

Foundations of Social Theory

University of Notre Dame · Instructor: Omar Lizardo

Discussion

New Event

New Assignment

New Exam

Calendar

People

Wednesday - January 15, 2014

Library

Class: Modernity and Social Change: The Rise of the West and Social Theory

12:30pm - 1:45pm · Lecture

Rosenberg, N. and Birdzell, L. (1986). How the West grew rich: The economic transformation of the industrial world. Basic Books, New York (Pp. 37-70)

Syllabus

Settings

Marx, K. and Engels, F. (2002). The Communist Manifesto. Penguin Books, New York (Pp. 218-233)

Slides:

docs.google.com/presentation/d/1z8N1LGtOwh9LFH_OOIHnojJXpJPIETERRPrdqW8yE/pub?start=false&loop=false

Slides: drive.google.com/file/d/0B8t2mOdAUdzuRTF0N1VIVkp2dG8/edit?usp=sharing

Monday - January 20, 2014

Class: Class canceled (travel)

12:30pm - 1:45pm · Lecture

Wednesday - January 22, 2014

Class: Karl Marx on Labor and Alienation

12:30pm - 1:45pm · Lecture

Marx, K. (2007). Estranged labor. In Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, pages 67-83. Dover Publications, Mineola, NY.

Sunday - January 26, 2014

Assignment: Weekly Paper 1: Estrangement and Alienation

Due: January 26, 2014

Outline the four main forms of "estrangement" and point to their sources and consequences. What features of the labor process under capitalism lead to estrangement? What can we guess about Marx's "ideal" conditions for non-estranged labor from his (negative) description of labor under capitalism?

Provide a concrete example of estranged labor. This can come from your own experience. Can you think of instances where you have felt estranged from the product

of your activity, from your own actions or from others?

Provide a concrete example of labor that does not meet Marx's conditions for estrangement. This can also come from your own experience. What sort of social arrangements make this sort of work possible?

This essay should be typed, double-spaced, with one-inch margins in a 12-point serif font like the "Times New Roman" font in Word. Fonts like Arial and Comic Sans are not allowed. In addition your name (and the name of the course) should be on the header of the page not on the actual body of the paper.

Tutorial on how to insert a header: www.wikihow.com/Add-a-Header-in-Microsoft-Word

Wikipedia entry on Marx's Theory of Alienation:
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marx's_theory_of_alienation

[View 7 submissions](#)

Monday - January 27, 2014

Class: Karl Marx on the Sources of Historical and Social Change

12:30pm - 1:45pm · Lecture

Marx, K. (1859). 'Marx on the History of His Opinions' (Preface to a contribution to a critique of political economy). In Tucker, R. C., editor, The Marx-Engels Reader, pages 3-6. W. W. Norton, New York, second edition

Marx, K. and Engels F. (1995) The German Ideology. International Publishers, New York (Pp. 42-48)

Marx, K. and Engels F. (1995) The German Ideology. International Publishers, New York (Pp. 79-81)

Wednesday - January 29, 2014

Class: Karl Marx on the Link between Social Class and Action

12:30pm - 1:45pm · Lecture

Marx, K. and Engels, F. (2002). The Communist Manifesto. Penguin Books, New York (Pp. 218-233) (re-read)

Marx, K. and Engels F. (1995) The German Ideology. International Publishers, New York (Pp. 52-57)

Sunday - February 2, 2014

Assignment: Paper 2: Marx's Model of Historical and Social Change

Due: February 2, 2014

In this paper, I want you to outline Marx's model of historical and social change as laid out in the In the "The Communist Manifesto" (1847) and in the short entry on "Marx on the History of his Own Opinions (a.k.a. "Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (1859)"). Make sure to note the role of the "economic structure" (e.g. the productive forces and the relations of production) in driving social change and conditioning changes in the "superstructure" (e.g. law and politics and culture and ideas more generally). Make sure to provide at least one detailed and concrete example (e.g. the transition from Feudalism to Capitalism) of how this model of social

change works.

