dec 2015
REVIEW SESSION
Review your notes and bring any questions you might have, particularly all that might be relevant for the final exam.

Session 15 – 17 Dec 2015
FINAL EXAM (120min. in-class exam, books closed)

Classroom Etiquette
Be considerate and if anything is unclear, ask.

Required Co-curricular Activities
n/a

Suggested Co-curricular Activities
Make use of the sociology lectures and seminars offered at Humboldt-University Berlin. The term starts in mid October, more details will be given in class.

Your Instructor
Jochen Steinbicker is Professor of Sociological Theory at the University of Hamburg. He received his Doctorate from Humboldt University in 2008 and has been teaching at NYU Berlin since 2012. His past research has focused on the information society, leading to two books (Zur Theorie der Informationsgesellschaft, 2nd edition 2011; Pfade in die Informationsgesellschaft, 2011). He is also the author of an introduction to the sociology of Robert K. Merton (2013, with Jürgen Mackert). More recently, he has started to look at how the modern quest for individuality might be linked to class structuration, and how particular class configurations can be linked to specific notions of individuality.