This course reviews the major lines of classical to contemporary sociological theory. The classical writers emphasized are Marx, Weber, and Durkheim. Twentieth-century authors highlighted include Mills, Dahrendorf, and Parsons. More contemporary figures, including Collins, Bordieu, Foucault, and Giddens, are presented in the context of their intellectual forebears.

- Course Requirements -

(1) Preparation, attendance, and participation - 20% of your final grade.
(2) Reflection Essays – 20% of your final grade.
(3) Take Home Midterm – 30% of your final grade.
(4) Final Essay - 30% of your final grade.

(1) Preparation, attendance and participation (20% of your final grade)

Assignment Overview: All students are expected to attend class and participate in class discussions. While I may not regularly take attendance, I will note frequent absences and this will influence your participation grade. Finally, I expect all students to contribute to class discussions. Keep in mind that adequate participation in class depends on adequate preparation for class and your participation grade will be based on the relevance of your participation to course readings and lectures.

I am aware that class participation can be quite stressful for some students. If you find yourself reluctant to speak in class, please contact me as soon as possible. I am quite sympathetic to this concern and am happy to offer advice on participating and will also strategize ways of incorporating you into class discussions.

Purpose: The purposes of the "preparation, attendance, and participation" are several. I find that course lectures are more interesting and useful to students who have thoroughly prepared for
class. Additionally, preparing for each class will provide you with the overall background in the study of social theory necessary to successfully complete your other major assignments. By asking you to rigorously prepare for class and actively participate in class discussions, I hope to get a sense of our collective concerns about social theory, so that I can adequately address them in future class periods.

**Grading:** A participation grade may often seem quite “subjective,” since they are few firm criteria on which instructors appear to be evaluating students; however, I have found that students who do the following typically earn high attendance, preparation, and participation grades: Regularly arrive on time for class and rarely leave early; inform me of planned absences, late arrivals, or early departures; share their thoughts (through email or in person) on readings and topics that they missed when absent from class; speak with a relevant dean if a personal or familial emergency prevents them from missing substantial class time or delays their completion of assignments; come to class prepared with discussion points, whether in the form of notes or marked passages in assigned readings; come to class prepared to discuss class assignments on the days that they are due; regularly participate in class; email me occasionally to share thoughts on course topics and readings; and meet with me once or twice during the semester to discuss their progress in and thoughts on the course.

Please consult the grading rubric, available on our Course Blackboard site, for further information.

**Reflection Essays (20% of your final grade)**

**Assignment Overview:** I have dedicated four class periods—at the end of Sections I (9/28), II & III (10/24), IV (11/9), and V (11/21)—for in-class discussion of the contemporary relevance of major approaches to social theory. For each of these class meetings, you should produce a short reflective essay of approximately 2 pages. For the essay, you should choose some aspect of contemporary life—a film, a song, a technology, an advertisement, an event, an element of BC life—and describe how it relates to that section’s social theory. (Please note: Because of Columbus Day, we will do a joint In-Class Discussion on Durkheim and Weber on 10/24. You may choose either social theorist to write about for that assignment.) Please come prepared to discuss your reflection essay in small groups and with the class.

**Purpose:** There are several purposes of the reflection essays. First, they provide you with an opportunity to write sociologically in an informal, low-pressure context. Essays will be graded on an abbreviated grading scale (see below). Second, the reflection essays will provide us, as a class, with resources to use in-class and will prepare you, individually, to actively engage in in-class discussions. Finally, the reflection essays will serve as “practice” for the final essay, in which you are expected to produce a full-fledged, sociological analysis on a topic of your choice. I encourage you to consider how the reflection essays may serve your final project.

**Grading:** The reflection essays will be graded on a high credit (A) / credit (B) / no credit (F) basis. Papers that satisfy the minimum requirements of the assignment will earn credit. See the grading scale for written work (below) for more information.
(3) Take-Home Midterm (30% of your final grade)

Assignment Overview: Your take-home midterm will cover the social theory of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim. The midterm will consist of short essay(s) and is due by the start of class on Monday, October 31. I will hand-out the assignment at least two weeks prior to the deadline.