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mode_of_production
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Base_and_superstructure
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Productive_forces
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Relations_of_production

Link to Slides:

docs.google.com/presentation/d/1dErEEbADbCEcgDphua3Y1vLPsYZxLjh9sFpNz5RQFdg/pub?start=false&loop=false&delayms=3000

[View 6 submissions](#)

Monday - February 3, 2014

Class: Karl Marx on Ideology and Social Domination

12:30pm - 1:45pm · Lecture

Marx, K. and Engels F. (1995) The German Ideology. International Publishers, New York (Pp. 48-52)

Marx, K. and Engels F. (1995) The German Ideology. International Publishers, New York (Pp. 57-60)

Wednesday - February 5, 2014

Class: Weber on Ideas and the Cultural and Institutional Uniqueness of the West

12:30pm - 1:45pm · Lecture

Weber, M. (1963). The attitude of the other world religions towards the social and economic order. In The Sociology of Religion, pages 262–274. Beacon Press, Boston, MA

Weber, M. (2011c). Prefatory remarks to collected essays in the sociology of religion (1920). In Kalberg, S., editor, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, pages 233–237. Oxford University Press, New York, the revised 1920 edition

Sunday - February 9, 2014

Assignment: Weekly Paper 3: Ideology and Social Class

Due: February 9, 2014

In The German Ideology, Marx and Engels note that "The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas." What do Marx and Engels mean by this statement? How do they conceive of the connection between social class and ideas? How does the theory of ideology link to their theory of social change? Can you think of certain "ruling ideas" that function as "ideology" in the contemporary context? Can you think of certain ideas that function as "revolutionary" ideas?

Provide a concrete example of how we would use Marx's theory of the relation between ideas and social class to understand political divisions over economic policy in the context of contemporary democratic societies.

Link to slides:

docs.google.com/presentation/d/1CsMRq4A_td5w7dYcPCZWmBXR2e8ciTXfFOS_OQhBrc/pub?start=false&loop=false&delayms=3000

[View 9 submissions](#)

Monday - February 10, 2014

Class: The Role of Ideas in Social Action I: Economic Traditionalism versus Rational Capitalism

12:30pm - 1:45pm · Lecture

Weber, M. (2011). Prefatory remarks to collected essays in the sociology of religion (1920). In Kalberg, S., editor, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, pages 237–243. Oxford University Press, New York, the revised 1920 edition

Weber, M. (2011). The "spirit of capitalism". In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, pages 76–98. Oxford University Press, New York, the revised 1920 edition

Wednesday - February 12, 2014

Class: The Role of Ideas in Social Action II: The Work Ethic

12:30pm - 1:45pm · Lecture

Weber, M. (2011). Luther's conception of the calling. In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, pages 99–109. Oxford University Press, New York, the revised 1920 edition

Sunday - February 16, 2014

Assignment: Weekly paper 4: Rational Capitalism

Due: February 16, 2014

In the "Prefatory Remarks to Collected Essays in the Sociology of Religion" Weber enumerates the features of Western culture that he considers unique and in need of special explanation (e.g. "Only in the West..."). Summarize Weber's "list" of features and note in which way they represent the "rationalism" specific to the West. Why is rational capitalism the most important of all of these cultural phenomena?

Using the article below on "Capitalism in the New Russia" I want you to first summarize Weber's definition of rational capitalism as outlined in the "Prefatory Notes," noting each of the key distinctive features of rational capitalism and how they are different from adventure capitalism. Be sure to note why Weber dismisses "greed" or "acquisitiveness" as central aspect of the mentality of rational capitalism. What does Weber propose instead?

Second, I want you to compare Weber's "ideal type" of rational capitalism to the one that has emerged in the transition to "capitalism" in the post-Soviet era. In what ways does the contemporary situation in Russia fall short of Weber's definition of rational capitalism? How much is this contributing to the country's troubles? What could be done to move Russian capitalism closer to Weber's "rational" capitalism?

Link to Article: ihr.org/jhr/v16/v16n3p21_Michaels.html

Specs:

Minimum 1000 Words. This essay should be typed, double-spaced, with one-inch margins in a 12-point serif font like the "Times New Roman" font in Word. Fonts like Arial and Comic Sans are not allowed. In addition your name (and the name of the course) should be on the header of the page not on the actual body of the paper.

