Course Objectives

Knowledge
• Explore the key problems and frames of analysis featured in classical social theory
• Investigate the historical contexts that have informed the construction and promotion of classical social theory
• Review contemporary debates surrounding the ‘canonization’ of particular texts and celebration of particular scholars as ‘classical’
• Review the contemporary and enduring relevance of Karl Marx, Max Weber, Emile Durkheim and Georg Simmel as guides for understanding our times.

Skills and Abilities
• Develop an ability to critically assess ‘classical’ frames of analysis in social theory.
• Develop the ability to evaluate contemporary interpretations of classic texts in social theory.
• Develop the ability to critically apply classical social theory to understanding contemporary world problems
• Develop an ability to critically assess contrasting portrayals and accounts of classical social theory.

Learning outcomes
• Students will demonstrate their knowledge and skills through by writing a coursework essay.

Session Schedule:

1. **Introductory: Classical Social Theory and Key Problems of Modernity**

Recommended Reading:


2. Karl Marx

In His Own Words

Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right (1844)

Eleven Theses on Feuerbach (1845)

The German Ideology (1846)

The Communist Manifesto (1848)

A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (1859)

Value Price and Profit (1865)

Capital (vol. 1) (1867) (vol. 2, 1893 & vol. 3 1894)

Useful sources for selected highlights:

Marx, K (1977) [edited by David Mclellan] Selected Writings, Oxford University Press


https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/

Useful Commentaries


**Some Current Debates**


3. Max Weber

**In His Own Words**

*The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904 & 1905)
*The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism* (1915)
*Economic Ethics of the World Religions* (1915-16)
*Methodology of the Social Sciences* (1903-1917)
*Ancient Judaism* (1917-19)
*Politics as a Vocation* (1919)
*Science as a Vocation* (1919)
*Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions* (1920)
*The City* (1921)
*Economy and Society* (posthumous 1922)
*General Economic History - The Social Causes of the Decay of Ancient Civilisation* (posthumous 1927)

Useful sources for selected highlights:


http://www.sociosite.net/topics/weber.php
Useful Commentaries


Some Current Debates


4. **Emile Durkheim**

**In His Own Words**

*The Division of Labour in Society* (1893)

*The Rules of Sociological Method* (1895)

*Suicide: A Study in Sociology* (1897)

*The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1912)

*Education and Sociology* (posthumous 1922)

*Sociology and Philosophy* (posthumous 1924)

*Moral Education* (posthumous 1925)

*Socialism* (posthumous 1928)

*Pragmatism and Sociology* (posthumous 1955)

*Professional Ethics and Civic Morals* (posthumous 1957)

Useful sources for selected highlights:


Durkheim, E. (1973) [edited by Robert Bellah] *Émile Durkheim on Morality and Society*, University of Chicago Press


[http://durkheim.uchicago.edu/](http://durkheim.uchicago.edu/)

[http://media.pfeiffer.edu/iridener/DSS/#durkheim](http://media.pfeiffer.edu/iridener/DSS/#durkheim)
Useful Commentaries


Nisbet, R. (1965) *Émile Durkheim*, Prentice-Hall


Wolff, K. (1960) *Émile Durkheim 1858-1917*, Ohio State University Press

Some Current Debates


5. Georg Simmel

In his Own Words


*The Philosophy of Money* (1900)

*Schopenhauer and Nietzsche* (1907)

*Sociology: Inquiries into the Construction of Social Forms* (1908)

*Rembrandt* (1916)

*The View of Life: Four Metaphysical Essays With Journal Aphorisms* (1918)

Useful sources for selected highlights:


[https://archive.org/stream/sociologyofgeorg030082mbp/sociologyofgeorg030082mbp_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/sociologyofgeorg030082mbp/sociologyofgeorg030082mbp_djvu.txt)

[http://media.pfeiffer.edu/lridener/DSS/#simmel](http://media.pfeiffer.edu/lridener/DSS/#simmel)

Useful Commentaries


**Some Current Debates**


6. Critical Assessments and New Developments

Key readings


Supplementary Reading


Methodology

The course consists of an introductory session that review some of issues and the problems featured on contemporary scholarship on classical social theory. Subsequent sessions focus on key texts in the canon of classical social theory. Each session offers a critical assessment of the contemporary relevance of classical frames of social analysis. Students will be provided with study questions in advance of each session and will be encouraged to discuss these in class.

Coursework will consist of a 5000-word essay on the issues raised through the course. Students will be provided with a list of essay questions for this purpose.

Evaluation

Written coursework: 100% of final grade
Contact Hours

Consulting location and hours:

Email: i.m.wilkinson@kent.ac.uk

Characteristics of written work:

Extension 5000 words

Coursework will be assessed according to the following criteria:

- Structure of the work
- Knowledge and understanding
- Depth of analysis
- Clarity and rigour of argumentation
- Grammatical and syntactical correctness
- Consistency of referencing