

**HTS 3102**  
**Social Theory and Structure**  
9:30am-10:45am Tues/Thurs  
Old Civil Engineering Building 304

**Instructor:** Dr. Kate Pride Brown  
**Office Hours:** Tuesday 2:30 – 4:30pm, and by appointment  
**Office:** Old Civil Engineering Bldg (OCE), office 135  
**Office Phone:** 404-894-0616  
**Email:** k.p.brown@gatech.edu

### **Course Description**

Social theory represents our abstract thinking about the social world that we inhabit. We know that there is such a thing as society – we know because it imprints itself onto us: the language we speak, the clothes we wear, the way we worship, the person we choose (or do not choose) to marry, the food we eat (and how it comes to our table), the rules by which we are governed and the norms that channel our behavior. There are measurable and observable trends that originate in society, but what is the meaning of it all? How does it come about? Why does it change? How do the individual and the collective relate to one another? Social theory is the collection of interpretive lenses that we employ to explain the observable social trends that we encounter.

In this class, we will be reading “classical” social theory. These are the thinkers who first attempted to answer the above questions without recourse to metaphysical or moral explanations, and thus formed the foundation of sociological thought. Their ideas have been enormously generative and extremely influential. In this course, we will read the original works of the central classical sociological theorists in order to better train our minds, to think through their distinct perspectives, not only so we may better understand society as we encounter it, but importantly so that we can place contemporary conversations and public debates in an ideological lineage. We all stand on the shoulders of giants, and it is worth getting to know them before you presume to ascend to that summit.

### **Readings**

The following books are required:

*The Marx-Engels Reader, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, Edited by Robert C. Tucker  
*The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Max Weber  
*The Division of Labor*, Emile Durkheim  
*The Souls of Black Folk*, W.E.B. DuBois

Other readings will be made available to students electronically on Canvas.

#### *Recommended Textbook:*

There is no textbook for the course. However, I know some students like to have a comprehensive textbook for personal study. To that end, I recommend the following:

*The Discovery of Society* by Randall Collins and Michael Makowsky (McGrawHill)  
*Masters of Sociological Thought* by Lewis Coser (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich)

## Assignments & Evaluation

**Participation:** Students should come to class on time and prepared to engage in discussion of the assigned readings. Attendance and punctuality are also part of the participation grade. Students may have 3 unexcused absences without penalty. Further absence, or repeated tardiness, will result in exponentially increasing loss of participation points.

Students should endeavor to complete the week's reading *before* Tuesday's class. In a class of this size, vocal participation is expected of everyone.

Additionally, students will have the opportunity to pose questions (and answers) related to the reading on Canvas. I recommend you utilize this resource. To that end I am requiring students to post a minimum of four questions online during the semester (once for each theorist we cover). Questions should be posted no later than 5pm on Monday. Receiving these questions before class will help me to incorporate the answers into my plans for the following morning. You may attempt to answer your peer's questions online, but these do not count toward your four required questions. It will, however, earn you some esteem in my eyes (which could come in handy someday if you want a letter of recommendation!). Posing questions online should not forestall asking questions in class either.

**Reflection Papers:** To complete a reflection paper, students are expected to select a passage from the assigned reading – no more than three or four lines – and reflect on its meaning. Students should indicate what the passage means to them and how it relates to the overall argument of the text. Finally, students should briefly assess the relevance of the passage to contemporary society – how does this material contribute to our understanding of the world around us? Reflections should be 2-3 pages in length.

Students are responsible for turning in **eight** short reflections over the course of the term, beginning with Week Two. Assignments can be turned in at any time during the week (and for the purposes of this class, the weeks run Fri-Thurs). Only one reflection from a given student will be accepted in a single week and it should reflect on a passage from *that week's reading*. No reflections will be accepted from students Week Five (when I am in Russia) or Week Seven (when I am grading exams). They also will not be accepted on the last day of class. This means that you have twelve weeks to turn in eight assignments. Don't get behind, because you cannot catch up once you've squandered your "free" weeks.

Reflections will either receive credit or not, depending on their quality. Acceptable assignments will be judged by the degree to which the student justifies the selected passage and seriously engages it, and to which s/he addresses all three aspects of the assignment: reflection on the passage itself, relation to the overall argument of the reading, and connection to the contemporary world.

**Midterm Exam:** The midterm exam will be a take-home exam comprising three essay questions. Answers should be about 3 typed pages for each question. Essays should be free from error, typed, double spaced, with 1" margins and in Times New Roman font. Late exams will be docked a letter grade for each day after the due date, beginning from the hour it is due.

**Final Exam:** The final exam will consist of three essay questions. A list of five questions will be distributed prior to the end of the semester. Of those five questions, three will be selected and distributed to students on the date of the final exam. Responses will be completed in class on the date of the final exam.

## **Grading**

10% Participation  
20% Reflection Papers  
30% Midterm Exam  
40% Final Exam

## **Grade Explanation for Qualitative Assessment**

A: Receiving an A demonstrates full mastery of the material. It marks exceptional work that goes beyond the basic requirements of the assignment. Such work displays full comprehension, excellent execution, and offers high-order analysis of the implications of the theory or case at hand. Receipt of an A on an assignment suggests that, if the student were to teach the material to another student, the second student would come away with a thorough comprehension of the subject.

B: Receiving a B suggests that the student adequately completed the assignment with no major errors. Full comprehension of the subject, such as understanding of how the topic interrelates to other topics or grasping larger sociological implications, may be lacking.