[View 4 submissions](#)

Monday - February 17, 2014

Class: The Role of Ideas in Social Action III: Salvation,

Impulse Control, and the Systematization of Everyday**Life**

12:30pm - 1:45pm · Lecture

Weber, M. (2011). The religious foundations of this-worldly asceticism. In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, pages 113–138. Oxford University Press, New York, the revised 1920 edition

Weber, M. (2011). Asceticism and the spirit of capitalism. In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, pages 158–179. Oxford University Press, New York, the revised 1920 edition

Wednesday - February 19, 2014

Class: The Role of Ideas in Social Action IV: The Legacies of the Protestant Ethic in Contemporary American Culture

12:30pm - 1:45pm · Lecture

Uhlmann, E. L., Poehlman, T. A., & Bargh, J. A. (2009). 'American moral exceptionalism.' Pp. 27-52 in *Social and psychological bases of ideology and system justification*.

Uhlmann, E. L. (2012). American Psychological Isolationism. *Review of general psychology*, 16(4), 381-390.

Sunday - February 23, 2014

Assignment: Weekly Paper 5: The Protestant Ethic

Due: February 23, 2014

In this paper summarize Weber's argument of how the Lutheran notion of treating work as a calling, coupled with the Calvinist emphasis on predestination, led to the end of the traditionalist medieval economic ethic and helped to install a new approach to economic action (the Protestant Ethic). Be sure to draw the links between the Protestant Ethic and the (secular) frame of mind of capitalism as described by Weber (via the Franklyn maxims). How does this (according to Weber) help to account for the specific features of rational capitalism? How do they help us account for unique features of contemporary American culture (provide concrete examples).

Specs: 1000 words minimum, 12pt Times New Roman Font, Double-spaced.

[View 8 submissions](#)

Monday - February 24, 2014

Class: The Role of Ideas in Social Action V: Rationalization in the Economy, the Living Room, and the Bedroom

12:30pm - 1:45pm · Lecture

Ritzer, G. (1983). The "McDonaldization" of Society. *Journal of American Culture*, 6(1):100–107.

Shore, B. (1996). "Interior Furnishings." Chapter 5 from *Culture in mind: Cognition, culture, and the problem of meaning*. Oxford University Press.

Illouz, E. (2010). Love and its discontents: Irony, reason, romance. *The Hedgehog Review*, 12(1), 18-32.

Wednesday - February 26, 2014

Class: The Role of Ideas in Social Action VI: The Three Forms of Authority

12:30pm - 1:45pm - Lecture

Weber, M. (1994a). Domination and Stratification. In Heydebrand, W., editor, Sociological Writings, pages 28–37. Continuum, New York

Sunday - March 2, 2014

Assignment: Weekly Paper 6: Rationalism and Rationalization

Due: March 2, 2014

Ritzer I: www.youtube.com/watch?v=uzEh8izzJMQ

Ritzer II: www.youtube.com/watch?v=bh17s9DilZw

Polan on Corn: www.youtube.com/watch?v=xThSnJb8miQ&feature=BFp&list=PLFF92642487D5215A

Beat of the System: www.youtube.com/watch?v=JgvYGi5J-Cg

In Chapters 4 and 5 of *The Protestant Ethic* Weber describes how Puritan asceticism, with its constant attempt to regiment all aspects of life, results in the "steel-hard casing" of the modern economic order. This system is based on the extreme rationalization of all aspects of life, beginning with individual behavior (e.g. discipline, regimentation, time-management), to the organization of work and finally to the reconfiguration of the entire economic production process so as to increase the efficiency of the capitalist enterprise.

Sociologist George Ritzer notes that one of the most insidious examples of this trend toward increasing rationalism and regimentation at the level of economic production (as is ultimately spreads throughout the entire society) is represented by McDonald's (and Starbucks) business model. In the short film "Beat of the System" that we saw in class we find an even earlier example of the trend towards the rationalization of economic production and the rationalization organization of work in the form of "Fordism" and "Taylorism" (Scientific Management). Finally, Anthropologist Bradd Shore notes a similar trend in his concept of "modularization" and "modular schema" which is "a design strategy that breaks complex wholes into elementary units that are understood as recombinable into vary of different patterns" (p. 118) and which he finds in such diverse realms as furniture, television, education, hamburgers, corporations, shopping malls and even the American-style (individualistic) democracy.

