SOCIOLOGY 375
Social Theory

Fall 2021
Gordon Gauchat
Bolton Hall, Room 742
Office Hours: Tuesday, 1:00PM to 3:00PM and by appointment
Email: gauchat@uwm.edu

Lectures: Tuesdays and Thursday, 11:00AM-12:15PM
Classroom: Bolton Hall B84
Course Website: https://uwmil.instructure.com

Social theories attempt to describe the social world and predict how it will change. This course will focus on the origins of several key social theories that remain influential in social science. We will look at five major theoretical perspectives: rational choice, Durkheimian, Marxian, Weberian, and symbolic interactionism. These theoretical perspectives continue to dominate social science and broader debates about how to organize society and solve the social problems we confront. Thus, throughout the course, we will link these five social theories to contemporary issues and political debates. We will also analyze how these different theories relate to each other; including what the various theories emphasize relative to each other; points of disagreement between them, and points where they are complementary.

Class Organization
This course will revolve around reading primary sources and discussing ideas. I will provide brief lectures that summarize major ideas and provide further context, but we will spend most of class time discussing the readings. Many of the ideas in this course will be complex. The only way to fully engage with complex arguments and ideas is to work through them together. This means “interrogating” the readings, asking questions, mapping out the logic, and making arguments about what we think a reading might mean. Doing this in a group, with your peers, can be very rewarding and fun.

In sum, it is very important that you ask questions and interact with your peers during our class meetings. I adopt the principle that THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A STUPID QUESTION. You should think of this class as a safe environment to voice your views and make sense of new and interesting ideas. Sometimes the simplest questions or the most misdirected comments are the most productive and illuminating ones, and we need to embrace that in this class. To make our exploration of sociological theory as relevant as possible to you, I have organized this class around a common theme: how can social science help us make sense of contemporary society and our everyday life? As you will see, this will be a central element in the papers that you will write. I will also try to make my lectures and our discussions revolve around this theme.
Assignments and Workload
The grading scheme in this course is aimed at encouraging and maximizing the core elements of this class: reading and discussion.

Readings: there will be a considerable amount of reading to do for this class. We have an average of 30 pages per session (with some variability), but some of the texts are more difficult. Remember, you don’t want to “just go through the motions” with the readings (or with life in general, really); instead, you want to engage. This will require more time than a superficial reading. To ensure that you are reading effectively and understanding the texts, I will give you a quiz every Thursday (see the class schedule below for exact dates) at the beginning of class about what you read since the previous quiz. Importantly then, at least some quiz questions about the texts will be about things that we have yet to discuss in class. The quizzes will focus on making sure that you have read, not that you fully understood the readings. My goal here (besides making sure that you are keeping up with the readings) is to help you learn to read intellectually challenging texts. Thus, this class is not only about learning sociological theories, but also how to engage with intellectual materials by identifying arguments and key ideas, even if you miss some of the complicated details. I will distribute a set of questions to guide your reading for each session of the semester. If you are still having difficulty, please come to see me during office hours. Of the 13 quizzes that we will have during the semester, I will drop the three lowest grades. You cannot make up a missed quiz (it will be one of the three dropped grades). Each quiz will be worth 10 points, so the total number of possible points for the quizzes will be 100.

Participation: Class discussion will be central to this course. For that reason, 10 points of your grade will be devoted to participation in class discussions. My main goal is to encourage you to think critically about the readings and bring questions, comments, doubts, and observations to class. People often disagree about how society works or should work, I want everybody to be respectful of other people’s ideas. I want people to feel free to express their viewpoints about the readings and how they relate to society. I only ask that our discussion relate to the course materials (the text or topic of discussion) and help further your understanding of the course materials. I am not expecting everyone to talk in every class, but to be generally engaged and contribute regularly. However, I am aware that it is hard to ensure everyone’s participation in class because we are a relatively large group, because people have different personalities and it is hard for some to speak in public. For this reason, I have set up a discussion board on the CANVAS website where you can post comments and questions about the readings and our sessions. I do not want you to think that writing online posts means that there is no need to participate in the classroom. My main goal is to have a lively class discussion, and thus you should think about the online posts to complement your participation in class. If you are usually engaged and active in class you do not need to write anything online, but if you are on the quiet side and want to get the 10 points for participation you should regularly make meaningful contributions to the online forum. And notice that I say ‘regularly’. Submitting several posts in the last week of class will not make up for the previous fourteen.

