



Lakehead University, Fall 2021  
Department of Sociology

# **SOCI 3410: Early Sociological Theory**

Web-based: <https://mycourselink.lakeheadu.ca/d2l/home/87298>

## **Course Director**

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Office Hours: By appointment, via Zoom

## **Course Description**

Classic sociological theory is the foundation upon which the discipline is based and marks the earliest attempts to define the scientific study of society. It is thus as much about crafting theories about social life as it is about determining what the proper objects of sociological inquiry should be.

SOCI 3410 takes a comprehensive look at the theoretical foundations of sociology by exploring how five main authors — Marx, Weber, Simmel, Durkheim, and Mead — developed theoretical systems in response to the economic, political, and cultural conditions of Western social life in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These authors more than any others shaped the trajectory of sociology that was to come afterwards. To fully appreciate the depth and breadth of their insight, students will read primary excerpts of the major works that they produced.

Since this is an intermediary-level course, familiarity with the foundational sociological categories and principles is assumed. Students should subsequently have SOCI 1100 and SOCI 2111 successfully completed.

## **Course Objectives**

The purpose of this course is twofold. First, the course is designed to provide an extensive overview of classic sociological authors and their theories about the social world. This will give students an appreciation for the context and development of early sociological theory and provide the conceptual background upon which to understand contemporary social thought.

Second, and just as important, our objective is to determine whether the social theory of classic scholars holds contemporary relevance for our modern social worlds. Or, while reading about the history and development of social thought is surely a worthwhile exercise in its own right, we want to go one step further and determine the degree to which these theories can be usefully applied to our lives today. This will take abstract theory and determine whether it aligns with the practical realities of everyday experience.

At the course's conclusion, students will have an appreciation of the classical foundations of sociological theory and a critical understanding of how this body of work applies — or doesn't — to contemporary social life.

## Course Organization

The course will be broken up into five sections, each attending to the life and work of an early social theorist. Classes will provide an overview of the historical context of an author's system of thought, an explanation of the main components of their theoretical framework, and a critical discussion about their contemporary relevance. A film will cap off each section in order to embed the theory within a modern social situation. I will aim to post two lectures each week: one on Wednesday, one on Friday.

## Evaluation

Final grades will be based on the following breakdown:

1. Analytic Paper - Marx	17%	September 30, 11:59 pm
1. Analytic Paper - Weber	17%	October 21, 11:59 pm
1. Analytic Paper - Simmel	17%	November 4, 11:59 pm
1. Analytic Paper - Durkheim	17%	November 18, 11:59 pm
1. Analytic Paper - Mead	17%	December 2, 11:59 pm
2. Presentation	15%	December 12, 11:59 pm

1. Students are responsible for writing an **analytic paper** for each of the five main theorists covered in this course. Papers should critically assess the relevance of a particular social theory for understanding contemporary social life. Although some degree of synthesis and review is expected, top marks will be awarded for papers that practically apply and critically evaluate the argument within. Each paper should be between 5 - 7 pages, double-spaced, and follow standard writing conventions concerning style and citation. Page length does not include the bibliography. Papers should include external sources, one of which must be related to a contemporary event or situation. Please do not draw on any examples I use in class. All assignments must be handed in on the course D2L site before the due dates listed above. MS Word or Apple Pages formats only; no PDFs or Google Docs, please. When uploading files, please use this naming convention: [Last name] - SOCI 3410 - [Assignment name].
2. A ten-minute **presentation** will be due on December 12th. After writing a series of reaction papers that critically evaluate the contemporary relevance of classical theorists, students will develop a presentation on the one person/theory that they feel is most applicable to modern social life. A small portion of the presentation should be used to review core concepts but emphasis should be placed on expanding on the theory and demonstrating its practical use for understanding a recent world event. Short video clips (no more than three minutes) can be used. Presentations will be uploaded to the D2L site.