In this paper, I want you to briefly summarize Weber's argument for the connection between contemporary economic regimentation and puritan asceticism. I then want you to connect this argument to Ritzer's and Shore's discussions. In addition, I want you to draw the links between "rationalism" as a general characteristic Western (and especially American) culture and all of the various examples that we noted above (up to and including Pollan's discussion of how the rationalization of food production results in corn becoming an ubiquitous component of all of the "foods" that we eat). How can all of these apparently unrelated phenomena be thought of as examples of the same trend? Can you think of other examples of this type of extreme economic rationalism in the contemporary world?

[View 10 submissions](#)

Monday - March 3, 2014

**Class: The Role of Ideas in Social Action VII:
Bureaucracy and the Bureaucratic Ethic**

12:30pm - 1:45pm · Lecture

Weber, M. (1994). Domination and Stratification. In Heydebrand, W., editor, Sociological Writings, pages 59-67. Continuum, New York

Wednesday - March 5, 2014

Class: Application: The Corporation

12:30pm - 1:45pm · Lecture

Sunday - March 16, 2014

**Assignment: Weekly Paper 7: Rationalization of Modern
Capitalism (The Corporation)**

Due: March 16, 2014

Weber equated bureaucracy as a form of administration in comparison to other forms (e.g. traditional or charismatic) of organization to the difference between mechanized and non-mechanized forms of production. With its emphasis on rationality, calculability, impersonality (e.g. disregard for individuals), and the division of labor, bureaucracy facilitates the efficient pursuit of specialized purposes. In the modern capitalist economy this "single purpose" is, as stipulated in law, the maximization of profits for shareholders. In this way, capitalist corporations can be seen as a combination of the principles of bureaucratic authority and Western rationality, with the motivation for increasing profit characteristic of modern capitalism.

In this paper, I want you discuss, using original examples or examples taken from the film, the ways in which the documentary "The Corporation" exemplifies these features of modern bureaucratic capitalism. How can we explain why corporations are seemingly uncaring, devoid of feelings and sometimes exploitative of persons? Why is corporate malfeasance a systematic product of corporate rationality and not the exceptional immoral behavior of a "few bad apples"? Given the kind of "persons" that corporations are designed (by legal-rational mandate) to be why is it problematic to grant them democratic rights usually reserved for natural persons? Finally, why are critics of corporate capitalism who focus on moral failings particular natural persons (e.g. Bernie Maddoff) off the mark?

Specs: 1000 words minimum, 12pt Times New Roman Font, Double-spaced.

Link to slides:

docs.google.com/presentation/d/1506V3HNN3SEbSuAoleJyB0lt8nFX3ZWsuDTMWUJI3GQ/pub?start=false&loop=false&delayms=3000

docs.google.com/presentation/d/1CZZvzUDJpQif2UpC_E2-CU30uNkS-0a28Cks2cb_k/pub?start=false&loop=false&delayms=3000

[View 11 submissions](#)

Monday - March 17, 2014

Assignment: Final topic memo

Due: March 17, 2014

Time to begin thinking about your final paper topic! This assignment is designed as a gentle way to ease you into this process. I want you to write a 500-750 word memo on a general topic that you are interested in and that you think will make a good candidate for the subject of your final paper. You are welcome to peek at the reading schedule to see if there is anything that we will be talking about in the future that seems to deal with that topic. In the memo please be sure to be as specific as possible about the topic that you are proposing, tell me why it is interesting to you and how do you see it fitting with something that we have already talked about or will be talking about in the future.

[View 16 submissions](#)

Class: Durkheim and Tonnies on Organic and Mechanical Solidarities

12:20am - 1:45pm · Lecture

(a) Durkheim, E. (1973). Review of fredinand tönies, gemeinschaft und gesellschaft. In Traugott, M., editor, Emile Durkheim on Institutional Analysis, pages 115–122. University Of Chicago Press, Chicago

(b) Émile Durkheim (1964). Division of Labor in Society. The Free Press, New York (Pp. 54–69, 129–132, 147-155, 190-193, 226–229, 256-262)

Wednesday - March 19, 2014

Class: Durkheim on Crime and Punishment

12:30pm - 1:45pm · Lecture

Émile Durkheim (1964). Division of Labor in Society. The Free Press, New York (Pp. 70–110 and 156–164)

Durkheim, Emile. 1978[1901]. "Two Laws of Penal Evolution." Pp. 153-180 in Mark Traugot (Ed.) Emile Durkheim on Institutional Analysis. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Sunday - March 23, 2014

Assignment: Weekly Paper 8: Two Ways of Being Together

Due: March 23, 2014

Emile Durkheim is most well known for his influential distinction between mechanical and organic solidarity.

