HSPS Tripos – Part 1, Soc1
Introduction to Sociology: Modern Societies I
(2017-18)

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Aims and Objectives
The course has three interconnected aims and objectives:

- to introduce students to the systematic study of society and social life
- to introduce students to the central debates concerning the nature of the modern era and its social consequences by exploring a selection of key sociological texts by Karl Marx, Max Weber and Emile Durkheim
- to provide students with a fundamental understanding of the major institutions that comprise, and issues that confront, modern societies

Course Content
The course introduces students to the discipline of sociology in two parts. In the Michaelmas term students are thoroughly acquainted with core sociological concepts and concerns (e.g. class, bureaucracy, social solidarity, social change). We do this through a critical engagement with the ideas of three central figures in the history of modern sociological thought: Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Emile Durkheim. Towards the end of Michaelmas and throughout Lent, we build on the foundations laid by the classical theorists and develop a systematic analysis of key institutions and aspects of modern societies including the following: the modern state and the rise of nationalism; citizenship and the welfare state; the media and public life; class and inequality; gender and sexual divisions; race and ethnicity. We conclude with a broader reflection on the changing nature of modern societies in our contemporary global age.

Mode of Teaching
The paper is taught through 18 two-hour lectures over three terms. A list of supervision topics is included in this paper guide and will also be available from the Faculty Office. Students will be expected to supplement the material acquired in lectures through their own reading of the literature recommended here and by supervisors. Required reading is starred.

Mode of Assessment
There is one three-hour written examination at the end of the year. Candidates must answer three questions from an undivided paper.
Supervision

Supervision is essential for this paper and will be arranged by Directors of Studies in the Colleges. It is recommended to have six to eight supervisions in total for this paper (including revision supervisions), covering six of the topics in this paper guide. A list of qualified supervisors is provided by the paper coordinator.
Part I: THEORIES OF MODERNITY (Michaelmas 2017)
Dr Teije Hidde Donker

Topic 1 – Karl Marx
(Michaelmas week 1)

This lecture introduce Marx’s views on the transition to modern capitalism. Specific emphasis is given to two fundamental aspects of Marx’s project: first, his observations regarding what is distinctive and problematic about modern society; and second, his materialist understanding of historical change.

a. Historical context
The first part addresses the particular intellectual and socio-political context within which Marx wrote. More specifically, we will consider how Marx was influenced by and reacted against German idealist philosophy and utopian socialist thought.

b. Historical Materialism and the Communist Revolution
The second part explores four texts that are distinctive of Marx’s views. Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts includes a famous section on alienation, and German Ideology presents a basic outline of a materialist conception of history. Both demonstrate the influence of Feuerbach on the young Marx and the extent to which he distances himself from Hegel. Communist Manifesto is a polemical defence of historical materialism and argues that the collapse of capitalism is inevitable. Grundrisse is generally viewed as a transition piece, linking his earlier philosophical concerns with the more empirical emphases found in Capital.

c. Marx and Marxism: the legacy and its critics
The final part of this lecture deals with Marx’s enduring influence, the varieties of Marxism, and its critics. We also assess the widely held view that recent social and political events refute the validity of Marx’s views.

Reading


**Essays**

1. Do you agree that Marx is a critic of capitalism but not of industrialisation?
2. Feminist scholars have critiqued Marx for failing to include gender in his historical materialism. Do you agree?
Topic 2 – Max Weber

(Michaelmas week 2)

These lectures introduce Weber’s views about the transition to rational capitalism. As with the lectures on Marx, we consider two fundamental aspects of Weber's intellectual project: first, his observations regarding what is distinctive and problematic about modern society; and second, his interest in the role of unanticipated effects in history.

a. Historical context
The first part of this lecture explores the particular intellectual and socio-political context in which Weber wrote. It includes, amongst other things, a discussion of Weber’s relationship to historical materialism, Nietzsche’s influence, and Weber’s position vis-a-vis the ‘Methodenstreit’.

b. The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism
The second part introduces Weber’s classic study of the relationship between Protestantism and rational capitalism. It explores Weber’s use of Verstehen and the role of unintended effects of purposive action. The lecture also explores Weber’s text on ‘bureaucracy’. Emphasis is given to the following two themes: Weber’s notion of rationalisation and the concept of ideal types.

c. Weberian sociology and its critics
The final part gives some indication of Weber’s influence and assesses various critiques of Weberian sociology.

Reading
Collins, H. Weberian Sociological Theory. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (esp. chapters 1, 2)
Essays
1. According to Weber, what makes bureaucracies efficient? Do you agree?
2. Critically discuss Weber’s theory on the role of the Predestination doctrine in the development of early capitalism.
**Topic 3 – Emile Durkheim**

(Michaelmas week 3)

These lectures introduce Durkheim’s views about the transition to a modern differentiated society. We focus on Division of Labour and Suicide, discussing it in two ways. Firstly, we consider Durkheim’s thoughts on what is distinctive and problematic about modern society, and secondly his views concerning how society is held together.