Purpose: The purpose of this assignment is to evaluate students’ comprehension of three foundational social theorists. As such, I will design this assignment to test knowledge of course readings and lectures from Parts II, III, and IV.

Grading: See the grading scale for written work (below) for more information.

(4) Final Project (30% of your final grade)

Assignment Overview: All students are expected to complete a research paper of approximately 3,000-4,000 words. The paper can be on a topic of your own choosing and should draw on course materials from throughout the semester and at least two other academic sources. I will provide a further guide to the assignment later in the semester.

A final draft of the paper, submitted through Blackboard, is due by noon on Friday, December 16. The final paper is worth 35% of students’ final grades; see the grading scale below for more information on grading. I will consider papers that I receive after this deadline at my discretion.

Purpose: The purpose of this assignment is to allow students to employ the writing and analytic skills that they have developed over the course of the semester to analyze topics that interests them. It is also designed to permit students an opportunity to prove familiarity and mastery of course materials. Students are expected to draw on all relevant course materials and are encouraged to speak with me about the relationship between course materials and the topics that they have selected.

- Grading Rubric for Written Work -

A or A-: Work satisfies the requirements of the assignment and also goes beyond the minimum requirements of the assignment by thoughtfully employing relevant and significant materials; exhibiting extraordinary care and thought with relevant course readings, concepts, lectures, and discussions; and referencing them appropriately and “talking back” to these course resources so one’s own thoughts or criticisms are apparent in the paper.

B+, B, B-: Work is related to the assigned topic and references important and relevant course readings, concepts, or lectures in an appropriate way; work satisfies the length requirement of the assignment; the paper is well-organized and its central argument is clear; and entry contains few, if any, grammatical mistakes or typos.

C+, C, C-: Work is related to the assigned topic and uses course readings, concepts, or lectures in an appropriate way; however, the paper may reference course readings, concepts, and discussions sparingly and may ignore significant, relevant ones; the paper may not satisfy the
minimum length requirement of the assignment; the paper may include some grammatical mistakes and/or typos that obscure the paper’s claims; and the paper may also suffer from organizational problems that obscure its overall argument.

D+, D, D-: Work is loosely related to the assigned topic; it displays carelessness with course readings, concepts, or lectures, using terms in inappropriate ways and/or ignoring significant and relevant course concepts; organizational problems, grammatical mistakes, and/or typos obscure the author’s claims; and the paper may be significantly shorter than the minimum length requirement of the assignment.

F: Paper/homework is turned in late without an advance discussion or not at all; entry is unrelated to the assigned topic.

- Final Grade Scale -

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>3.85 - 4.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>3.50 - 3.84</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>3.15 - 3.49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>2.85 - 3.14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>2.50 - 2.84</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>2.15 - 2.49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>1.85 - 2.14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>1.50 - 1.84</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>1.15 - 1.49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>0.85 - 1.14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>0.50 - 0.84</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>&lt; .50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Course Text -


All other readings, which are marked by an asterick, are available through our Blackboard Vista site @ https://cms.bc.edu/webct/

- Course Schedule -

Note: Readings should be completed by the date that they are assigned. I reserve the right to alter the course schedule with due notice.

Readings from Classical Sociological Theory are noted with the abbreviation CST.

Part I: Social Theory: What is it and where did it come from?

(Class 1) Wed., Sept. 7: Course Introduction
(Class 2) Mon., Sept. 12: What is social theory?
SC215.02 Syllabus

a.  

b.  

(Class 3)  
Wed., Sept. 14: Where did social theory come from?

   a.  
      CST - “General Introduction,” Pp. 5–10

   b.  

   c.  

Part II: Marxist Social Theory

(Class 4)  
Mon., Sept. 19: Labor and Human Existence

   a.  

   b.  

(Class 5)  
Wed., Sept. 21: Capitalism and Labor

   a.  

(Class 6)  
Mon., Sept. 26: Class Struggle

   a.  

(Class 7)  
Wed., Sept. 28: In-Class Discussion: The Contemporary Relevance of Marxist Social Theory

   a.  
      * Roubini, Nouriel – “Is Capitalism Doomed?”

Part III: The Sociological Theory of Emile Durkheim

(Class 8)  
Mon., Oct. 3: The Contours of Durkheim’s Social Thought

   a.  

   b.  

