Nature of the Course:
This is a required course on sociological theory primarily for graduate students in sociology. No one semester course in sociological theory can be exhaustive. This course is intended to introduce you to “the lay of the land” in classical and contemporary sociology by emphasizing the in-depth study of primary texts of four major historical figures – Marx, Weber, Durkheim and Mead. It uses these texts to understand in more general terms the role of metatheory in theoretical and empirical analyses, as well as to consider alternative ways of putting together ideas and evidence in sociological research. The course will show you how the theoretical traditions associated with Marx, Weber, Durkheim and Mead “live” in various ways in contemporary sociological theory and research. This includes examining how these traditions have provided intellectual resources for current theory and empirical research on major topics in macrosociology [or social organization] and microsociology [or social psychology]. As well, it includes considering how these traditions have been built on and critiqued by such major contemporary perspectives as feminist sociology. Although full consideration of American sociology’s institutional history in its larger cross-national context is beyond the scope of the course, Soc 8701 does introduce you to some institutional as well as intellectual history of sociology. It will give you a sense of how sociology’s institutional history, intellectual history and current landscape are interconnected.

Requirements:

Written Assignments:
There will be two open book take-home written examinations. Students will have one week to complete each of them. Each exam will consist of from 1-3 essay questions. Questions may have multiple sub-parts. The exams will call for you to pull together various ideas and assumptions, draw out implications of these ideas and assumptions, and compare and contrast basic perspectives of the theorists. Exams will provide you with an opportunity to wrestle with fundamental issues and ideas that are important to the field.

Prior to the first exam, I will provide you with additional information on what you can expect. In addition, exams will be distributed in class with ample time for everyone to read through the questions and instructions and ask about anything that remains unclear. That way, we can be sure that everyone has understood what is expected, and that any additional clarifying instructions and information are provided equally to all of you.

Your written assignments will have a page limit. They must be typewritten and not handwritten.
Class Participation:
This course is a combination of lecture and seminar style discussion. Ordinarily, I will provide orienting lecture material before we engage in discussion. Often, I will provide you with a discussion question or questions to think about in advance. I also will encourage you to submit your own questions for class discussion. There are no formal classroom presentations, but you will get the most out of the class if you are an active participant in class discussion. The kind of lively and thought provoking interchange that enhances both individual and collective learning and enjoyment depends on active engagement and participation from each of you, as well as from me. Outstanding performance in class discussions will be formally rewarded if your grade is otherwise on the borderline between two grades. [See grading below.]

Grading:
There will be +/- grading. The examination on which you do best will count for 2/3 of your grade. The other examination will count for 1/3 of your grade. If your grade is on the borderline between two grades (e.g., between A- and B+, between B and B-, etc.), outstanding performance in class discussions will be taken into account in your favor in assigning a final grade.

Because this is a graduate course, any grade of C+ or below will be considered an unsatisfactory performance.

I will read your examinations carefully. In grading, I will pay particular attention to the clarity and logic of your arguments, as well as to the evidence that you provide for your arguments. To receive a good grade, you do NOT need to try and reproduce the answer you think that I might give to questions that I ask. You DO need to advance a clear, well organized, well thought out and developed argument, one that proceeds logically and one that provides appropriate evidence for your assertions/position. You also must think for yourself. If you use or develop somebody else’s ideas in constructing your response to an examination question, you must credit the proper source.

Throughout the semester, I strongly encourage you to discuss and debate course issues and materials with each other outside of class. However, when it comes time to formulate responses to distributed examination questions, you are expected to work solo. Scholastic dishonesty and plagiarism will not be tolerated.

Other Administrative:
If you are unable to make my office hours because of another class, employment or child care obligations, please give me advance notice so that we can schedule an alternative appointment. I am happy to schedule appointments to meet with you, but I can not be available to meet with you outside of my office hours unless you and I have made an appointment. If you would like to schedule an appointment for sometime other than my
normal office hours, you are invited to check in with me immediately after class. You also may telephone me at the office or e-mail me to schedule an appointment.

Please do not telephone me at home unless it is a dire emergency. E-mail is the best way to get in touch with me. You can expect regular—but not instantaneous—turn around.

If you have a disability that may require some modification of any aspect of the course, please see me so that reasonable accommodation can be made.

