

Theoretical anchors

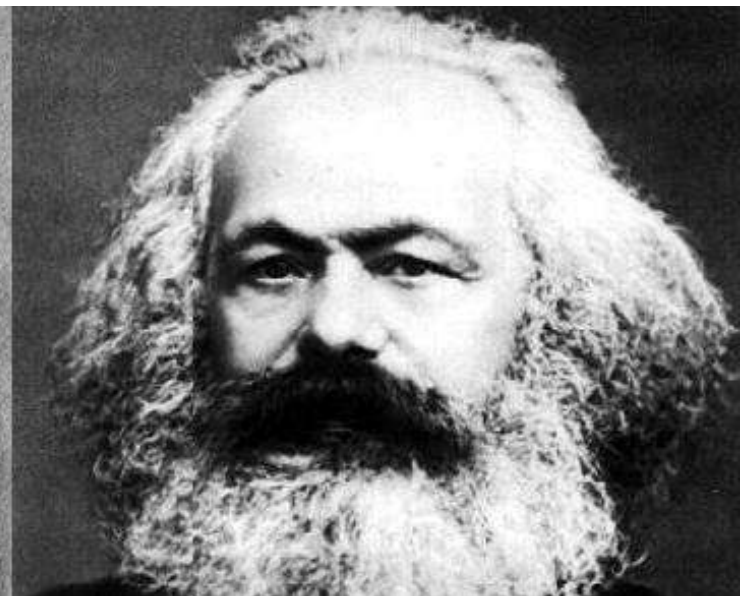
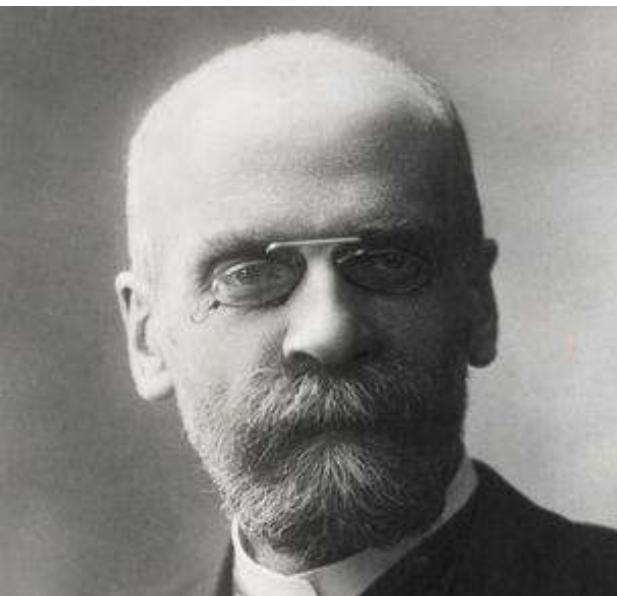
1. Administrative
2. Durkheim, Weber, and Marx
3. Social theory
4. *Theoretical tradition 1:*
Structural functionalism
5. Discussion

Readings

- ⋮ Chapter 1 from Conerly, Holmes, and Tamang (2021) should have been assigned for today.
- ⋮ I've made it ***optional***
(If you already did this reading, you will still get credit for it)

Group sign up

- ⋮ Remember to sign up for a group!
(Link is also on MyCourses)
- ⋮ Don't be shy adding your name to an existing group