Papers: With the quizzes and the points for participation I will ensure that you are reading and critically engaging with the course materials. However, neither of these components will allow you to develop your thoughts in any depth. For this reason, the last required element for this
This is all you will need to do for this course. There are no midterm or final exams. There will be quite a lot of difficult reading, so I want you to focus on doing that and come to class ready to ask questions and discuss. Importantly, the only other requirement for the course will be attendance to class. Attendance is required, and I will take attendance each class. I will allow up to 4 unjustified absences. These are supposed to cover illnesses and other uncontrollable circumstances. They are not a free pass to miss four classes without reason. Therefore, if anyone misses more than four classes I will need to see a justification for ALL the absences if you do not want to be penalized. You are expected to be in class every day, and therefore any unjustified absence beyond the 4 will subtract 3 points from your final grade. And just to be clear: attending a class implies being there for all (or most) of the class and being ‘active and engaged’. Showing up for a quiz and leaving right after it, as well as showing up late or leaving early without reason will be counted as an absence. In the same way, being in class watching videos or writing emails on your laptops (and believe me, it is obvious when you are not using them to take notes for the class) will also be counted as an absence, and I will be the only judge of whether you are ‘active and engaged’.

The grading scheme, therefore, will be the following:

- 10 quizzes x 10 points each = 100 possible points (50%)
- 3 papers x 30 points = 90 possible points (45%)
- Participation = 10 possible points (5%)

TOTAL = 200 possible points (100%)

The final letter grades will be applied over the total possible 200 points in the following way:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>186-200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>180-185.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>174-179.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>166-173.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>160-165.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>154-159.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>146-153.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>140-145.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>134-139.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>120-125.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0-120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This scheme will be strict. If you get 185.9 points your grade is A-, not A. You are warned from the very beginning: if you want a higher grade, you need to work harder (and take advantage of the opportunities that I will give you over the course of the semester). Complaints of the “but I am so close!” at the end of the semester will have no effect. A further comment on ‘complaints’ about grades: I am happy to discuss with you any concerns you might have about how you are evaluated and about your grades. However, I will only make changes to your grades if I have made an obvious mistake. My main concern when I evaluate you is to make sure that I am fair to
everyone in relation to each other. If somebody comes to see me and ‘convinces’ me to increase his or her grade that puts those who just accept their grade and do not come to see me at a disadvantage, and therefore as a policy I do not change grades.

A note on participation in class discussion
As I mentioned above, your active participation will be a key element of the learning experience in this class, so I want to make sure that it is clear what I mean: participating in class is not a function of speaking a lot or of making only brilliant points. My main criterion for evaluating participation is: does this comment move the conversation forward? This can happen by asking a very simple question of clarification, or by saying something that is completely wrong but allows us to confront an issue that we had not considered before. Someone who speaks non-stop or who shuts other people off is in fact stifling debate, and that is the exact opposite of what I am looking for. As I said before, I want to encourage you all to participate, thus the principle that there is no such thing as a stupid question or comment in this class. But I do ask you to be mindful: you are part of a group, and our goal is to move forward and learn together. Disrupting the conversation or putting someone else down is not acceptable and I will be strict about that.