**a. Historical context**
The first part of this lecture explores the particular intellectual and socio-political context in which Durkheim wrote. It includes a discussion of Durkheim's efforts to create a new academic discipline, the influence of Comtean positivist philosophy and the socio-political situation in the Third Republic in France.

**b. Division of Labour, Suicide and other works**
The second part introduces Durkheim’s Division of Labour. We first discuss Durkheim’s use of evolutionary theory to account for societal change. Second, we discuss his diagnosis of the problems of modern society, in particular the notion of anomie. We subsequently explore how some of the themes in Division of Labour are taken up in later works, including Rules of Sociological Method, Suicide and Elementary Forms of Religious Life.

**c. Durkheimian sociology and its critics**
The second part of this lecture explores Durkheim’s legacy as manifest in the work of more recent social thinkers. It also discusses major criticisms of Durkheimian sociology.

**Reading**


Essays

1. What does Durkheim mean by anomie, and why does he regard it as problematic?
2. Discuss Durkheim’s treatment of sex and race in his general theory of the division of labour.
Part II: The Study of Modern Societies (Michaelmas 2017 - Lent 2018)

SOCIAL INEQUALITIES
Dr Manali Desai

Topic 1 – Class and Inequality

(Michaelmas week 4)

a. In this part of the lecture we will discuss various theories of class, examining how neo-Marxists and neo-Weberians have thought about class, and Bourdieu’s variation on the theme.

b. In this part of the lecture we will discuss empirical studies of class, examining evidence on the persistence and evolution of social class in modern Britain.

Reading

a.

b.

Essays

a. Do Savage et al make a convincing case for a new model of class? Why or why not?
b. Discuss and provide evidence for two mechanisms that enable class in modern Britain to persist.

**Topic 2 – Race, Ethnicity and Racism**

(Michaelmas week 5)

a. The first part of this lecture will discuss the concepts of ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’ and how they are linked to contemporary inequalities.

b. In the second part of this lecture we will discuss the history of racism in the UK and beyond, considering how ethnic divisions can become racialized and lead to discrimination and violence.

**Reading**

a.

b.

**Essays**

a. What are the similarities and differences (if any) between the concepts of race and ethnicity?
b. Discuss two key social or cultural mechanisms by which racism persists in contemporary culture (you can choose a non-western country or a country other than the UK)?
**Topic 3 – Nations and Nationalisms**

(Michaelmas week 6)

**a.** This part of the lecture addresses the rise of the nation and nationalism in Europe and beyond.

**b.** In this part of the lecture we will ask whether nationalism is on the decline in the face of globalization.

**Reading**

**a.**

**b.**

**Essays**

**a.** Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of Anthony Smith’s theory of the ethnic origins of nations.

**b.** Discuss, using examples, how ‘globalization’ both erodes and strengthens nationalism.
**Topic 4 – Gender, Sexuality, and Intersectionality**

(Michaelmas week 7)

**a.** In this part of the lecture we will discuss the category of ‘gender’; how is it constructed, and why is it so powerful? How are gender and sexuality related?

**b.** What is ‘intersectionality’ in sociology and why is it important?

**Reading**

**a.**


**b.**


**Essays**

**a.** Are gender and sexuality fundamentally intertwined, or should they be considered as entirely separate analytical frameworks?

**b.** Discuss two ways in which the theory and method of intersectionality challenges white, western feminism (or feminist theory).
**Topic 5 – The Politics of Inequality**

(Michaelmas week 8)

a. This part of the lecture discusses the rise in global inequality and considers some of the causes.

b. This part of the lecture discusses the consequences of these inequalities with a focus on the consequences of austerity.

**Reading**

a.

b.

**Essays**

a. Why has inequality grown steadily during the past two decades?
b. Discuss two important consequences of recent austerity measures in the UK, using evidence to show these effects.
POWER & SOCIETY
Dr. Teije Hidde Donker

Topic 1 – Understanding Power

(Lent week 1)

a) This part of the lecture introduces the concept of power by discussing different approaches to understanding power: realist, behaviorist, and post-structuralist ones.
b) The second part of the lecture discusses how these different views on power relate to issues of social inequality such as class, sexuality, gender and race.

Reading

a) Schmidt, Brian C. “Competing Realist Conceptions of Power.” Millennium 33, no. 3 (June 1, 2005): 523–49.
* Mann, Michael. The Sources of Social Power: Volume 1, A History of Power from the Beginning to AD 1760. Cambridge University Press, 2012. [Chapter 1]
Poggi, Gianfranco. Forms of Power. John Wiley & Sons, 2016. [Introduction, Chapter 1, 2]
* Castells, Manuel. Communication Power. OUP Oxford, 2013. [Chapter 1]


Essays
1. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of realist, behavioralist and post-structuralist approaches to power
2. Which approaches to power do you consider more useful in social analysis, and why?
**Topic 2 – Political Power: The Rise of the Modern State and the Welfare State**

(Lent week 2)

a) In the first part of the lecture we explore different views on the causes and distinctiveness of the modern state.

b) In the second part of the lecture we explore the rise and possible decline of the welfare state.