In this paper I want you to:

Briefly summarize Durkheim's definition of each kind of solidarity. Which form of solidarity depends on "sameness" which form of solidarity depends on "differences"?

Discuss how Durkheim's distinction relates to Tonnies' equally influential differentiation between Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft.

1) Outline the characteristics of gemeinschaft/mechanical solidarity. What keeps people together in this kind of society? What are the most likely sources of bonding (e.g. blood, language, locality, etc.)? What are the consequences of living in this type of society for the development of the individual personality?

2) Outline the characteristics of gesellschaft/organic solidarity. What keeps people together in this type of society? How is it different from Gemeinschaft? What role does the Division of Labor play in keeping people together? Why does individuality come to be preponderant in this type of society?

Be sure to provide concrete examples of groups that exhibit each type of solidarity as well as the kinds of behaviors and institutions that are associated with each throughout the discussion.

[View 12 submissions](#)

Monday - March 24, 2014

Class: Application: Organic versus Mechanical Moralities

12:30pm - 1:45pm · Lecture

Émile Durkheim (1964). Division of Labor in Society. The Free Press, New York (Pp. 164–173)

Haidt, J., & Graham, J. (2009). Planet of the Durkheimians, where community, authority, and sacredness are foundations of morality. Social and psychological bases of ideology and system justification, 371-401.

Wednesday - March 26, 2014

Class: Suicide and the Linkage Between Individual and Society

12:30pm - 1:45pm · Lecture

Émile Durkheim (1979). Suicide: A study in Sociology. The Free Press, New York (Pp. 152–170, 171-216, 217-240)

Sunday - March 30, 2014

Assignment: Weekly Paper 9: Accounting for the "Maquiladora Murders"

Due: March 30, 2014

The so-called "Maquiladora Murders" (also known as the "Female homicides in Ciudad Juarez and the Femicidios") are a wave of killings in the Mexican bordertown of Ciudad Juarez that started in the early 1990s and have continued ever since. Official estimates of the number of women killed state that almost 400 women have been murdered (most in gruesome fashion) although unofficial estimates by human rights groups are much larger (approaching 600).

Wikipedia entry: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Female_homicides_in_Ciudad_Juarez

NY Times Article (2002): goo.gl/gXHYN

The feminicides in Ciudad Juarez are a major sociological (and criminological) mystery (in that to date they continue to confound the experts). Various explanations have been offered (drug trafficking, serial killers, organ trafficking, etc.) none of which are very satisfying. In this paper, I want you to (after consulting the Wikipedia and New York Times articles linked to above, as well as any independent research that you might want to engage in), to put yourself in WWDS?* mode, and consider the possibility of the female homicides in Juarez as an example of punishment in Durkheim's sense. That is, rather than providing an exclusively instrumental explanation, I want you to look at this phenomenon as an example of a collective (although not necessarily coordinated) response to a violation of the collective conscience.

Requirements: outline exactly how the killings fit the Durkheimian pattern of crime and punishment, what sort of collective morality has been disrupted (hint: it's got something to do with traditional gender relations)? What are the sources of this disruption? How can the violence be seen as a (somewhat desperate) attempt to restore what has been lost?

*What Would Durkheim say?

