

HTS 6001
Social Theory
Fall 2026

Instructor:

Dr. Bhumika Chauhan
Office: Old Civil Engineering Building (Room 136)
Email: bchauhan30@gatech.edu

Office Hours:

Thursday 2pm-3pm (by appointment only)
Booking link: TBD

Class Information:

Thursday; 5:00-7:45 pm
OCE 104

Course Overview

In this course we will encounter, and critically engage, works by thinkers who were formative in the development of sociology, those whose ideas continue to echo through contemporary scholarship in a continuous conversation. The canonical classical theorists – Marx, Durkheim, Weber, and DuBois – set the stage for subsequent research and theorizing, and their writing has stood the test of time.

Learning outcomes:

- Gain a familiarity with key sociological theories.
- Skills: critically reading social scientific research; identifying and using scholarly sources; communicating social scientific research.

Readings

You will need the following books, available in the bookstore.

W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*
W.E.B. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction in America*
Emile Durkheim, *Rules of Sociological Method*
Emile Durkheim, *Suicide*
Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*
Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*
Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*
David McLellan, *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, 2nd Edition
Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*

Other readings will be made available to students electronically.

Assignments, Deadlines, and Grading:

Class Format and Grading

Class Participation	40%
Essays	20%
Term Paper	40%

Participation (40%)

Writing and speaking in class are essential practices for learning new concepts. Students will be expected to participate in class discussions as individuals as well as through group work. Hence, students are required to read the readings before class. As you read the materials for class, you are encouraged to write memos for every reading. A good memo will (1) summarize the key arguments, key concepts, and the evidence provided, (2) evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the evidence and argument, (3) reflect on how the reading relates to previous readings and class discussions, (4) things that are not clear to you about the argument, and (5) pose 1-2 questions about the readings. These elements will help you participate in class discussions the next day.

Two Essays (20%, due SEPT 17 and OCT 22)

Twice in the semester, during our discussion of the principal classical theorists, I will assign an essay question and students will be graded on their response to it. Essays should be 4-6 pages, double-spaced, with 1" margins, and in 12-point standard font (preferably Times New Roman). Consider these assignments to be formal essays. By means of these essays, I will provide you with early feedback on your academic writing, in addition to assessing your mastery of concepts in classical theory.

Term Paper (40%, due DEC 17)

Students are required to write a term paper in which they display mastery and insight into a topic related to sociological theory and in which they develop a sustained argument about the theoretical ideas they seek to engage.

Students have great latitude in choosing a topic. Examples of potential topic include: critically comparing two theorists; exploring how a specific theorist would approach a particular substantive issue; demonstrating how a particular theoretical lens may (or may not) prove useful in illuminating some empirical concern; and many more. There are obvious reasons why students might want to pick theorists that we are reading in class; however, I am also providing a list of additional social theorists for students to consider, given their particular research interests.

Importantly, the term paper is *not* an empirical paper. It should be a logical, rational discussion about the theoretical ideas themselves: what are the assumptions? what are the implications? how do ideas relate to one another? what empirical conditions might we deduce from these relationships?

To encourage students to begin preparing for the term paper early in the semester, I require all students to submit a **term paper proposal in Week 4**. It does not need to be more than a paragraph. Just describe the topic sufficiently for me to sign off on it. *The proposal is not a contract!* You may change topics at any point, but the longer you work on the paper, the stronger it will be.

I also expect to see a **proposed outline for your term paper by Week 12**. Again, the outline is not a contract; your final paper can deviate from the proposed outline. This requirement is simply a way for me to review the progress of your thinking on your chosen topic.

Finally, I expect all students to meet with me at least once during **office hours to discuss your term paper between Weeks 10-14**. If given sufficient time, I can read a draft in advance the deadline and provide feedback.

Final papers should not be less than 15 pages, and should not exceed 30 pages, excluding bibliography. Papers are due on **Dec 17** no later than noon.

Course Policies

Attendance

Attendance will be taken in every class period, and this will determine the classroom participation grade listed above. Class attendance is central to your learning in this course, and a lot of important material will be introduced during class that will go beyond the readings. Missing too many classes will impact your ability to follow subsequent classes and do your assignments.

But life happens! Excused and documented absences will not affect the participation grade, though. If you will be missing a class, please send a brief email in advance so that your class

participation grade is not impacted. If you're unwell, please get a doctor's note. If you have a sports meeting, please get a letter from your coach. Prioritize your health and stay home if you're unwell. If you are unable to attend class for **three consecutive meetings due to a prolonged illness**, please send along a doctor's note and see the Accommodations section below. If you feel you are having trouble catching up, please set an appointment for office hours.

Late assignments

The policy for late assignments is that you will need a documented health, funeral, or university-sponsored excuse for turning in late assignments at full credit. Assignments turned in after their due dates without an excuse will receive a drop in letter grade every two days beyond their due date.

Accommodations

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, contact the Office of Disability Services at 404.894.2563 or their website as soon as possible to discuss your needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Then, make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss your learning needs.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. All work submitted must be original and properly cited. Plagiarism, cheating, or any form of academic dishonesty will result in immediate consequences as outlined in the university's academic integrity policy.