**Readings:**
Below, you will find listed for each section of the course a set of books and articles that are the *required reading* for that section. For each section, there also are some *recommended readings*. Recommended readings are listed, by week to which they correspond, at the end of your syllabus.

Since primary texts of Durkheim, Marx, Weber and Mead constitute most of the required reading, recommended readings include a select group of “overview” secondary sources, commentaries and interpretive work. Recommended readings include sources that comment on the theorists directly as well as sources that do not directly comment on or about the particular theorists, but do discuss relevant theoretical issues. Thus, in addition to contemporary sources interpreting one or more of the major thinkers we are examining, recommended readings include some more recent statements about key ideas and issues raised by the texts we examine.

Again, I want to emphasize that the course requires you to read in-depth and engage seriously with the required reading, but does not assume that you will read any of the recommended readings. However, if you find that you are having difficulties with required primary texts, recommended readings (as well as class lectures and discussion) can help orient you. As well, the list of recommended readings provides you with a set of resources for your ongoing education—to be consulted if and when you find useful as you develop your skills and interests throughout your graduate school training.

Because this course focuses on in-depth engagement with a small number of central theorists and theoretical traditions, it can not provide coverage of every theorist or tradition that has been important or useful to the development of sociology, sociological theory and sociologists. For the beginning of an orientation to various classical and contemporary figures and perspectives that this course does not examine in depth, you can consult the following: *Handbook of Social Theory*, edited by George Ritzer and Barry Smart (Sage, 2001); *Classical Sociological Theory*, edited by Craig Calhoun, Joseph Gerteis et al (Blackwell, 2003); *Contemporary Sociological Theory*, edited by Craig Calhoun, Joseph Gerteis et al (Blackwell, 2003); George Ritzer. *Sociological Theory* (5th Edition, 2000, McGraw-Hill), and Irving Zeitlin, *Ideology and the Development of Sociological Theory* (7th edition, Prentice-Hall, 2001).

For additional training in contemporary sociological theory and social theory more generally, I encourage you to take graduate courses in major substantive areas of your
interest, both in- and outside sociology, as well as additional graduate courses and seminars in theory or theory construction, philosophy of science, logic, etc. offered in this and diverse other departments and programs. Which other courses will be most useful for your own intellectual and professional development will of course vary, depending on your own background, interests, goals, etc. I am pleased to discuss such issues with you, and offer what guidance I can. UM has a wealth of resources to help further your development.

Required Books:
The following books will be used extensively in the course. They are available at the UM Bookstore. I have ordered paperback editions whenever possible. I also have placed copies of these books on reserve in Wilson Library. Whenever possible, Wilson Reserve will have the same edition/translation that we are using in class. However, please be aware that the edition or translation placed on reserve can not always correspond exactly to the edition/translation ordered through the bookstore more generally for the class.

Emile Durkheim. The Rules of Sociological Method. [1895].
Emile Durkheim. The Division of Labor in Society. [1893].
Emile Durkheim. The Elementary Forms of Religious Life. [1912].
Emile Durkheim. Suicide: A Study in Sociology. [1897].
Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. The Communist Manifesto. [1848].
Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. The German Ideology.
Irving Zeitlin, Ideology and the Development of Sociological Theory, 7th ed., 2000, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall. (Wilson library owns only through the 3rd edition, 1987, so the 3rd edition will be on Wilson Reserve. We will have a copy of the 7th edition available in the Teaching Resources Center.)

Required Articles:
In addition to the above-listed required books, we will make use of a number of required articles, and also some excerpts from edited volumes and out-of-print books. These will
be available either through Wilson Reserve or the TRC. You will find the location of each reading at the appropriate point on the syllabus.

**Some Recommended Books:**
The following recommended books will be useful during large parts of the course. All of these have been placed on reserve in Wilson Library. Some of you may wish to purchase one or more of these books as resources for yourselves.

Anthony Giddens. 1971. *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory: An Analysis of the Writings of Marx, Durkheim and Weber* Cambridge University Press. [Wilson may not be able to locate its copy of this book, but I have purchased one for the TRC.]


Here are some recent fairly non-technical and very thought-provoking works that are both great reads and provide contemporary statements and developments pertaining to some of the major issues that confronted the classical theorists and continue to confront us today.


