

Emory University
Department of Sociology
Fall 2017
MWF 10-10:50
Tarbutton 111

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Office Hours: M 2-3, TH noon-1

SOC 289: Great Works in Western Social Thought

Content and goals

As part of the Voluntary Core Curriculum, this course examines a sample of great works in Western social thought from the European Middle Ages to the twentieth century in order to reflect on important questions about social life. For example, does society require a common faith, or can we build solidarity in a different way? Are people disposed toward cooperation or conflict? How should society balance individual and community, freedom and equality, order and progress? And what fundamental transformations have come about in modern societies? By answering these and other questions, through close reading and lively discussion, the course aims to help you to

- critically appreciate seminal texts in the Western tradition
- understand both continuity and change in Western thinking about society
- situate your own views in the context of a long and diverse tradition
- improve your analytical and writing skills in dealing with challenging material

In addition to reading classic texts, we will study a small sample of works of art to reflect on ways in which they might embody forms of social thought.

Format

This course will operate as a seminar in which we collectively discuss and debate the ideas expressed in the texts and your own reflections expressed in short assignments. Some classes may feature structured debate with assigned roles.

Readings

- All readings are listed in the schedule below and will be **posted in pdf format on Canvas**.
- Most readings (see Schedule) will consist of **excerpts** from larger texts.
- The readings aim to expose you to a variety of great works.
- The selection of readings partly reflects a division of labor with other VCC courses, which cover classics of antiquity, historical writing, ethics, and American political thought; however, some readings may overlap.
- You are welcome to study the material in electronic format, but I encourage you to print all, or the most important, pages and bring them to class for reference.

Guidance

You should anticipate about two hours of reading prior to each class session. Use posted study questions to guide your reading. Provided you make a good-faith effort to deal with the text itself, you are welcome to use the Web to do your own background research on a particular reading (for example, the online *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* [plato.stanford.edu] is a good source on several relevant topics). Of course, you may seek assistance from peers or see me during office hours, as needed. For assistance with writing, I encourage you to consult tutors in the [Writing Center](#) or through the ESL program.

Requirements

1. **Midterm and final exam**, consisting of essay questions, take-home component likely, each exam worth 25% of your grade
2. **Two essays**, about 3 pages, due dates TBA, each essay worth 10%
3. **Participation**, including short, ungraded assignments (criteria posted), 20%
4. **Attendance at Emory Williams Memorial Lectures**, on various Wednesdays at 4:30 p.m. (see dates below and on the Canvas calendar). One-page **summary and comment** on two of these lectures, each 5% of your grade. Note: If you are unable to attend because of an unavoidable conflict, you must give me advance notice and within 10 days of the lecture date submit a brief summary based on watching the recorded version, which will be made available on the VCC website a few days after each lecture.

Note 1: If you need accommodations, please contact [OAS](#).

Note 2: The [Honor Code](#) is in effect throughout the semester.

Course etiquette

- To avoid disruptions, be sure to arrive on time; repeated late arrival will be counted as an absence and affect your participation grade.
- To keep our joint attention focused on discussion, use of laptops will not be allowed.
- No food of any kind is allowed, including gum. Be sure to finish breakfast prior to class. Water or coffee is fine.

Schedule

- Italicized titles below refer to books from which we will read excerpts
- This schedule is subject to minor revision, as needed
- Any short, ungraded assignments will be announced in class and via Canvas
- Williams lectures are marked in boldface; all will start at 4:30 (place TBA)

8/23 Introduction

1. Before 1500

- 8/25 Augustine, *The City of God*; Benedict, *The Holy Rule of St. Benedict*
8/28 Heloise and Abelard, letters
8/30 John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*
9/1 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*
9/6 Chartres Cathedral assignment

2. 1500s-1600s

- 9/8 Martin Luther, *Open Letter to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*
9/11 John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*
9/13 Hugo Grotius, *On the Law of War and Peace*
Williams lecture: John Witte, "The American Constitution"
9/15 John Milton, *Aeropagitica*
9/18 Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*
9/20 Samuel von Pufendorf, *On the Duty of Man and Citizen*
9/22 Baruch Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*
9/25 Dutch painting assignment

3. 1700s

- 9/27 Bernard Mandeville, *Fable of the Bees*
Patricia Brennan, "The Milgram Experiment—A Psychological Classic"
9/29 David Hume, "On Commerce," "The Progress of English Liberty"
10/2 David Hume, "Why Utility Pleases"; Adam Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*
10/4 Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*
10/6 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Origin and Foundations of Inequality among Men*
First essay due

10/11 Midterm exam

4. Late 1700s

- 10/13 Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*
10/16 Immanuel Kant, "Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View"

- 10/18 Johann Gottfried Herder, "This Too a Philosophy of History"
Joseph Crespino, "Great Books of the American South"
10/20 Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*
10/23 W. A. Mozart/Lorenzo Da Ponte, *The Marriage of Figaro*, opera assignment

5. Mid-1800s

- 10/25 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*
10/27 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*
10/30 Karl Marx, "Inaugural Address," *Capital Vol. 1*
11/1 John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*
Anthony Martin, "Great Works of Paleontology"
11/3 John Stuart Mill, *On the Subjection of Women*
11/6 Debate
11/8 Giuseppe Mazzini, *A Cosmopolitanism of Nations*
Ernest Renan, "What is a Nation?"

6. Late 1800s-early 1900s

- 11/10 Luchino Visconti, *The Leopard*, movie assignment
11/13 Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life"
11/15 Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*
Deborah Lipstadt, "Great Works on the Holocaust"
11/17 Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation"
11/20 Walter Lippmann, *Drift and Mastery*
11/27-9 Edith Wharton, *The Age of Innocence*, novel assignment

7. Post-WWII

- 12/1 Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*
12/4 Martha Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions*

12/12 **Final exam**
3-5:30 p.m.