Academic misconduct is described fully in two documents: the [Student Code of Conduct](#) and the [Academic Honor Code](#). The Student Code of Conduct outlines the Institute's expectations for academic and nonacademic conduct as well as students' rights and seeks to foster an environment conducive to academic excellence. The Code outlines nine charges that apply to academic misconduct. The [Georgia Tech Academic Honor Code](#) is a guide that articulates [student and faculty expectations](#); it is designed to strengthen the level of academic integrity and trust within the Tech community. As described in the Academic Honor Code, faculty members are expected to create an environment where honesty flourishes.

Use of Generative AI Tools

Generative AI derives its output from previously created texts from other sources that the models were trained on yet doesn't cite sources. Per GaTech's Honor Code, you may not submit any work generated by an AI program as your own. If you include material generated by an AI program, it should be cited like any other reference material (with due consideration for the quality of the reference, which may be poor). When/if you use AI platforms in your assignments, please write a note to clarify where in your process you used AI, include the prompt used to generate the material, and which platform(s) you used. See this article for

how to cite AI properly: How to cite ChatGPT: <https://apastyle.apa.org/blog/how-to-cite-chatgpt>

NOTE: These tools can produce inaccurate, offensive, and biased results. Uncritical use of these tools for your assignment, especially for a social science class, may lead to historically inaccurate and sociological unscientific statements being included in your paper, which will negatively impact your grade.

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974 is a federal law that affords students certain rights with respect to their education records: • The right to inspect and review their own records • The right to request amendments to their records • The right to have some control over the release of personally identifiable information from their records. Generally speaking, all Institute employees who have access to student records are responsible for guarding the confidentiality of those records.

Mental Health Assistance

There are resources on campus at the GTech's Counseling Center to help if you are facing a mental health issue. In case of an urgent psychological crisis call Counseling Center at 238 404.894.2575 (Address: Smithgall Student Services Building, Suite; website: counseling.gatech.edu).

Sexual Harassment (Title IX)

All faculty members are considered "[Responsible Employees](#)" per GT's [Sexual Misconduct Policy](#). **I am, therefore, required to report allegations of sexual misconduct** to the Title IX office. You can reach out to the Title IX Coordinator with questions at 404-894-5698.

If you need to speak in confidence with someone who does not have an obligation to report to the Title IX Office, please contact:

- VOICE Advocates: 404.385.4451 | 404.385.4464 404.894.2500 (on-call advocate available outside of business hours) healthinitiatives.gatech.edu/well-being/voice
- The Center for Mental Health Care and Resources | 404-894-3498 | www.care.gatech.edu
- Women's Health at 404-894-1434, or any other clinician in Stamps Health Services at 404-894-9980

Course Schedule

Week 1

Aug 27: Introduction

No reading is assigned in advance of the first meeting

Week 2

Sept 3: The Enlightenment

Immanuel Kant, "What Is Enlightenment?"

Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, Ch. 1-3

Week 3

Sept 10: Marx

McLellan, Karl Marx: Selected Writings

Ch. 6: On "The Jewish Question"

Ch. 7: Toward a Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*

Ch. 8: The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts

Ch. 13: Theses on Feuerbach

Ch. 14: The German Ideology

Ch. 25: The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte

Week 4

Sept 17: Marx

McLellan, Karl Marx: Selected Writings

Ch. 18: The Communist Manifesto

Ch. 30: Critique of Political Economy

Ch. 32: Capital

Ch. 39: On Bakunin's *Statism and Anarchy*

Ch. 40: Critique of the Gotha Program

Ch. 46: Letters

***Term Paper Proposal Due**

Week 5

Sept 24: Weber

Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills, *From Max Weber*

Ch. III: Intellectual Orientation

Ch. IV: Politics as a Vocation (pgs. 77-83)

Ch. V: Science as a Vocation

Ch. VII: Class, Status and Power

Ch. VIII: Bureaucracy

Ch. IX: Sociology of Charismatic Authority

Ch. X: The Meaning of Discipline

***Essay 1 Due**

Week 6

Oct 1: Weber

The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism

Week 7

Oct 8: Durkheim

Emile Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method*, Prefaces, Chap 1, 2 and 5

Emile Durkheim, Suicide

Week 8

Oct 15: Durkheim

Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*

Week 9

Oct 22: DuBois

W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*

W.E.B. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction in America* (Selections)

***Essay 2 Due**

Week 10

Oct 29: Antonio Gramsci, *The Prison Notebooks* (selections online)

Louis Althusser, *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*

Week 11

Nov 5: SPRING BREAK

Week 12

Nov 12: Microsociology

Craig Calhoun, et al. (eds) *Contemporary Sociological Theory*, 2nd Edition

Ch. 1: The Phenomenology of the Social World

Ch. 2: The Social Construction of Reality

Ch. 3: The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life

Ch. 4: Symbolic Interactionism

Candace West and Don Zimmerman, "Doing Gender"

Ann Swidler, "Culture in Action"

***Term Paper Outline Due**

Week 13

Nov 19

Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*

Part 1, Chapter 1: The Body of the Condemned

Part 2, Chapter 1: Generalized Punishment

Part 3: Discipline

Week 14

Nov 26: Thanksgiving Break

Week 15: Last Day of Class

Dec 3: Reflections

***Dec 17: Term Papers Due at 11:59 p.m.**