

SOCIOLOGY 303

Early Modern Social Thought

St. Francis Xavier University

Fall Term 2018

Tuesday 12:45—14:00, Thursday 11:15—12:30

Mount Saint Bernard College, Room 117

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Office hours: Wednesdays 10:00—12:00, Thursdays 13:00—15:00

Course Description

This course examines early modern ways of thinking about the social world. These include theories of social contract, liberalism, political economy, positivistic science, evolution and progressive history. Students will discuss these intellectual influences in terms of how they either provided assumptions and authority for the emergence of the discipline of sociology in the 19th century or were questioned and challenged by sociologists.

By the end of this course students will have a working familiarity with some of the most important foundations of sociological thought. Students will have read original works by the most relevant social theorists of the early modern period which will serve as a solid foundation as they go on to further studies. Participants will develop their ability to read and discuss difficult, period literature and improve their group work skills.

Course Form

The sessions will consist of informal introductory lectures with room for questions and open discussions. Please note that the lectures will not be summaries of the texts, but are rather meant to supplement the texts and initiate analysis. Indeed, the goal of the classes will be to critically analyse the texts considerably. We will also make use of group discussions and problem-based learning. Please make note that all aspects of this course adhere to the principle of equitable learning. Therefore I invite each member of the class to strive to promote a respectful, safe and equitable learning environment, free from discrimination and harassment. Please feel free to discuss any questions or concerns regarding equality in our learning environment with me, either in or before/after class or during office hours.

Texts

There are three central texts available for purchase at the Campus Store:

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. (2009) [1755] *Discourse on Inequality*, translated by Franklin Philip. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tocqueville, Alexis de. (2003) [1835/40] *Democracy in America and Two Essays on America*, translated by Gerald Bevan. Toronto: Penguin Books.

Wollstonecraft, Mary. (2010) [1792] *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*. London: Verso.

All other materials will be available at the circulation desk of the MacDonald Library, online or via Moodle.

Evaluation

Attendance/Participation—10%

Memos—15%

Midterm—15%

Paper (due 20 November)—30%

Final Exam—30%

Attendance for the course is mandatory, though students will be given a few days' grace. Be sure to contact me in advance if you're going to be absent for any length of time (see Accommodation below) Participation is an important element of the course (not just for your participation mark), and students should make every effort to ask questions and to engage in discussions and group work.

For the memos, students are asked to write two pages each on the readings for any five of the sessions. These are due on the Tuesday for that session (i.e. when we begin the topic). These need not be formally structured; reflections on the readings are what I'm looking for: What caught your interest in the readings? Why is this important? How does it relate to other sociological themes and other readings? Avoid summaries or "rehearsals"; I'm interesting here in what you can do with the readings. Note: you can only submit one memo per class so my advice is to start early and get them out of the way.

There will be a brief midterm consisting of a choice of several short-answer questions.

Ideally the paper should be the deployment of one of our authors/topics (one author; one of the readings) to a contemporary aspect of sociological study, in effect making the selected author topical for sociology today. How does the theory determine or change our way of thinking about sociology? What sorts of foundational discussions does it imply; what does it preclude? Alternatively students may develop their own topics. Check with me before you do this. In all cases be sure to have a clear thesis statement and don't forget that papers that argue or try to establish a point are easier to write and easier to read. I'm looking more for clarity and quality, rather than quantity (of pages, of material covered); the papers should be approximately 2000 words in length.

An closed-book, essay-style exam will be scheduled during the regular examination period.

Guidelines for submission

Memos are due on the Tuesday of the corresponding session. For the paper, on the due date (20 November) students must submit a paper copy in class *and* an electronic copy to the instructor with the following subject heading: "Paper – [Last name, first name]". Without the electronic copy you will receive no grade. Late assignments without valid (e.g. verified medical) excuse will be penalized five percentage points per business day. Please use one clear referencing system consistently.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the use of *any* source without acknowledging its author and will not be tolerated in this course. Not only is it a serious breach of academic integrity, but it undermines the efforts of other course participants. Cases of plagiarism will be dealt with in the strictest possible manner and the instructor reserves the right to use all available technical assistance to discover plagiarists. You can read more about academic integrity in the current academic calendar in section 3.8. If you are unsure of anything, please come see me. Remember: there is no justification for plagiarism.

Contact

Please only email me if I can quickly read your email and then answer with a word or two (preferably "yes" or "no"). For any communication more complex, students are welcome to come see me during office hours. Generally no appointment is necessary. If you have difficulty meeting at this time, simply contact me to set up an alternative arrangement.

