

ANTH 10536: How Societies Work (or Don't)
Harper Memorial 150 (M, T, W, Th, F 9:00am-3:00pm)
SUMMER COURSE

Instructor

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Office Hour: Thursdays 3:00-4:00 in Gates-Blake 320 or by appointment

Course Assistant

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Office Hour: Wednesdays 3:00-4:00 in Gates-Blake 319 or by appointment

Course Description

How do societies work? Why do they so often seem to break down and fail? Should we expect societies to “work” as cohesive entities, or should we assume that they are always rife with conflict, inequality, and power struggles? In this class, we will address these questions with the help of classic works of modern social and political theory. We will use these theories to explore several interrelated questions. What makes societies cohere? What novel forms of social organization and new ideas of social order have emerged in the modern era? And lastly, what new dangers have accompanied the emergence and development of distinctively modern forms of social life?

Requirements

Course Engagement (30% of final grade)

This course is primarily a discussion class. That means that your consistent, on-time attendance and active participation are essential. You are expected to come to class having completed the assigned readings and prepared to engage thoughtfully in discussion. If, for whatever reason, you find it difficult to participate actively, please come speak to me, and we can work to develop strategies for you to contribute to the conversation.

Because this class is centered on our collaborative discussion, electronic devices (laptops, tablets, and cellphones) will have no place in the classroom. From past experience, I have found that the presence of such devices in the classroom detracts from the aims of listening to and engaging with one another far more than it advances them. I am, of course, willing to accommodate those with special circumstances that necessitate the use of a computer or other technology in class, including students who have a registered disability and students who serve as note takers for students with registered disabilities. If this applies to you, please come talk to me.

Lastly, class sessions will not be recorded or made available over zoom. If illness or other unforeseen circumstances prevent you from attending, you should notify the instructors as soon as possible, contact a fellow student to get the notes for the missed session(s), and ideally, plan to attend office hours to discuss what was missed.

Course Journal (20%)

You are responsible for keeping a course journal (as an online Google doc), which you will add to daily and submit to the course assistant each Friday. Typically, there will be time allocated at the end of the class day so that you can add to your journal, but you should always plan to add to your daily entries outside of class.

Your course journal will serve as an invaluable study guide and resource when preparing for the final exam. It is also where you can take stock of what you have learned from the readings and our discussion of the texts. It will be graded on how thoughtfully you engage with the class material. There is no expectation that your entries will be perfectly composed or your interpretations unimpeachably correct. What is most important is that you demonstrate that you are working thoughtfully with the questions and problems raised by the course material.

The length of your entries is up to you. You are free to add as much as you like, but a good rule is that your entry should be at least 400 words. What goes in your entries is also up to you. The following are some questions to help you get started thinking about what you might include:

- What did you learn today? Try to specify what concepts, arguments, and ideas about society were introduced in the readings and class discussion?
- What connections can you draw between sessions? How do the authors, concepts, and arguments you have encountered in class relate to earlier readings and ideas?
- Choose key quotes from the reading(s) that help you to concretize the main take-aways from the text. Rather than simply copying and pasting, include some notes here about what these quotes mean to you and how they relate to the main takeaways.
- What remains puzzling or difficult to grasp in the text? What kind of follow-up questions do you have?
- How have the arguments or concepts introduced in class led you to reevaluate your preexisting views?

Final Exam (25%)

A final exam will be administered in the afternoon of the last day of class (7/25). This will be a bluebook exam and will consist of two essay responses. Please note: You can bring a **print-out** of your course journal to the final exam.

Final Essay (15%)

For the final essay, you should develop one of your reading responses into a 1,250-1,750-word paper. Which response is up to you, but it should allow you to connect your discussion of that day's readings to the themes and questions from one or more of the other sessions. The essay will be due the day before the final exam (Thursday, July 24) by midnight.

Schedule

Week 1 Principles of Cohesion

- 9 July Authority and Representation**
Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (1651), Chs. 13, 17, 18, 21, pp. 74-78, 106-118, 136-145
- 10 July Empathy and Recognition**
Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), part I, section I, Chs. 1-4, and section III, Ch. 2, pp. 9-23, 50-61
G. F. W. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, "Independence and Dependence of Self-Consciousness: Lordship and Bondage," pp. 111-119
- 11 July Interest and Exchange**
Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), book I, Chs. 1-3, 7-25; book IV, Ch. 2; and book IV, Ch. 9 (conclusion only) pp. 7-25, 474-495, 208-209

Week 2 Forms of Modern Social Life

- 14 July Democracy and Individualism**
Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (1835, 1840), Introduction, Vol. 1, Part 1, Ch. 4; and Vol. 2, Part 2, Chs. 1-5, 13, 21 pp. 1-15, 42-44, 201-214, 229-233, 286-297
- 15 July Bourgeois Society and Industrial Civilization**
Karl Marx, *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, "Estranged Labor" and "The Power of Money in Bourgeois Society," pp. 70-81, 101-105
Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party" (1848), Part I. Bourgeois and Proletarians, pp. 473-483
- 16 July The Metropolis**
Louis Wirth, "Urbanism as a Way of Life" (1938), pp. 1-24
- 17 July Disciplinary Society and Normalizing Power**

Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (1975), Part One, Ch. 1 “The Body of the Condemned,” and Part Three, Ch. 3, “Panopticism” (selections), **pp. 3-32, 200-209, 218-228**

- 18 July** **Terror and Total Domination**
Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), Ch. 12, part III Total Domination, and Ch. 13 Ideology and Terror: A Novel Form of Government, **pp. 437-479**
SMART Museum Visit (TBC)

Week 3 Pathologies of Social Life

- 21 July** **Field Trip to Joliet Prison (TBC)**
No Reading
- 22 July** **Racism**
Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The Case for Reparations” (2014), **pp. 55-71.**
Karen E. Fields and Barbara J. Fields, “Slavery, Race, and Ideology in the United States of America” in *Racecraft: The Soul of Inequality in American Life* (2012), **pp. 111-148.**
- 23 July** **Sexism**
Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (1949), Introduction, **pp. 3-18**
Judith Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution” (1988), **pp. 519-531.**
- 24 July** **Our Present**
William Davies, “The Politics of Recognition in the Age of Social Media,” (2021) **pp. 83-99**
- 25 July** **Review and Final Exam**
No Reading