COURSE CALENDAR AND OUTLINE:
WEEK 1 (September 2-4) Introduction: Sociology and Sociological Theory
REQUIRED READING:
Irving Zeitlin, Ideology and The Development of Sociological Theory, Chapters 1-12, covering the Enlightenment, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Mary Wollstonecraft, Romantic-Conservative Reaction, Bonald and Maistre, St. Simon, Compte and de Tocqueville, Harriet Martineau, Harriet Taylor and John Stuart Mill [about 140 pages total, bookstore purchase, 3rd edition on reserve in Wilson will not have the material on Martineau, Taylor and Mill].
Albion Small, “The Era of Sociology.” American Journal of Sociology 1 (July 1895), reprinted in AJS 100 ix-xxiii [TRC].

WEEKS 2-5: Durkheim and Durkheimian Legacies:
WEEK 2 (September 9-11): REQUIRED READING:

WEEK 3 (September 16-18): REQUIRED READING
Emile Durkheim, The Rules of Sociological Method. (147 pages total)
Emile Durkheim, Suicide. Introduction, Book 1, Chapter 1 “ Suicide and Psychopathic States,” Book II, “Social Causes and Social Types,” Book III, Chapter 1 “The Social Element of Suicide.” (220 pages total)
(about 370 total pages of reading)

Week 4 (September 23-25): REQUIRED READING
WEEK 5 (September 30-October 2): REQUIRED READING

WEEKS 6-9: Marx and Marxist Legacies:

WEEK 6 (October 7-9): REQUIRED READING
Marx, opening pages of *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, in *The Essential Marx*, edited by Ernst Fischer, pp. 167-72 [TRC]
Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, Part I “Feuerbach” (95 pages)
(about 150 total pages of reading)

WEEK 7 (October 14-16): REQUIRED READING
Part I, Chapter I “Commodities,”
Part II, Chapter VI, “The Buying and Selling of Labour Power,”
(approximately 133 pages total for reading from *Capital*)
(about 165 total pages of reading for the week)
WEEK 8 (October 21-23): REQUIRED READING
Part IV “Production of Relative Surplus Value,” Chapters XII “The Concept of Relative Surplus Value,” Chapter XIII, “Co-operation,” Chapter XIV, Sections 4-5, (Section 4 is the Division of Labor in Manufacture and Division of Labor in Society, Chapter 5 is The Capitalistic Character of Manufacture);
Part IV, Chapter XV “Machinery and Modern Industry, read from the beginning up until Section 6;
(about 230 total pages of reading)

WEEK 9 (October 28-30): REQUIRED READING
(about 105 total pages of reading)

TAKE HOME MID-TERM EXAM distributed in class on Thursday, October 30. Due on Thursday, November 6 at the beginning of class.

WEEKS 10-13: Weber and Weberian Legacies:

WEEK 10 (November 4-6): REQUIRED READING

Week 11 (November 11-13): REQUIRED READING
Week 11 Reading, continued:

Chapter II “Sociological Categories of Economic Action,” Parts 1-26 (pp. 63-154).
Chapter III “The Types of Legitimate Domination,” Parts 1-12a, 14 (pp. 212-254, 266).
Also, in Vol. 2 of Economy and Society, pp. 654-58 “The Categories of Legal Thought” [TRC]
(about 250 total pages of reading)

WEEK 12 (November 18-20): REQUIRED READING
(about 245 total pages of reading)

WEEK 13 (November 25): Reduced Reading, November 27 is Thanksgiving.
REQUIRED READING:

WEEKS 14-15: Mead and Symbolic Interaction:

WEEKS 14 (December 2-4): REQUIRED READING
George Herbert Mead on Social Psychology, Part I, Chapter 2 “Problem of Society: How We Become Selves.
Part III, Chapter 4 “Mind Approached Through Behavior -- Can Its Study Be Made Scientific?”
[TRC and on order for Wilson library]
(about 225 total pages of reading)

WEEK 15 (December 9-11). NO REQUIRED READING. You will want to be consolidating your knowledge and preparing for distribution of the take-home Final Examination, on Thursday, December 11.