Office hours, email
I will hold office hours every Tuesday from 1:00PM to 3:00PM. I am happy to see you by appointment at other times if you cannot make the office hours. You should see this as a resource to which you have access to seek clarification, to discuss issues both with the material and the functioning of the class, or simply to make your views known about specific topics and readings. Given the difficulty of some of the material that we will be covering this semester, you should make use of office hours! You can also contact me by email at any point during the semester. I will try to reply to your messages promptly. However, you should always allow 24-72 hours for my replies. Therefore, you should not wait until the last minute to ask me important questions. Plan ahead!
### COURSE SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Due</th>
<th>Topic, and Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Week 1**  
Sept 2 | Introductions  
- No Readings |
| **Week 2**  
Sept 7, 9 | What are social theories? The origins of social theories in historical context.  
- Robert Nisbet, *The Sociological Tradition*, ch.2, "The Two Revolutions" (pp. 20-44)  
- Quiz 1 |
| **Week 3**  
Sept 14, 16 | Rational Choice/Utilitarian Theory: King James I, Hobbes, Locke, the problem of order  
- King James I, "Speech to Parliament 1610" (pp. 1-2)  
- Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (pp. 1-8)  
- John Locke, *Two Treatises of Civil Government* (pp. 1-36)  
- Quiz 2 |
| **Week 4**  
Sept 21, 23 | Rational Choice/Utilitarian Theory (cont’d): Smith, Bentham: Economy and Moral Order  
- Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* chs. 1&2 on the "Division of Labor" (pp. 1-11)  
- Adam Smith, "The Invisible Hand" (one page)  
- Quiz 3 |
| **Week 5**  
Sept 28, 30 | Introduction to Marx and Marxism: Alienation and Social change/revolution  
- Karl Marx, *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, "Estranged Labor" (p. 1-14)  
- Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto* (pp. 1-32)  
- Quiz 4 |
| **Week 6**  
Oct 5, 7 | Marx and Marxism (cont’d): The Materialist Conception of History  
- Friedrich Engels, "Socialism: Utopian and Scientific" (pp. 1-19)  
- Quiz 5 |
| **Week 7**  
Oct 12, 14 | Marx’s Concept of Class Updated  
- Erik Olin Wright, “A General Framework for the Analysis of Class” (pp. 108-123)  
**PAPER 1 DUE IN CANVAS BY 11:59PM, Friday Oct 15** |
| **Week 8**  
Oct 19, 21 | Introduction to Durkheim: The Division of Labor and Mechanical Society  
- Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society* (pp. 11-29; 31-64)  
- Quiz 6 |
| **Week 9**  
Oct 26, 28 | Durkheim and the Division of Labor (cont’d): Organic Solidarity, the Causes, Abnormal Forms, and Suicide and the Division of Labor  
- Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*, (pp. 68-86; 200-05)  
- Bearman, “The Social Structure of Suicide” (pp. 501-24)  
- Quiz 7 |
| **Week 10**  
Nov 2, 4 | Introduction to Max Weber: Ideas and culture as "effective forces in history"  
- Quiz 8 |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 11</th>
<th>Nov 9, 11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Quiz 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 12</th>
<th>Nov 16, 18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weber’s concept of “Rationalization” updated to “McDonaldization”</td>
<td>- Ritzer, <em>The McDonaldization of Society</em> (chs. 1 and 2, pp. 1-42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Quiz 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PAPER 2 DUE IN CANVAS BY 11:59PM, Friday November 12**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 13</th>
<th>Nov 30, Dec 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to Symbolic Interactionism</td>
<td>- Mead: selections from <em>Mind Self, and Society</em> (pp. 135-64; 173-78; 192-200)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Blumer: &quot;Society as Symbolic Interaction&quot; (pp. 206-13)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Quiz 11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 14</th>
<th>Dec 7, 9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic Interactionism’s Concept of “Self” Updated</td>
<td>- Itzigsohn &amp; Brown, <em>Sociology and the Theory of Double Consciousness</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Quiz 12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 15</th>
<th>Dec 14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moving Forward, Introduction to Contemporary Theory</td>
<td>- Anthony Giddens, <em>Capitalism &amp; Modern Social Theory</em>, ch. 15 &quot;Social Differentiation…” (224-42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Quiz 13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PAPER 3 DUE IN CANVAS BY 11:59PM, Friday DEC 17**

---

**UNIVERSITY AND SOCIOLOGY DEPARTMENT POLICIES**

The Secretary of the University maintains a web page that contains university policies that affect the instructor and the students in this course, as well as essential information specific to conduct of the course. The link to that page is: [http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/news_events/upload/Syllabus-Links.pdf](http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/news_events/upload/Syllabus-Links.pdf)