(Class 9)  
Wed., Oct. 5: Social Solidarity

   a.  

   b.  

Monday, October 10: No Class. Columbus Day. University Holiday.

Part IV: The Sociological Theory of Max Weber

(Class 10)  
Wed., Oct. 12: The Contours of Weber’s Social Thought

   a.  

   b.  

(Class 11)  
Mon., Oct. 17: The Cultural Origins of Capitalism

   a.  

(Class 12)  
Wed., Oct. 19: Forms of Legitimate Domination

   a.  

   b.  

(Class 13)  
Mon., Oct. 24: In-Class Discussion: The Contemporary Relevance of Durkheim and Weber

   a.  
b. * Haidt – “Why We Celebrate a Killing.”
c. * Shane – “C.I.A. is Disputed on Civilian Toll in Drone Strikes.”

Part V: Symbolic Interactionism

a. No assigned reading.
(Class 15) Mon., Oct. 31: Self & Society
Midterm due
a. Cooley - “The Looking Glass Self”
(Class 16) Wed., Nov. 2: Symbolic Interactionism
a. * Blumer – “Sociological Implications of the Thought of George Herbert Mead, All
(Class 17) Mon., Nov. 7: Goffman & the Sociology of Everyday Life
a. * Goffman – “Self Presentation”
b. * Goffman – “Social Life as Drama”
c. * Cahill – “Meanwhile Backstage”
(Class 18) Wed., Nov. 9: In-Class Discussion: The Contemporary Relevance of Symbolic Interactionism
a. * Febos – “Look at Me, I’m Crying.”

Part VI: Critical Social Theory

(Class 19) Mon. Nov. 14: Consumer Society & Critical Thought
a. CST – “Introduction to Part VI,” 333–335
(Class 20) Wed., Nov. 16: Consumer Society and the Erosion of Critical Thought
(Class 21) Mon., Nov. 21: In-Class Discussion: The Contemporary Relevance of Critical Social Theory

Wednesday, November 23: No Class. Thanksgiving Break. University Holiday.

Part VII: Selected Readings in Contemporary Social Theory – Contemporary Forms of Social Organization

(Class 22) Mon., Nov. 28: Organizing the state
(Class 23) Wed., Nov. 30: Surveillance & Society
a. * Foucault – “Panopticism.”
(Class 24) Mon., Dec. 5: Objects & Society
(Class 25) Wed., Dec. 7: Course Conclusion
December 16: Final Paper Due (12:00 p.m.)
- Academic Integrity -

In class, we will work together to comprehend important sociological readings. In the spirit of this collective effort, please feel welcome to speak with classmates about course readings and assignments. However, your work must be original and, when using, paraphrasing, or referencing the work of another, you must include a citation of the source. I will treat plagiarism in accordance with Boston College’s Academic Integrity Policy and Procedures.

Please note that in this class the minimum penalty for cheating or plagiarizing will be failure of that course requirement. Cheating or plagiarizing on a homework will, at the minimum, result in a failing grade for both that requirement and will significantly and negatively impact your "preparation, attendance, and participation" grade. In all cases, I will forward incidents of plagiarism or cheating to appropriate university administers.

You are responsible for familiarizing yourself with these policies and procedures, which you can find at http://www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/academic/resources/policy.html

- A message on our semester together -

Having taught and assisted in a range of courses at Boston College, I am aware that the semester can produce any number of stresses, surprises, emergencies, and frustrations for students. If you find yourself struggling to understand course readings, class assignments or my grading, I strongly encourage you to speak with me immediately. I am always happy to share my thoughts on your assignments, as well as strategies for improvement. Of course, it is more helpful to have such a discussion before the final week or two of classes, which is when the reality of "the final grade" tends to set-in.

If you find yourself struggling to complete assignments or attend class, I strongly encourage you to let me know about your concerns. Additionally, you may want to speak with you class dean, who can provide you with additional support, particularly in the case of a family or personal emergency.

You can find your class dean's name at http://www.bc.edu/schools/cas/about/contact/a-and-s-deans.html.

Contact information for deans is available at http://www.bc.edu/schools/cas/about/contact/directory-adm.html.