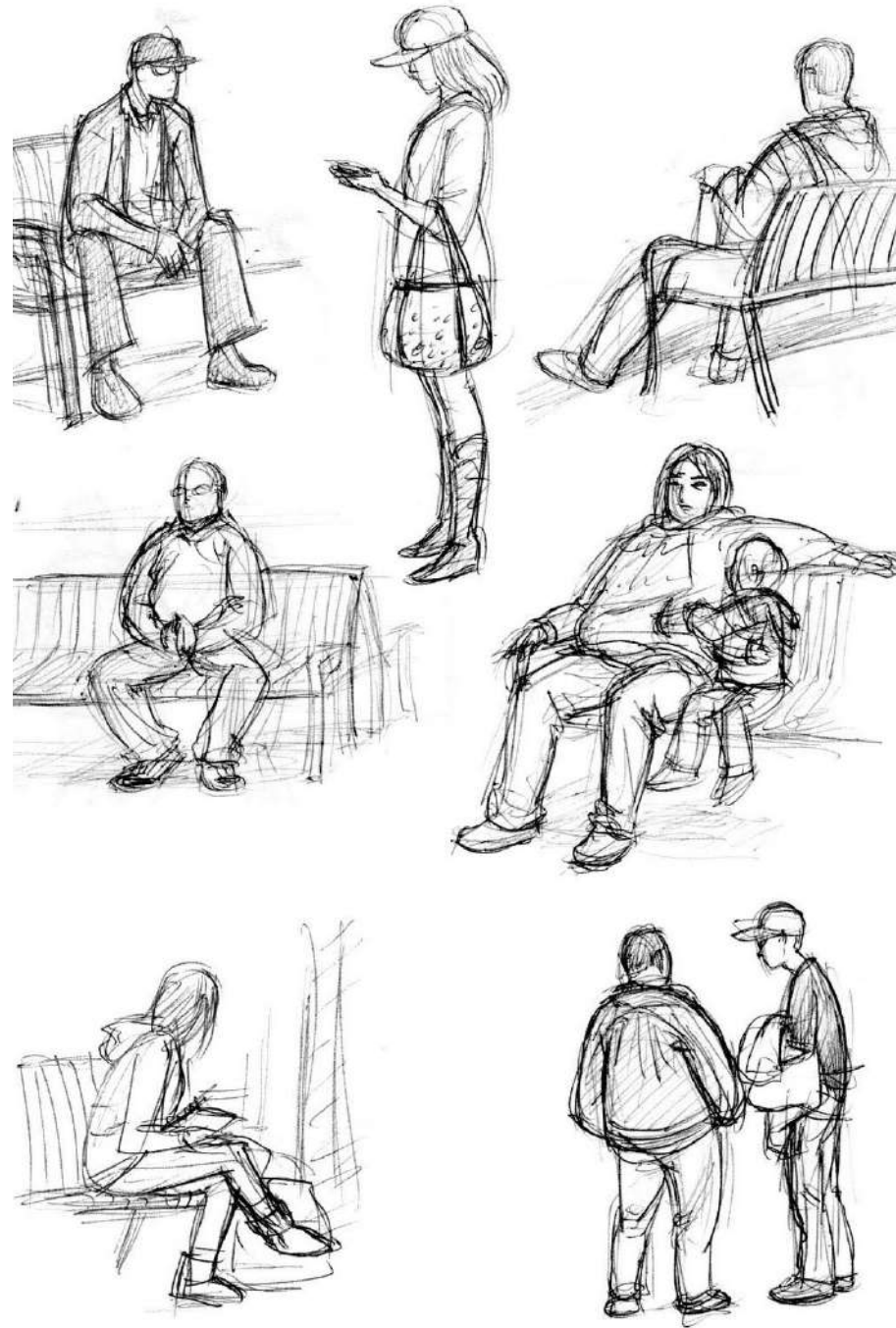
European tradition

- ∴ Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber often credited as 'founders' of sociology
- ∴ Erikson emphasizes the emergence of sociology as a *discipline* (as opposed to the study of society in general) in the European context
- ∴ Contemporary sociology is global, but retains a bias toward Western topics and ideals

Theory is contextual

- ∴ Marx, Durkheim, and Weber were developing theory to explain particularities of European society at the time
- ∴ They were responding to the political and historical moment
- ∴ Theory, though it often aims to be *general* in scope, should be understood in context

Social theory



What do we mean by "theory"?

- ∴ A soci(ologic)al theory is any framework used to **explain** the things we see in the social world
- ∴ Can be used to generate *hypotheses*
- ∴ Allows different topics to be seen as examples of a larger pattern
- ∴ Gives us tools to think about new situations and events
- ∴ Can offer a new perspective on topics we already understand



Generalization

- ∴ Theory can lend weight to a specific empirical case by framing it as an illustration of a broader social reality

Scope

- ∴ **General** theory aims to explain society as a whole
- ∴ **Narrow** theory limits itself to explaining a tightly bounded domain of social reality
 - Theory of organizational influence
 - Theory of occupational mobility
- ∴ Narrow theories often fit within the framework of a particular general theory

Micro- vs macro-level

- ∴ **Micro-level** theories start from the behavior and interactions of individuals, explaining larger structures in terms of these small-scale subjects
- ∴ **Macro-level** theories start from a view of society as a whole, explaining individual experiences through the broad, society-wide forces

Good sociological analysis needs to incorporate appropriate *social theory* and *methods of inquiry*

Theory:

∴ Means of *explaining* and *predicting* the social world

Methods:

∴ Means of *collecting data* and *making observations* about the social world



Throughout the semester, we will be using *three broad theoretical lenses* to make sense of social phenomena:

