Sociology 200
Classical Sociological Theory
Wellesley College, Fall 2006

Thomas Cushman
Office Hours, PNE334
   Monday 4:00-6:00; Thursday, 4:00-5:00

Course Description

This course provides an introduction to the thought of several key figures who are considered the founders of sociology as a discipline in the 19th and early 20th century. Our particular focus is on how these thinkers experienced wrote and thought about the nature of social order as well as the causes and consequences of the transition from feudal society to industrial society, or what sociologists refer to as modernity.

Required Texts

The following texts are available at Wellesley College Bookstore and on reserve at Knapp:


Additional required readings will be available in the E-reserve section of the course conference and will be noted in each section of the syllabus.

Course Requirements

A. Mid-Term Exam (short answer and essays on lectures and readings), in class, Monday, October 23
B. Final Examination (self-scheduled, in class, blue book)
C. Three Papers on topics to be announced: Due dates: Paper 1, October 5; Paper 2, November 13; Paper 3, December 12. All papers are due in class, late papers will be penalized ½ letter grade for each day late.
D. **Class Attendance and Participation:** is mandatory and will be taken each class period.

**Course Outline and Reading Assignments**

**September 7:** Introduction to the class and its objectives. What is theory? What is sociological theory? Why is theory important?

**September 11-15** Historical Origins and Foundations of Sociological Theory.
- Reading: Ken Morrison, Introduction

**September 18-25** The Early Positivists: Adolphe Quetelet and Auguste Comte.
  - Lewis Coser, “Auguste Comte” (er)
  - Auguste Comte, “Population Increase and the Law of Three Stages” (er)

**September 28-October 2** Social Evolutionism: Herbert Spencer
- Reading: Lewis Coser, “Herbert Spencer”, chapter to be handed out in class
  - Herbert Spencer, “Social Structure and Function”; Progress: Its Law and Cause (er),

**October 5 - 19** Historical Materialism and Practice: Karl Marx
- Reading: Ken Morrison, Chapter 2 on Marx (in entirety)
  - Karl Marx (all er), “Reflections of a Youth on Choosing an Occupation”; “Theses on Feuerbach” ; “The Preface to a Critique of Political Economy”
  (above: basic assumptions, models, philosophy)
  (below: specific workings of capitalism and program for change)

Mid-term Exam, in class, October 23

October 26-November 9 Moral Bases of Society, Social Solidarity, and Social Disorganization: Emile Durkheim
Reading: Ken Morrison, Chapter 3 on Durkheim
Robert Bellah, “Introduction in On Morality and Society
Emile Durkheim, Chapters 1–5 (Intellectual background)
Chapters 6–9 (Social Solidarity, Division of Labor)
Chapter 10 (Dualism of Humans)
Chapters 11–12 (Religion)
(Readings listed for Durkheim in clusters to be discussed in specific classes)

November 13–30 Action, Rationalization, Power, and Modernity: Max Weber
Reading: Ken Morrison, Chapter 4 on Weber
Max Weber, “The Rationalism of Western Civilization” (er) (Rationality)
“The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism”, in entirety (Rationalization)
“Bureaucracy”, (er) (Power and Domination)

November 30-December 11 On Individuality and Social Forms: Georg Simmel
Reading: Georg Simmel, “How is Society Possible? (er), “Conflict” (er) (Social Order)
“The Stranger”; “The Poor” (er) (Social Types)
“The Metropolis and Mental Life”
(Modernity)