**Reading**


**Essays:**

1. What were the main causes of the rise of the modern nation-state?
2. Has the welfare state been dismantled?
**Topic 3 – Political Power: State & Revolution**

(Lent week 3)

a) In the first part of the lecture we explore different views on the causes and consequences of revolutions and discuss how these views relate to specific approaches to power and the state.

b) The second part of the lecture discusses how globalization can influence the emergence and development of revolutionary movements.

**Reading**

**a)**

* Goldstone, Jack A. *Revolutions: Theoretical, Comparative, and Historical Studies.* Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2003. [Introduction, Chapter 1-3]


CB Sanderson, Stephen K. *Revolutions: A Worldwide Introduction to Political and Social Change.* Routledge, 2015. [Chapter 4-5]

**b)**

Castells, Manuel. *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age.* John Wiley & Sons, 2013. [Chapter 1-2]

Kandil, Hazem. “Why Did the Egyptian Middle Class March to Tahrir Square?” *Mediterranean Politics* 17, no. 2 (July 1, 2012): 197–215.


**Essays**

1. What causes revolutions? Are they becoming less likely?
2. Is the use of violence a necessary characteristic of a definition of revolutions?
**Topic 4 – Military Power: War & Society**

(Lent week 4)

a) The first part of this lecture discusses the changing character of collective violence in society.

b) In the second part of this lecture we explore debates on the emergence of “new wars” and the US led “war on terror”.

**Reading**

a)  

* See also Strachan, Hew, and Andreas Herberg-Rothe. *Clausewitz in the Twenty-First Century*. OUP Oxford, 2007. [Chapter 1]


b)  


**Essays**

1. Discuss if contemporary warfare can be considered “new”.

2. Discuss the “war on terror” and how it relates to the changing position of the state in society.
**Topic 5 – Ideological Power: Neoliberalism**

(Lent week 5)

a) The first part of this lecture discusses different approaches to the concept of ideology and how these relate to realist and post-structuralist views of power.

b) In the second part of this lecture we discuss the causes and consequences of the emergence and global dominance of neoliberal ideology.

**Reading**

**a)**
Mannheim, Karl. *Ideology and Utopia*. Routledge, 2013. [Chapter 1 and 2]


* Eagleton, Terry. *Ideology*. Routledge, 2014. [Chapter 1]

**b)**
Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford University Press, 2007. [Introduction, Chapter 1, 4]


**Essays**

1. If ideologies are only about ideas, how can they become a source of power?
2. Weber famously stated that the state has a monopoly on violence. Can we also say that the state has a monopoly on symbolic, ideological, violence?
**Topic 6 – Combined Power: Globalization & Neoliberalism**

(Lent week 6)

a) In the first part of the penultimate lecture we compare the notions of empire and globalization in relation to state, military and ideological power.

b) In the second part we conclude the course by exploring possibilities for individual opposition to dominant powers in a world shaped by globalization & empire.

**Reading**

a)
* Hardt, Michael, and Antonio Negri. Empire. Harvard University Press, 2001. [Chapter 1.1, 1.2, 4.3]

Mann, Michael. *Incoherent Empire*. Verso, 2005. [Introduction, Chapter 1-4].


b)


**Essays**
1. Is Imperialism still possible today?
2. How does globalization alter international power relations?
Topic 7 – Further Aspects of Globalization: Culture and the Environment
(Lent week 7)

a) In this first part of the final lecture, we explore the cultural manifestations of globalization.
b) In the second part, we discuss current global challenges we face in relation to our environment.

Reading


Weller, Robert P. Discovering Nature: Globalization and Environmental Culture in China and Taiwan. Cambridge University Press, 2006. [Chapter 1, 5, 6, 7]

Essays
1. Are we becoming a world culture?
2. In what sense is the environment a global problem, demanding global solutions?
Revision Session
(Lent week 8)
We use the final week of Lent for Revision.

Further information:

a) How this course relates to others
This paper provides students with grounding in some of the classic texts of social thought, with an introduction to some of the key concepts in sociology today and with an understanding of some of the core institutions of modern societies. The paper provides the foundations for more advanced coursework in sociology at the IIA and IIB levels.

b) Supplementary Reading List

c) Student Feedback
Your chance to put forward your opinions on the papers you take!

For Sociology Papers, student feedback is collected via hard-copy anonymous questionnaires distributed at various points in the academic year. It is crucial that you fill these out and give feedback on your papers. Getting good feedback from students makes the course better and shows the outside world how Cambridge degrees consider their students’ views.

Course organisers take students' concerns and suggestions into consideration each year when preparing their paper outlines and selecting supervisors for the year. So please remember to fill out a form.