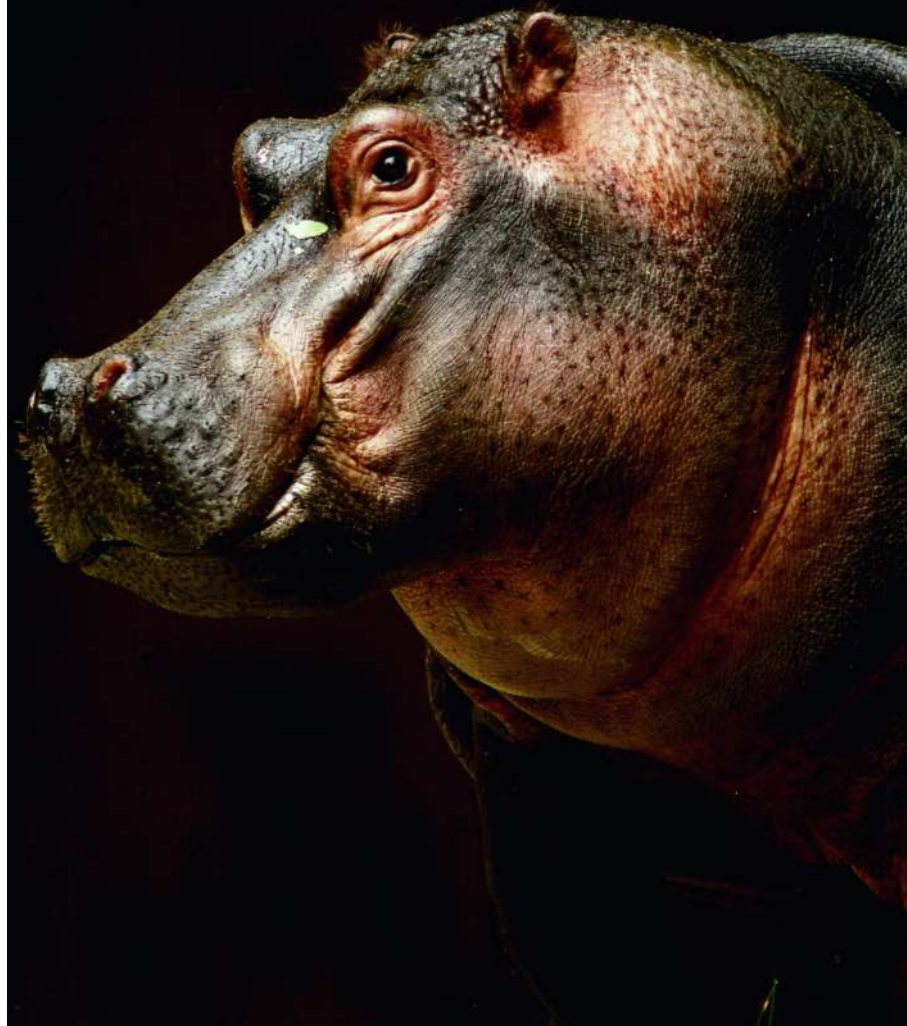
Today

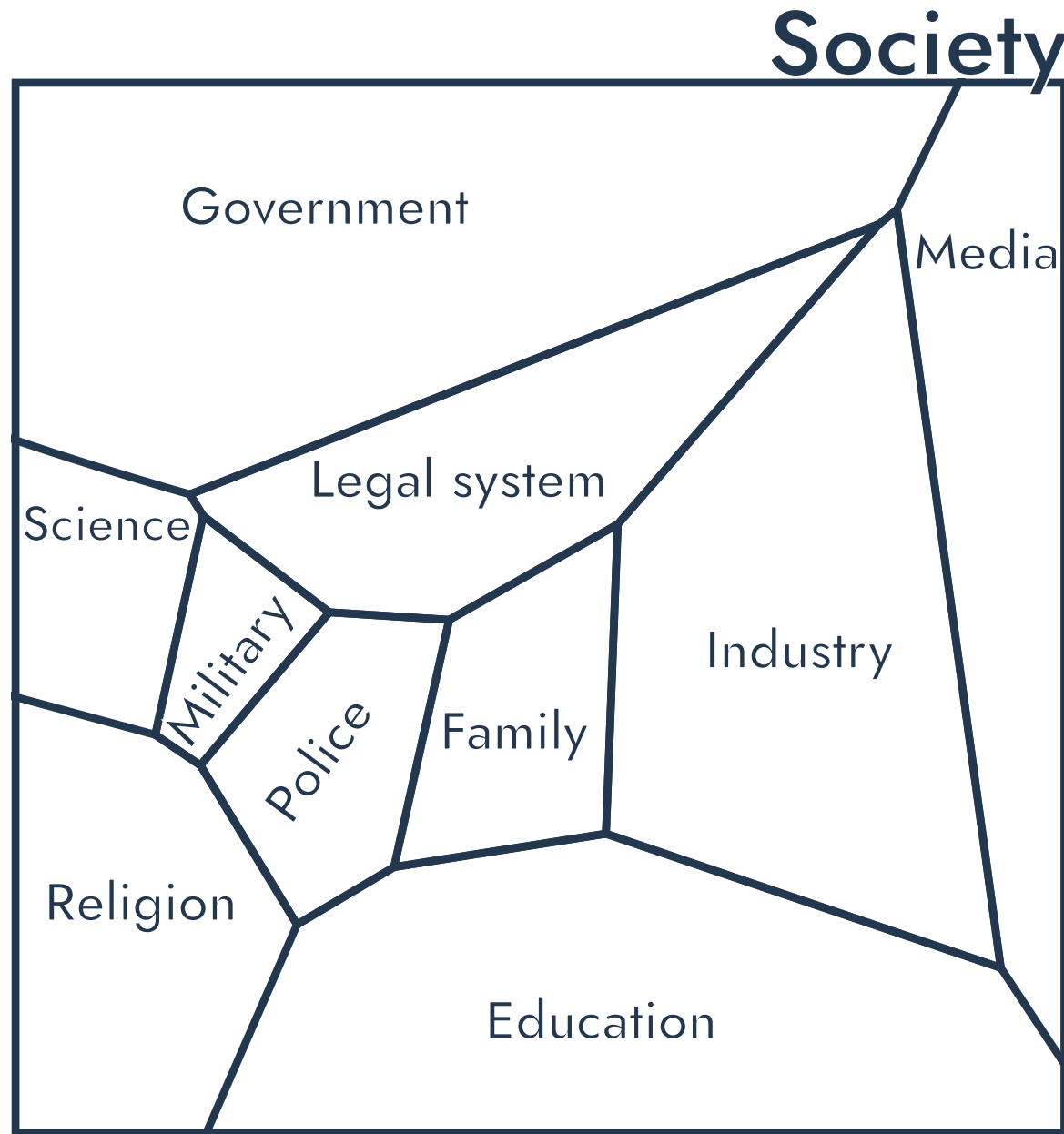
1. Structural functionalism

2. Conflict theory

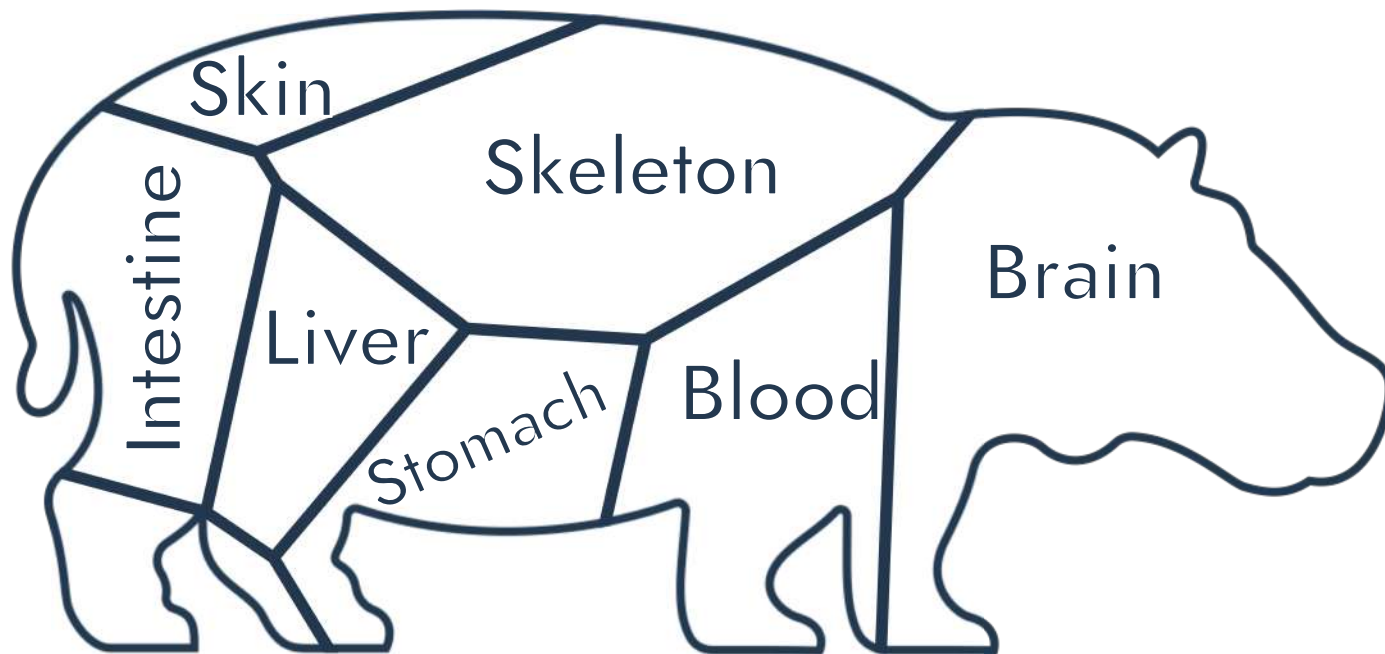
3. Symbolic interactionism

Structural functionalism





Society



Some major themes from structural functionalism:



Social cohesion

- ∴ Mutually dependent components of society foster a sense of unity that holds society together
- ∴ **Émile Durkheim** theorized a historical shift from **mechanical** (pre-modern) to **organic** (modern) forms of **solidarity**



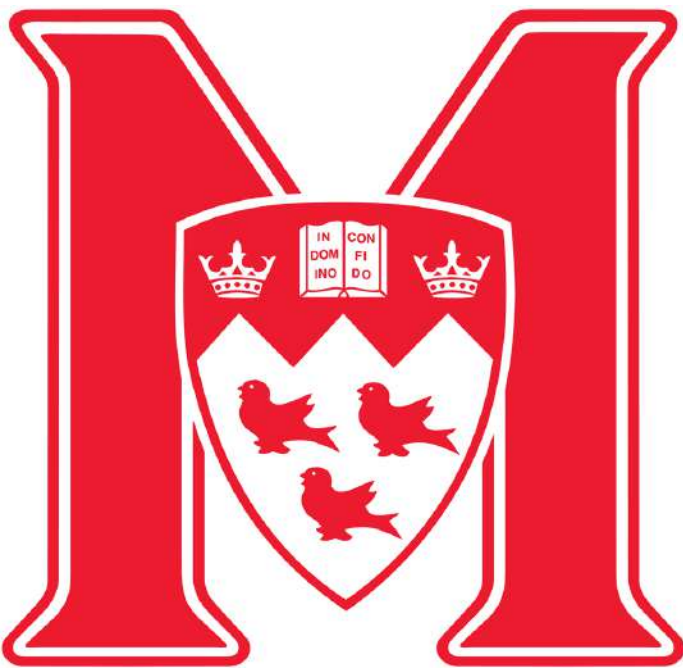
Social roles

- ∴ The roles that people occupy (mother, banker, leader) are built socially