C: Receiving a C suggests a need for improvement. This work falls short of adequacy. There are significant errors in knowledge, comprehension or execution.

D: Receiving a D means that, while something was turned in, it shows only a minimal understanding of the subject at hand or largely fails to fulfill the stated requirements of the assignment.

F: A student receiving an F either did not do the assignment at all, or did it so poorly as to display no knowledge of the subject matter whatsoever.

+/- : Receiving a plus or minus on any letter grade indicates a little more or a little less of the same.

## **Grade Point Breakdown**

A: 100-90  
B: 89-80  
C: 79-70  
D: 69-60  
F: 59-0

## **Academic Integrity**

Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. For more information on Georgia Tech's academic Honor Code, visit: [www.catalog.gatech.edu/policies/honor-code](http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/policies/honor-code). Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarizing will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity for investigation. But regardless of any potential penalty imparted by that body, always bear in mind the underlying premise: you are called upon to conduct yourself in a manner worthy of the knowledge and capabilities that you are striving to attain.

## **Accommodation of Disabilities**

In compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act, Georgia Tech will provide reasonable accommodation of all medically documented disabilities. If you have a disability and would like the Institute to provide reasonable accommodations for the disability during the course, please notify the Office of Disability Services as soon as possible ([www.disabilityservices.gatech.edu](http://www.disabilityservices.gatech.edu)). Please make sure that I am provided a reasonable accommodation request letter as soon as possible, and definitely well in advance of any necessary accommodation.

## **Area E Approved Learning Outcome:**

- Student will demonstrate the ability to describe the social, political, and economic forces that influence social behavior.

## **Explain how the course satisfies the Core Area E learning outcome:**

This course focuses on the foundational social theories that motivate sociological research. To demonstrate that they have met the Area E learning outcome, students will be able to analyze contemporary social phenomena from the perspectives of historical materialism, functionalism, rationalization, social identity, field theory, and others.

## **Course Learning Outcomes**

By the end of the semester students should be able to:

- Identify major theorists in the sociological cannon and describe the theoretical perspective associated with each.
- Position social thinkers in an intellectual lineage and explain how these lineages form a scholarly conversation with one another.
- Assess the logical integrity, underlying assumptions, and inherent implications of different theoretical positions.
- Apply social theories to explain contemporary phenomena and postulate future trajectories.
- Evaluate contemporary political, economic, and social claims relative to established theoretical traditions.



This course is part of Georgia Tech's Serve-Learn-Sustain (SLS) initiative, which provides students with opportunities to combine their academic and career interests with their desire to make worthwhile contributions to the world and build sustainable communities where people and nature thrive: in Georgia, the United States, and around the globe. More information about SLS can be found at [www.serve-learn-sustain.gatech.edu](http://www.serve-learn-sustain.gatech.edu). Visit the website to sign up for the SLS Email List, view the full list of affiliated courses and projects, and find links to Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

## **SLS Learning Outcomes Addressed in This Course**

### **Develop Knowledge & Skills**

- Students will be able to identify relationships among ecological, social, and economic systems.
- Students will be able to describe how their actions impact the sustainability of communities.
- Students will be able to evaluate how decisions impact the sustainability of communities.

### **Put Knowledge & Skills into Action**

- Students will be able to communicate effectively with the public about creating sustainable communities.

### **Build Long-Lasting Values and Beliefs**

- Students will develop and manifest personal values and beliefs consistent with their roles as responsible members of local, national, international, and/or professional communities.

# Course Schedule

Week One: Aug 21 & 23

“What Is Enlightenment?” by Immanuel Kant

*The Wealth of Nations*, chap 1-3, by Adam Smith

\*optional: Mary Jo Deegan, “Early Women Sociologists and the American Sociological Society”

Week Two: Aug 28 & 30

*Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, pp 70-81

Week Three: Sept 4 & 6

*The German Ideology*, pp.149-160 (just skim 151-154), bottom of 172-174

Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right* pp. 53-54

\*optional: *The 18<sup>th</sup> Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*

\*optional: “On the Jewish Question”

Week Four: Sept 11 & 13

*The Communist Manifesto* pp. 473-500

Week Five: Sept 18 & 20

NO CLASSES – Keep Reading Marx!

\*Mid-Term Exam Questions Distributed\*

Week Six: Sept 25 & 27

E&P Manuscripts, pp. 102-105

*Capital*, pp. 302-438

Week Seven: Oct 2 & 4

**\*\*MID-TERM EXAM DUE Before class begins on Oct. 4\*\***

*The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* Intro, Ch. 1-3

Week Eight: Oct 11

*The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* Chap. 4-5

Week Nine: Oct 16 & 18

“Class, Status and Party”; “Politics as a Vocation” (pp. 77-79)

“Power – Chapters 8,9,10”

Week Ten: Oct 23 & 25

“Science as a Vocation”

Week Eleven: Oct 30 & Nov 1

*The Division of Labor in Society* Introduction, Book One: 1-3, Book Two: 2 (1-87, 200--223)

Week Twelve: Nov 6 & 8

*The Division of Labor in Society* Book Three: 1-2; Conclusion (291-322, 329-341)

Week Thirteen: Nov 13 & 15

*Suicide*, Chap. 2, 3, 5 (Selections)

Week Fourteen: Nov 20

WEB DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* Ch. 2, 7, 8

Week Fifteen: Nov 27 & 29

WEB DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* Ch. 1-3, 6, 10-11

Last Day of Class: Dec 4

Final Exam: Thursday, December 13 from 11:20 a.m. - 2:10 p.m.