TAKE HOME FINAL EXAMINATION distributed in class on Thursday, December 11. Due on Thursday, December 18 (in my mailbox) at 4:30 p.m.
Recommended Readings:

**WEEK 1: Sociology and Sociological Theory**

*On the nature of science:*

*On Social Science and Social Service*

*On institutional and intellectual history in American sociology*

**WEEK 2, Durkheim, Division of Labor**

*Interpreting and Critiquing Durkheim and Division of Labor*
Giddens, *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory*, Part II (Durkheim), Chapter 5 “Durkheim’s Early Works,” Chapter 7 “Individualism, socialism and the ‘occupational groups’” [TRC]

**Some key issues:**
“Functional Causal Imagery” [Wilson Reserve].

*A Phenomenological Take on Durkheim’s concept of anomie*

**Utilitarian foundations of solidarity?**

**WEEK 3: Durkheim, The Rules and Suicide**

*Interpreting and Critiquing Durkheim, The Rules and Suicide*
Giddens, *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory*, Part II (Durkheim), Chapter 6, “Durkheim’s conception of sociological method.”

**Some Key Issues**
WEEK 4: Durkheim and Elementary Forms

Interpreting and Critiquing Durkheim, Elementary Forms
Zeitlin, Ideology and the Development of Sociological Theory, 7th edition, Chapter 22
Giddens, Capitalism and Modern Social Theory, Part II (Durkheim), Chapter 8,
“Religion and moral discipline.” [TRC and JSTOR].

Some key issues

Testing Durkheim?

Norms and human agency

WEEK 5: Durkheimian Legacies

Interpretation and Critique of Parsons and Merton

Social Order and Social Integration
WEEK 6: Marx and Historical Materialism

Interpreting and Critiquing Marx
Giddens, *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory*, Part I: Marx, Chapter 1 “Marx’s Early Writings.” [TRC]

Some key Issues

WEEK 7: Marx and Historical Materialism, continued

Interpreting and Critiquing Marx

Some key issues

WEEK 8: Marx, Capitalism and Laws of Capitalist Development

Interpreting and Critiquing Marx
Capitalism and Patriarchy

Some Key Issues
Casti, *Complexification*, Chapter 4 “The Lawless.” [Wilson Reserve]

WEEK 9: Marxist Legacies

Out of one, many:


Some Empirical Exemplars


Race, Class and Gender


14
WEEK 10, Weber and The Protestant Ethic

Interpreting, Critiquing Weber


American Sociological Review 45:925-42 [TRC and JSTOR].

WEEK 11, Weber, Key Concepts; Economy, State and Society

Interpreting, Critiquing Weber
Giddens, Capitalism and Modern Social Theory, Chapters 11 & 12, “Fundamental concepts of sociology.” Rationalization, the world religions and Western capitalism,” [TRC]

Some Key Issues
Giddens, Capitalism and Modern Social Theory, Part 4 “Capitalism, socialism and social theory.” [TRC]
Erik Olin Wright. 1978. Class, Crisis and the State, Chapter 4 (comparing Weber and Lenin on bureaucracy) [Wilson Reserve]
Robert Alford and Roger Friedland. Powers of Theory, Part II “The Managerial Perspective” (pp. 161-268) [Wilson Reserve]

Week 12, Weber’s Methods

Interpreting, Critiquing Weber
Giddens, Capitalism and Modern Social Theory, Chapter 10 “Weber’s methodological essays.” [TRC]
Some Key Issues

WEEK 13, Weberian Legacies

Rationalization and Legitimation

State Autonomy and Capacity

The [not so?] new economic sociology
**Ideas and Evidence**  
Stanley Lieberson. 1991. “Small N’s and Big Conclusions: An Examination of the Reasoning in Comparative Studies Based on a Small Number of Cases.” *Social Forces* 70:307-20 [TRC and JSTOR].


**Weeks 14-15: Mead and Symbolic Interaction**

**Interpreting and Critiquing Mead**


**Social Structure, Self and Identity**


**Structure and Agency**


**Consciousness**


Emergence
Casti, Complexification, Chapter 6 “The Emergent.” [Wilson Reserve].

More context for Mead and the development of symbolic interaction
Louis Menand. 2001. The Metaphysical Club [pragmatism(s) and progressivism(s) including Dewey and his precursors, their relationship to DuBois and to Chicago school sociology] [Wilson Reserve].
George Ritzer, Sociological Theory, Chapter 10 “Symbolic Interactionism.” You may also wish to read Ritzer’s Chapter on Georg Simmel and his chapter on Ethnomethodology [TRC, with 3rd edition on Wilson Reserve].