- ∴ **Talcott Parsons** theorized that roles are necessary for society to function, and become **institutionalized** over time



Function and dysfunction

- ∴ If an institution exists, it exists to fulfill a purpose for society
- ∴ **Robert Merton**: **manifest** vs **implicit** function



1. Individually

- ∴ Think of one aspect of **McGill sports and athletics** to explain using a structural-functional frame
- ∴ **Structure**: what other institutions is McGill athletics linked to? What institutions depend on it? For what?
- ∴ **Function**: what does institutionalized athletics provide to McGill? To Montreal? To Society?
- ∴ Consider the elements of social **cohesion**, **roles**, and **function** related to McGill athletics
- ∴ It might help to **take some notes**

2. Pairs

- ∴ Pair up with one of your classmates and **discuss** the topic and explanation you came up with on your own

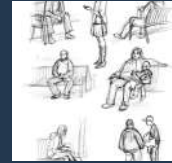
3. Everyone

- ∴ Share and discuss your ideas with the class

Image credit



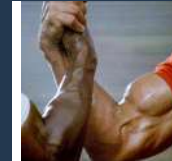
Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, and Karl Marx, via [Lo Sé y Me Importa](#)



Artist unknown, from [Pinterest](#)



Artist Drawing a Portrait of a Man by Albrecht Dürer, via [The Met Museum](#)



Still from [Predator \(1987\)](#).



Photo by [Petra Bouchalova](#) on [Unsplash](#)

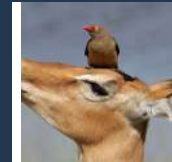


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