Specs: Minimum 1000 words, 12pt Times New Roman Font, Double-spaced

[View 11 submissions](#)

Monday - March 31, 2014

Class: Anomie and the Hedonic Treadmill

12:30pm - 1:45pm · Lecture

Haidt, J. (2006). The happiness hypothesis: Finding modern truth in ancient wisdom. Basic Books (Pp. 84-90, 132-134)

Émile Durkheim (1979). Suicide: A study in Sociology. The Free Press, New York (Pp. 241–276)

Wednesday - April 2, 2014

Class: Application: The Bridge I

12:30pm - 1:45pm · Lecture

Monday - April 7, 2014

Class: Application: The Bridge II

12:30pm - 1:45pm · Lecture

Wednesday - April 9, 2014

Class: Durkheim on Religious Phenomena

12:30pm - 1:45pm · Lecture

Durkheim, E. (1975). Concerning the definition of religious phenomena. In Pickering, W. S. F., editor, Durkheim on Religion: A Selection of Readings with Bibliographies, pages 74–99. Routledge & Kegan Paul, Boston, MA

Sunday - April 13, 2014

Assignment: Weekly Paper 10: Anomie and Suicide (The Bridge)

Due: April 13, 2014

Durkheim writes in his seminal work Suicide:

"The totality of moral rules truly forms about each person an imaginary wall, at the foot of which the flood of human passions simply dies without being able to go further. For the same reason—that they are contained—it becomes possible to satisfy them. But if at any point this barrier weakens, these previously restrained human forces pour tumultuously through the open breach; once loosed they find no limits where they can stop. They can only devote themselves, without hope or satisfaction, to the pursuit of an end that always eludes them...if...rules lose their authority...the emotions and appetites ruled by...morality will become unrestricted and uncontained, and accentuated by this very release; powerless to fulfill themselves because they have been freed from all limitations, these emotions will produce a disillusionment which manifests itself visibly in the statistics of suicide"(173).

This model of human motivation and the origins of human needs leads Durkheim to the counter-intuitive (at least for us modern individualists) prediction that rules, limitations (e.g. such as restrictions to complete "freedom of inquiry") and regulations (as well as integration into a "society" that upholds these rules) are actually good for the person. That is, persons, that are integrated into a framework of rule will be happier and more satisfied with their life than those who are "free" from all forms of control and regulation.

Using this as your starting point:

- 1) Summarize and evaluate Durkheim's theory of social integration and anomie. Be sure to explicitly discuss how Durkheim uses this theory to differentiate between egoistic and anomic suicide.
- 2) Evaluate and discuss Durkheim's empirical evidence for each kind of suicide, such as for instance, differences in suicide rates across the different religious confessions or between married and single people. How does Durkheim use these data to support his theory?
- 3) Provide examples (e.g from "The Bridge") that seems to be consistent with the hypothesis that lack of social integration or lack of social regulation results in unhappiness, dissatisfaction, depression and even suicide.

Minimum 1000 Words, 12 pt Times New Roman Font, 1in margins, name on the header not the body of the paper.

[View 14 submissions](#)

Monday - April 14, 2014

Class: Class cancelled (conference travel)

12:30pm - 1:45pm · Lecture

Tuesday - April 15, 2014

Assignment: Assignment 2: Short Draft and bibliography

Due: April 15, 2014

For this assignment I want you to write a short draft of your final paper based on the topic that you chose in the last assignment.

Your short draft should at a minimum include:

- 1) A statement of your main question or problem (what is it, why it is important).
- 2) A summary of a possible answer suggested by some of the readings and theories that we have covered so far.
- 3) A summary of what other answers may have been proposed by others outside of sociology (e.g. psychology, philosophy, history, theology, etc.).
- 4) A summary of how the approach taken from one of the classical theorist can be used to either challenge the non-sociological approaches, or could be integrated and made consistent with them.
- 5) A short summary of your conclusion.

Your bibliography should include at least three outside sources (material that we have not covered in class) that deal with that question in addition to the in-class material.

Minimum 1500 words, 12pt Times New Roman Font, 1in Margins, name in header.

[View 14 submissions](#)

Wednesday - April 16, 2014

Class: Religion and Social Solidarity I

12:30pm - 1:45pm · Lecture

Émile Durkheim (2001). The Elementary Forms of Religious Life. Oxford University Press, New York (Pp. 153-182, 283-288)

Sunday - April 20, 2014

Assignment: Weekly Paper 11: Religion, Religious Phenomena and Social Integration

Due: April 20, 2014

In the essay entitled "Concerning the Definition of Religious Phenomena" Durkheim provides a definition of religious phenomena and religion. In this paper I want you to provide a conceptual analysis of these (controversial) definitions. What is included and excluded? How is it different (and critical of) other definitions of religion? What sort of "religious phenomena" qualify as "religious" under Durkheim's definition which would not qualify under more restrictive definitions?