Students are expected to make every effort to hand in work on time, so assignments received later than the due date will be penalized 5% per day, including weekends. In rare instances where circumstances beyond the student's control have prevented an assignment from being submitted on time, exceptions to the lateness penalty may be granted. Such situations will require supporting documentation and be at the sole discretion of the professor.

Numeric grades will be assigned in conformance with Lakehead's standard grading structure. For a rough breakdown of the expectations associated with each letter grade, please consult the 'Literature & Theory' section of this reference:

- <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/academics/departments/english/markings-standards>

## Email Policy

Please include a subject line that begins with "SOCI 3410" in every email you send me. This will draw attention to your message and help me respond to it more quickly.

## Important Course Information

All students are expected to familiarize themselves with the following information concerning student behaviour and disciplinary procedures. Pay specific attention to the guidelines and restrictions surrounding plagiarism; it will not be tolerated:

- [idc.lakeheadu.ca/uploads/docs/Academic%20Integrity%20guide%20Orillia.docx](https://idc.lakeheadu.ca/uploads/docs/Academic%20Integrity%20guide%20Orillia.docx)

## Class and Reading Schedule

There are no textbooks to purchase. All readings can be found on the course website.

<b>Week 1</b>	September 9 + 11	<b>Course Introduction</b>
Syllabus		
<b>Week 2</b>	September 16 + 18	<b>Karl Marx</b>
Marx, K. & Engels, F. (1978). Manifesto of the communist party. In R. Tucker (Ed.), <i>The Marx-Engels Reader</i> (2nd ed.). New York: W.W. Norton. (pp. 469-500)		
<b>Week 3</b>	September 23 + 25	<b>Karl Marx</b>
Marx, K. (1978). Capital, volume one. In R. Tucker (Ed.), <i>The Marx-Engels Reader</i> (2nd ed.). New York: W.W. Norton. (pp. 302-328, 403-411)		
<b>Week 4</b>	September 30 + October 2	<b>Max Weber</b>
Weber, M. (1978). Economy and society. In G. Roth and C. Wittich (Eds.), <i>Economy and Society: An outline of interpretive sociology</i> . Berkeley: University of California Press. (pp. 956-963, 973-975, 987-994, 998-1003)		
<b>Week 5</b>	October 7 + 9	<b>Max Weber</b>
Weber, M. (1978). Economy and society. In G. Roth and C. Wittich (Eds.), <i>Economy and Society: An outline of interpretive sociology</i> . Berkeley: University of California Press. (pp. 212-216, 941-948, 952-955, 1111-1130)		

**Week 6**      October 14 + 16      **No Class - Reading Week**

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**Week 7**      October 21 + 23      **Georg Simmel**

Simmel, G. (1971). Fashion. In D. Levine (Ed.), *Georg Simmel: On individuality and social forms*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (pp. 294-323)

**Week 8**      October 28 + 30      **Georg Simmel**

Simmel, G. (2011). *The Philosophy of Money*. (T. Bottomore and D. Frisby, Trans.). New York: Routledge Classics. (pp. 252-256, 321-327, 347-357, 361-375)

**Week 9**      November 4 + 6      **Émile Durkheim**

Durkheim, É. (1984). *The Division of Labour in Society*. (W.D. Halls, Trans.). New York: Palgrave. (pp. 1-30)

**Week 10**      November 11 + 13      **Émile Durkheim**

Durkheim, É. (1995). *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. (K.E. Fields, Trans.). New York: The Free Press. (pp. 207-241)

**Week 11**      November 18 + 20      **George Herbert Mead**

Mead, G. (1969). Mind, self, and society. In C.W. Morris (Ed.), *Mind, Self, and Society: From the standpoint of social behaviourist*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (pp. 135-164)

**Week 12**      November 25 + 27      **George Herbert Mead**

Mead, G. (1969). Mind, self, and society. In C.W. Morris (Ed.), *Mind, Self, and Society: From the standpoint of social behaviourist*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (pp. 135-164)

**Week 13**      December 2 + 4      **Course Conclusion**

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