

**THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG**  
**Department of Sociology**  
**SOCI 3003 Classical Sociological Theory**  
**Second Term 2025-26**

Instructor: Dr. LI Hang 李鏗  
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Time: 8:30am – 10:15pm (TUE)  
Venue: YIA 505  
Course website:  
<https://blackboard.cuhk.edu.hk/>

Teaching assistant:  
Ms. WU Wenmiao 吳文淼  
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### ***Course Description***

This course explores the foundational works of classical sociological theory through the writings of Émile Durkheim (French, 1858-1917), Karl Marx (German, 1818-1883), and Max Weber (German, 1864-1920). Students will examine how these theorists addressed fundamental social issues and developed frameworks for analyzing social phenomena. The course emphasizes critical reading, analytical thinking, and understanding the historical context of sociological concepts. This course will explore the following questions: 1. What key themes and ideas emerge from classical sociological theory? 2. How does their social and intellectual context shape these ideas? 3. How can these theories inform our sociological way of questioning?

### ***Learning Outcomes***

After completing this course, students should be able to:

1. Explain the key ideas of major classical sociological theories and perspectives
2. Apply foundational concepts and frameworks of sociological theory
3. Examine historical and contemporary social issues from sociological perspectives
4. Evaluate critically theoretical arguments and their connections to empirical evidence

### ***Recommended Textbooks***

Appelrouth, S., & Edles, L. D. (2021). *Classical and contemporary sociological theory: Text and readings* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications, Inc.

Aron, R. (2019). *Main currents in sociological thought: Volume One and Volume Two*. Routledge.

Giddens, A. (1971). *Capitalism and modern social theory: An analysis of the writings of Marx, Durkheim and Max Weber*. Cambridge University Press.

- All textbooks are **accessible online** via the library website.

## ***Course Syllabus***

1. Introduction
  - Course Orientation
  - The Birth of the Sociological Way of Thinking
2. Émile Durkheim
  - Social Transformation and Solidarity
  - Durkheim's Methodological Rules
  - Suicide and Modernity
  - Religion and Moral Order
3. Karl Marx
  - Human Nature, Labor, and Alienation
  - Marx's Theory of History
  - Classes and Class Struggle
  - Dynamics of Capitalism
4. Max Weber
  - Weber's Conception of Sociology
  - Cultural Origins of Capitalism
  - Rationalization of Legitimate Authority
  - Rationalization of Everyday Life
5. Conclusion

## ***Course Components***

The lecturer will conduct all lectures in person, as scheduled below. Students will also meet with the teaching assistant for tutorials approximately every two weeks. **Students should reserve two time slots for tutorials, in addition to their lecture times.** The teaching assistant will schedule tutorial times at the beginning of the term.

A 3-unit course typically includes about 39 hours of classroom time and 78-107 hours of self-study. With 2-3 hours for assessment, students should expect to spend a total of 117-146 hours on a 3-unit course.

<b>Teaching Modes and Learning Activities</b>	
<b>On-site face-to-face</b>	<b>Percentage of time</b>
<i>Lectures</i>	18%
<i>Tutorials</i>	9%
<i>Assessments and Self-Study Hours</i>	73%

### ***Course Schedule***

Week	Date	Topic
1	Jan 6	Introduction
2	Jan 13	Émile Durkheim (i)
3	Jan 20	Émile Durkheim (ii)
4	Jan 27	Émile Durkheim (iii)
5	Feb 3	Émile Durkheim (iv)
6	Feb 10	Karl Marx (i)
No Class	Feb 17	Public Holiday
7	Feb 24	Karl Marx (ii)
No class	Mar 3	<i>Reading Week</i>
8	Mar 10	Karl Marx (iii)
9	Mar 17	Max Weber (i)
10	Mar 24	Max Weber (ii)
11	Mar 31	Max Weber (iii)
No Class	Apr 7	Public Holiday
12	Apr 14	Max Weber (iv)

### ***Assessment Type and Percentage***

<u>(I) Tutorial Participation</u>	<u>20%</u>
<u>(II) Mid-term Paper</u>	<u>30%</u>
<u>(III) Final Paper</u>	<u>50%</u>

### ***Assessment Rubrics***

#### ***Grade Descriptors (Course Level)***

Grade	Grade Descriptors (aligned to LO1-LO4)
A	<p>Outstanding performance on all learning outcomes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• LO1: Offers a comprehensive account of core concepts and arguments in Durkheim, Marx, and Weber, accurately situating each thinker's assumptions and debates.</li><li>• LO2: Deploys concepts with precision to analyze concrete cases; moves flexibly between abstract formulations and specific empirical details; shows excellent command of sociological terminology.</li><li>• LO3: Integrates historical and contemporary materials to illuminate mechanisms and contexts.</li><li>• LO4: Compares frameworks synthetically, identifies limits, addresses counter-arguments, and justifies theory choice with high-quality, well-cited evidence.</li></ul>

A-	<p>Generally outstanding performance on most outcomes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LO1: Rich and accurate exposition with minor gaps in coverage of debates or secondary interpretations.</li> <li>• LO2: Strong, well-chosen applications with small lapses in terminological precision or depth of linkage to data.</li> <li>• LO3: Clear connections across historical and contemporary cases; occasional missed opportunity to deepen contextualization.</li> <li>• LO4: Very strong comparative evaluation; some limits or counter-positions are less fully developed.</li> </ul>
B+ / B / B-	<p>Substantial performance overall, with strengths compensating for weaker areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LO1: Accurate summary of central ideas; treatment may be uneven or occasionally descriptive.</li> <li>• LO2: Appropriate applications that identify relevant phenomena; causal or conceptual links present but not consistently sustained.</li> <li>• LO3: Uses historical or contemporary materials but with limited integration across contexts or levels of analysis.</li> <li>• LO4: Compares frameworks and notes pros/cons; critique present but may lack depth, specificity, or evidential support.</li> </ul>
C+ / C / C-	<p>Satisfactory performance on the majority of outcomes, with notable weaknesses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LO1: Basic recounting of key concepts with simplifications or occasional misinterpretations.</li> <li>• LO2: Applications are surface-level or generic; concepts referenced but not well operationalized in cases.</li> <li>• LO3: Mentions historical or contemporary examples with limited analysis of mechanisms or context.</li> <li>• LO4: Limited or descriptive evaluation; counter-arguments largely absent; evidence minimal or loosely matched.</li> </ul>
D+ / D	<p>Barely satisfactory performance on a number of outcomes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LO1: Fragmentary grasp of the ideas of the classical thinkers; key terms misused or conflated.</li> <li>• LO2: Weak or incorrect conceptual application; reliance on assertion rather than analysis.</li> <li>• LO3: Sparse or ill-fitting examples; little sense of historical context or contemporary relevance.</li> <li>• LO4: Minimal comparison or critique; major claims unsupported; scope conditions not recognized.</li> </ul>