Accommodations

Any student that requires accommodation of any kind should contact me at the earliest opportunity so that the appropriate arrangements can be made. Also, please contact me at the outset of any prolonged illness or personal matter that might detract from your performance in the class. My goal is to help students navigate this course to a successful conclusion but you are responsible for communicating any potential challenges to me. I am here to support you but I cannot advocate for you if I don't have all the information in a timely manner.

Outline

Session One (4,6 September) – **Welcome and Introduction: Why Study Early Modern Social Thought and What is Modernity Anyway?**

Please skim these readings for 6 September:

Foucault, Michel. (1977) [1975] *Discipline and Punish*, translated by A.M. Sheridan Smith. New York: Vintage. Chapter 1: “The Body of the Condemned”.

Newton, Isaac. (1846) [1687] *The Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*, translated by Andrew Motte. New York: Daniel Adee. Author’s Preface (p. Ixviii) and General Scholium (p. 503).

Session Two (11, 13 September) – **Rousseau’s Critique of Modern Society**

Rousseau. *Discourse on Inequality*. Pages 14–54.

Session Three (18, 20 September) – **Rousseau and Hobbes on Human Nature**

Tuesday

Rousseau. *Discourse on Inequality*, Pages 55–85.

Thursday

Hobbes, Thomas. (1996) [1651] *Leviathan*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 13: “Of the Natural Condition of Mankind.”

Session Four: (25, 27 September) – **Rousseau’s Social Contract**

Tuesday

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. (1923) [1761] *The Social Contract*, translated by G.D.H. Cole. Toronto: J.M. Dent and Sons. Book 1. Available at <http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/rousseau-the-social-contract-and-discourses>.

Thursday

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *The Social Contract*, Book 2. Available at <http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/rousseau-the-social-contract-and-discourses>.

Session Five (2, 4 October) – **Locke on the State of Nature, Contract and Property**

Locke, John. (1998) [1690] Selections from *Two Treatise on Government*. In *Social and Political Theory: Classical Readings*, edited by M. Kimmel and C. Stephen, pp. 24–31. Toronto: Allyn and Bacon.

Macpherson, C.B. (1980) Editors Introduction. In *Second Treatise on Government* by John Locke, edited by C.B. Macpherson, pp. vii–xxi. Indianapolis: Hackett.

Session Six (9, 11 October) – **Sociological Critiques of Contract Theory**

Tuesday

Durkheim, Emile. (1997) [1893] *The Division of Labour in Society*. New York: The Free Press. Book 1, Chapter VII: “Organic Solidarity and Contractual Solidarity.”

Thursday

Ferguson, Adam. [1776] *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*. Part 1, Sections I, II and III.

Session Seven (16, 18 October) – **Edmund Burke on Modern Conservative Thought**

Burke, Edmund. (2007) [1790] Selections from *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. In *Classical Sociological Theory*, edited by M. Kimmel and M. Mahler, pp. 62–74. New York: Oxford.

► Attention: Midterm test on 18 October

Session Eight (23, 25 October) – **Tocqueville: An Early Political Sociologist?**

Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*. Pages 11–26, 58–71, 287–305.

Session Nine (30 October, 1 November) – **Tocqueville on Individualism and Equality**

Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*. Pages 498–503, 58–71, 521–523, 587–589, 591–600, 662–671, 677–683, 700–702, 803–809.

Session Ten (6, 8 November) – **Mary Wollstonecraft on Women, Friendship and Equality**

Wollstonecraft, Mary. (2010) *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*. London: Verso. Pages 9–49.

Session Eleven (13, 15 November) – **Mary Wollstonecraft on Inequality between Men and Women**

Wollstonecraft, Mary. *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*. Pages 50–103, 156–163.

Session Twelve (20, 22 November) – **Adam Smith on Sympathy and Civil Society**

Smith, Adam. (1986) [1790] The Theory of Moral Sentiments [Selections]. In *The Essential Adam Smith*, edited by R. L. Heilbroner, pp. 57–88. New York: Norton.

► Attention: Paper due on 20 November

Session Thirteen (27, 29 November) – **Adam Smith's Economic Thought. Conclusion/Review**

Smith, Adam. (2002) [1776] The Wealth of Nations. In *Classics of Political Philosophy*, edited by S. M. Cahn, pp. 633–51. New York: Oxford University Press.