In *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, Durkheim provides a theory of the origin of the notion of "The Sacred" from religious ritual gatherings. According to Durkheim the primary function of religious ritual is to renew group bonds and renew solidarity, and the prototypical religious occasion is the ritual gathering. Explain in detail how Durkheim derives these propositions. Can you think of an example of an event that Durkheim would call "religious" that other people would not necessarily think of as religious?

[View 7 submissions](#)

Wednesday - April 23, 2014

Class: Class cancelled (conference travel)

12:30pm - 1:45pm · Lecture

Sunday - April 27, 2014

Assignment: Assignment: Full draft (2500+ words) of your final paper.

Due: April 27, 2014

Make sure that your draft conforms to the following structure.

It should begin with an introductory section that states in detail what your question is and provides the reader with a sense of why your question is important.

Followed by a section that outlines different answers that have been given to this question (the answers may include positions taken outside of sociology, by psychologists, philosophers, theologians, etc.).

Followed by a section that outlines a sociological way of addressing the question and coming up with an answer to it. This section should discuss whether the sociological answer is more effective than previous answers, or if you have two competing sociological answers (e.g. Marx versus Weber on the sources of capitalism) you should specify why you believe that one sociological answer is better than the other one.

End in a discussion and conclusion that summarizes and recapitulates your argument, connects your questions and your answers to contemporary society and contemporary social developments and in which you talk about possible new questions that have been brought up by your analysis.

Minimum 2500 words, double-spaced, 1in margins, name in header not body.

[View 15 submissions](#)

Monday - April 28, 2014

Class: Class: Fashion and Modernity

12:30pm - 1:45pm · Lecture

Simmel, G. (1957). Fashion. *American Journal of Sociology*, 62(6):541–558

Simmel, G. (1997). Adornment. In Frisby, D., editor, *Simmel on Culture*, pages 206–210. Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA

Wednesday - April 30, 2014

Class: Money, the City, and Modernity

12:30pm - 1:45pm · Lecture

Simmel, G. (1997a). The metropolis and mental life. In Frisby, D., editor, *Simmel on Culture*, pages 174–186. Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA

Simmel, G. (1997b). On the psychology of money. In Frisby, D., editor, *Simmel on Culture*, pages 233–242. Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA

Tuesday - May 6, 2014

Assignment: Weekly paper 12a: Simmel on Fashion, Conformism and Individuality

Due: May 6, 2014

According to Simmel, Fashion is a "universal phenomenon in the history of our race" because it combines components of the two most important tendencies in social life: the desire to belong to a group (and thus conform) and the desire to individuate (and thus be different).

Briefly review Simmel's theory of fashion in this light. What accounts for the constant dynamism of fashion? How is fashion related to social stratification (e.g. the "trickle down" model)? Which groups are constantly forced to shift to new fashions? Which are more likely to imitate? Which are more likely to innovate? Are there social groups that are more likely to be attracted to fashion because of the structural position that they occupy?

[View 11 submissions](#)

Assignment: Weekly Paper 12b: Simmel on Money and Urban Life

Due: May 6, 2014

In "The Metropolis and Mental Life" and "The Psychology of Money" Georg Simmel details the various psychological and social consequences that come from life in the city, which he conceives as the center of the money economy characteristic of modernity.

In this paper I want you to briefly summarize Simmel's argument while specifying at least three (3) major social and psychological consequences of living in the city and/or being routinely involved in exchanges involving money. Make sure to point out the most relevant similarities and differences between Simmel's various arguments and previous treatment of similar subjects by Marx (e.g. money and commodities), Weber (e.g. rationality, calculation, capitalism and the money economy) or Durkheim (e.g. individuality and social solidarity). Finally, Provide at least one example from your experience in urban spaces that appear to be consistent with Simmel's analysis.

[View 2 submissions](#)

Wednesday - May 7, 2014

Assignment: Final Paper Due

Due: May 7, 2014

[View 16 submissions](#)

There are currently no upcoming events.