



# How Societies Work (or Don't)

ANTH 10536-94 Summer Session II

M-F 9-11:30am; 1-3pm  
Harper Memorial Library 145

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## Course Description:

How do societies work? Why do they so often seem to break down and fail? Should we even 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 and other questions by taking a deep dive into different schools of social thought: materialism, which sees the production of goods and services as the force that shapes social organization; structural functionalism, which argues that society’s various parts work together to strengthen social cohesion; social action theory, which argues that values, worldviews and social institutions (e.g. religion and family) shape individual activities; and, finally, post-modernism, which avoids any over-arching theory of society. Through these explorations, we will also address topics such as race, class, gender, technology, capitalism and modernity. Our readings will include works by Adam Smith, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Michel Foucault, W.E.B. Du Bois, Simone de Beauvoir, Edmund Burke and others.

## Grading and Assignments:

Your final grade will have the following components:

1. First Writing Assignment:	25%
2. Second Writing Assignment:	30%
3. Final In-class Essay:	25%
4. Soft Criteria (participation, attendance, effort, attitude, etc.)	20%

## **Expectations:**

Participation: Discussion and debate are crucial components of the learning process and students are encouraged to raise questions and express their opinions in class. Active and passionate participants will be rewarded, especially if the comments and questions reflect sincere and thorough engagement with the readings. Disrespectful and excessively argumentative participation is strongly discouraged.

Soft Criteria: Although I try my best to be fair, systematic and consistent, grading in class like this is an inherently subjective process and it would be misleading to pretend otherwise. Therefore, when calculating your final grade, I also factor in signs of improvement, sincere effort, good attitude, etc. as a way of balancing the grading process.

Policy on Plagiarism: Make the rational choice: don't plagiarize! Depending on the severity of the case, students caught plagiarizing work will either fail that particular assignment, fail the entire class and/or be expelled from the University. Be advised that the tools for finding acts of plagiarism are advancing as fast as those for committing them. It is just not worth the risk.

Policy on Extensions and Late Papers: I have a what I call a "24x24" extension policy: a twenty four hour extension will be automatically granted to any students who requests one at least twenty four hours prior to the original deadline. To reiterate, *you must ask for the extension at least twenty four hours before the deadline*. Otherwise late papers will be marked down one full letter grade for each day they are late.

Policy on Attendance and Classroom Breaks: Attendance is required. Because the students of this class are minors, we are required to monitor their whereabouts. Also, as a seminar, participation in and observation of discussion is vital to the goals of this class. Moreover, my knowledge of your presence in class can help me identify problems you might be having. For this reason, your attendance factors into your class participation grade even though no specific penalty is assigned to missing class. If you need to miss class for some reason, please let me know ahead of time. For similar reasons, leaving the Zoom session for brief periods during a class session is also strongly discouraged. Aside from interfering with your involvement in the discussion and my ability to identify problems you might be having with the material, departures during class are also very distracting to me and to some other students. If you have a pressing need to miss or leave class please let me know ahead of time and I will take it into consideration. Students with advanced notice are encouraged to discuss this with me at the beginning of the quarter.

Policy on AI Tools: In this course, we will be developing skills and knowledge that are important to discover and practice on your own. Because use of AI tools inhibits development of these skills and knowledge, students are not allowed to use any AI tools, such as ChatGPT or Dall-E, in this course. Students are expected to present work

that is their own without assistance from others, including automated tools. If you are unclear if something is an AI tool, please check with your instructor. Using AI tools for any purposes in this course will violate the University's academic integrity policy. I treat potential academic integrity violations by reporting students to the appropriate authorities.