1. **Students with disabilities.** Notice to these students should appear prominently in the syllabus so that special accommodations are provided in a timely manner. [http://uwm.edu/arc/](http://uwm.edu/arc/)
2. **Religious observances.** Accommodations for absences due to religious observance should be noted. [https://apps.uwm.edu/secu-policies/storage/other/SAAP%201-2.%20Accommodation%20of%20Religious%20Beliefs.pdf](https://apps.uwm.edu/secu-policies/storage/other/SAAP%201-2.%20Accommodation%20of%20Religious%20Beliefs.pdf)
3. **Students called to active military duty.** Accommodations for absences due to call-up of reserves to active military duty should be noted. Students: [http://uwm.edu/active-duty-military/](http://uwm.edu/active-duty-military/) Employees: [https://www.wisconsin.edu/ohrwd/download/policies/ops/bn9.pdf](https://www.wisconsin.edu/ohrwd/download/policies/ops/bn9.pdf)
4. **Incompletes.** A notation of "incomplete" may be given in lieu of a final grade to a student who has carried a subject successfully until the end of a semester but who, because of illness or other unusual and substantiated cause beyond the student's control, has been unable to take or complete the final examination or to complete some limited amount of term work. [https://apps.uwm.edu/secu-policies/storage/other/SAAP%201-13.%20Incomplete%20Grades.pdf](https://apps.uwm.edu/secu-policies/storage/other/SAAP%201-13.%20Incomplete%20Grades.pdf)
5. **Discriminatory conduct.** Discriminatory conduct will not be tolerated by the University. It poisons the work and learning environment of the University and threatens the careers, educational experience, and well-being of students, faculty, and staff. [https://apps.uwm.edu/secu-policies/storage/other/SAAP%201-05-1.%20Discriminatory%20Conduct%20Policy.pdf](https://apps.uwm.edu/secu-policies/storage/other/SAAP%201-05-1.%20Discriminatory%20Conduct%20Policy.pdf)
6. **Title IX/Sexual Violence.** Title IX is a federal law that prohibits sex discrimination in education program or activities, and UWM policy prohibits such conduct (see Discriminatory Conduct, above). This includes sexual violence, which may include sexual harassment, sexual assault, relationship violence, and/or stalking in all educational programs and education-related areas. UWM strongly encourages its students to report any instance of sex discrimination to UWM’s Title IX Coordinator (titleix@uwm.edu). Whether or not a student wishes to report an incident of sexual violence, the Title IX Coordinator can connect students to resources at UWM and/or in the community including, but not limited to, victim advocacy, medical and counseling services, and/or law enforcement. For more information, please visit: https://uwm.edu/sexual-assault/.

7. **Academic misconduct.** Cheating on exams or plagiarism are violations of the academic honor code and carry severe sanctions, including failing a course or even suspension or dismissal from the University. https://uwm.edu/deanofstudents/academic-misconduct/

8. **Complaint procedures.** Students may direct complaints to the head of the academic unit or department in which the complaint occurs. If the complaint allegedly violates a specific university policy, it may be directed to the head of the department or academic unit in which the complaint occurred or to the appropriate university office responsible for enforcing the policy. https://apps.uwm.edu/secu-policies/storage/other/SAAP%205-1.%20Discriminatory%20Conduct%20Policy.pdf

9. **Grade appeal procedures.** A student may appeal a grade on the grounds that it is based on a capricious or arbitrary decision of the course instructor. Such an appeal shall follow the established procedures adopted by the department, college, or school in which the course resides or in the case of graduate students, the Graduate School. These procedures are available in writing from the respective department chairperson or the Academic Dean of the College/School. https://apps.uwm.edu/secu-policies/storage/other/SAAP%201-10.%20Grade%20Appeals%20by%20Students.pdf

10. **LGBT+ resources.** Faculty and staff can find resources to support inclusivity of students who identify as LGBT+ in the learning environment. http://uwm.edu/lgbtrc/


12. **Final Examinations.** Information about the final exam requirement, the final exam date requirement, and make-up examinations. https://apps.uwm.edu/secu-policies/storage/other/SAAP%201-9.%20Final%20Examinations.pdf