## Reading and Assignment Schedule

<b>Week 1: Individuals, Communities, and Government</b>	
Day 1 Wednesday 7/9	<p><u>Morning</u> Topic 1: Introduction to the Class: What is society? What is a society? What does it mean for society to work? Topic 2: Atomistic Thinkers: Classical Liberals and Utilitarians Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i>, chapter 13</li> <li>● Locke, <i>Second Treatise on Government</i>, chapter 2</li> <li>● Bentham, <i>Principles of Morals and Legislation</i>, chapter 1</li> <li>● Mises, <i>Liberalism in the Classical Tradition</i> ( chapters 1.1,1.2, 1.11)</li> </ul> <p>First Writing Assignment Issued: Explain the difference between atomistic and holistic social thought.</p>
	<p><u>Afternoon</u> Writing Workshop 1: Summary vs. Explanation</p>
Day 2 Thursday 7/10	<p><u>Morning</u> Topic: Holistic Thinkers: Communitarian Conservatism Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Burke, <i>Reflections on the Revolution in France</i>, pages 44-73 [pdf]</li> <li>● Walzer, "The Communitarian Critique of Liberalism"</li> </ul>
	<p><u>Afternoon</u> Writing Workshop 2: the work of a paragraph</p>
Day 3 Friday 7/11	<p><u>Morning:</u> Topic: The Intrinsic Sociality of Hegel Hegel [selections TBA, on the concepts of recognition and <i>sittlichkeit</i>] Film: No Exit</p>
	<p>Review and Discussion</p>
<b>Week 2: The Study of Society and Its Problems, Part 1</b>	
Day 4 Monday 7/14	<p>First Writing Assignment Due: Topic: Society as Action Framework Readings:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Weber, <i>Economy and Society</i>, pages 4, 22-43, 53-56, 212-216, 302-306</li> </ul> Second Writing Assignment Due
	Afternoon: Writing Workshop 3: Argumentation
Day 5 Tuesday 7/15	Topic: Society as Organism Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Radcliffe-Brown, "The Concept of Function in Social Science" (178-187)</li> <li>● Radcliffe-Brown, "On Social Structure" (188-204)</li> <li>● Durkheim, <i>The Rules of the Sociological Method</i>, chapters 1 and 3</li> </ul> [Find a good example]
	Topic: Society as a "Curable" Organism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Durkheim, <i>The Division of Labor in Society</i>, Book III, chapter 1</li> <li>● Merton, "Social Structure and Anomie"</li> </ul>
Day 6 Wednesday 7/16	Topic: Society as Punisher (From Punishing Crime to Correcting Deviance) Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● "The Body of The Condemned" from <i>Discipline and Punish</i> by Michel Foucault</li> </ul>
	Topic: (Modern) Society as Corrector of Deviance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● "Panopticism" from <i>Discipline and Punish</i> by Michel Foucault</li> </ul>
Day 7 Thursday 7/17	Society as Recognizer: Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Simone de Beauvoir, <i>The Second Sex</i>, "Introduction;" pages 159-161, "Conclusion"</li> </ul>
	Writing Workshop 4: TBD
Day 8 Friday 7/18	Society as Recognizer [Du Bois and Fanon] Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● W.E.B. Du Bois, <i>The Souls of Black Folk</i>, Preface and chapter 1</li> <li>● Frantz Fanon, <i>Black Skins, White Masks</i>, Pages 191-206.</li> <li>● Film: "Chocolat" (1988)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Review and Discussion</li> </ul>
	<b>Week 3: The Study of Society and Its Problems, Part II</b>
Day 9 Monday 7/21	Second Writing Assignment Due Field Trip: Old Joliet Prison
	Field Trip: Old Joliet Prison
Day 10 Tuesday 7/22	Society as Stage Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Goffman, <i>The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life</i>, Introduction</li> <li>● Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution"</li> </ul>
	Writing Workshop 5: TBD
Day 11 Wednesday 7/23	Society as Producer Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Smith, <i>The Wealth of Nations</i>, "Introduction and Plan of the Work"</li> <li>● Marx, <i>The Communist Manifesto</i></li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Marx, "Estranged Labor"</li> <li>● Horkheimer, "Little Man"</li> </ul>
Day 12 Thursday 7/24	Society as Oppressor of the Mind <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Fromm, <i>Escape from Freedom</i>, chapters 1-2</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Fromm, <i>Escape from Freedom</i>, chapter 4</li> </ul>
Day 13 Friday 7/25	Society as Liberator of the Mind <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Fromm, <i>Escape from Freedom</i>, chapters 5.1 and 7</li> </ul>
	Final in-class Essay

Representative Syllabus