Revised Course Proposal:  SOC 2850 Classical Social Theory
To replace 3520: Development of Sociological Thought

1. Catalog Description:
   a. Course level: 2850
   b. Title: Classical Social Theory
   c. Credit: (3-0-3)
   d. Term to be offered: (F, S)
   e. Short Title: CLASSICAL THEORY
   f. Course description: The development of sociological thought will be traced from the earliest dialogues of social theory through the founders of the discipline. Special focus will be placed on a selection of primary contributors to classical sociological theory.
   g. Prerequisite: SOC 2710

2. Objectives of the Course:
The central objective of this course is to orient sociology students to the continued dependence of a theoretical framework in discussing social phenomena. The following learning objectives will be addressed in detail:
   - The interpretation of classical sociological theory critically.
   - An understanding of the classical body of theoretical knowledge that has influenced all substantive areas in the discipline.
   - A synthesis of secondary works on classical theory toward a comprehension of the driving themes within sociology.
   - Applications of sociological theory to social issues both of past importance and current concern.
   - Written theoretical applications of topics addressed in course electives throughout the department to better integrate course study.
   - Synthesize the various components of the discipline into a cohesive understanding and body of knowledge based on classical principles of theoretical orientation.
   - The interpretation of these classical works as a foundation to subsequent contemporary theory within the discipline.
   - A grounding of future coursework and research to theory providing a consistent agenda to the education of sociology majors

This course is writing active.

2. Course Outline
Sociological theory grounds the research of the discipline to the method of study. This is an essential element to understanding sociology as a social science. A body of knowledge known now as classical theory shaped the emergence of questions concerning social behavior into a scientific discipline we recognize today. An understanding of this “classical” body of work is necessary to the study of social behavior and group dynamics within the sociological framework. This course outline is designed to fulfill three specific needs of sociology majors. These needs are; 1) the exposure to and comprehension of a substantial body of work within the discipline, 2) to begin understanding social research as a product of theory, and 3) to begin to integrate the sometimes seemingly segmented parts of the field as a cohesive perspective of human behavior and social reality as
viewed by sociologists. These needs will be met using the following schedule and coverage:

**SYLLABUS**

**Week 1**  
**Introduction to Social Theory**  
- Identifying specific concepts and themes studied by sociologists  
- Defining social theory  
- Discussing the place of theory within social research models and the production of knowledge

**Week 2**  
**The Development of Sociological Thought**  
- Trace the emergence of sociology as a scientific discipline  
- Identify social and cultural influences to the development  
- Identify intellectual influences to the development  
- Identify individual contributors to the earliest stages of sociology

**Week 3**  
**The Challenges of the Discipline**  
- Identify the primary themes of social research  
- Identify the questions addressed by social research  
- Discuss the earliest stages of positivism  
- Discuss the movement away from evolutionary perspectives into a more complex offering of explanation  
- Exam 1

**Week 4**  
**Karl Marx**  
- The Dialectic  
- Structures of a capitalist society  
- Political economy  
- Alienation

**Week 5**  
**Max Weber**  
- Methodology  
- Class, Status and Party  
- Rationalization  
- Bureaucracies  
- Power

**Week 6**  
**Emergent Trends of Conflict Theory**  
- Utopia  
- Stratification  
- Power relationships  
- Critical Analysis  
- Applications across the discipline

**Week 7**  
**Applications of Conflict Theory**  
- Applications to courses and research on institutions  
- Applications to stratification: Race, class, gender  
- Exam 2

**Week 8**  
**Emile Durkhiem**  
- Social Facts  
- Suicide  
- Division of Labor, Mechanical and Organic Solidarity
• Religion

Week 9  **Talcott Parsons**
• Action Theory
• Pattern Variables
• Social System

Week 10  **Emergent Trends of Functional/Structural Theory**
• Rationalization
• McDonaldization (including Weberian Influences of Rationality)
• Systems Theory
• Deviance studies and social control

Week 11  **Applications of Functional/Structural Theory**
• Applications of institutions
• Applications to family and small groups
• Role theory
• Social Typologies
• Human Ecology
• Exam 3

Week 12  **Georg Simmel**
• Individual Consciousness
• Associations
• Impacts of group size
• Objective culture; Fashion and Money

Week 13  **George Herbert Mead**
• Mental processes, Consciousness
• Development of the Self
• Symbols and Gestures

Week 14  **Emergent Trends of Symbolic Interactionism**
• Development of self
• Definition of the Situation
• Humor
• Symbolic interpretation

Week 15  **Applications of Symbolic Interactionism**
• Applications to systems and roles
• Applications to interpretations of illness and disease
• Applications to institutions
• Applications to deviance

Final Exam

Evaluation of students in social theory rests on the ability to demonstrate the following, 1) recognition of dominant theorists and theories, 2) comprehension of the various elements and models of classical theory, 3) influential concepts derived from this early work, 4) synthesis of major themes and phenomena and their treatment by various theorists, and 5) application of classical theory to social phenomena. The first three elements will be evaluated by class exams that include several assessment tools. The second element will be measured using essays requiring a synthesis of knowledge. The final element will be evaluated by
a term paper requiring the application of a classical theory to a topic from another sociology course within the department. The grading is as follows:

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<tr>
<td>Exam 1</td>
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<td>Final</td>
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<td>Term Paper</td>
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4. **Implementation**
   a. Initial instructor: Darren Hendrickson
   b. Additional Costs: None
   d. Term first offered: Spring 2002

5. **Rationale**
   a. This fulfills departmental theoretical requirements of sociology majors and minors. This revision is to address identified needs of sociology students to understand and apply theoretical concepts earlier in the course of study. It is the hope that the completion of this course within the second year of study will better prepare them for later coursework.
   b. Prerequisite: SOC 2710
   c. This course is a revision of SOC 3520.
   d. This is a required course for all sociology majors and minors.

6. **Community College Transfer**
   Community College course will not be judged equivalent to this course.

7. **Date Approved by department**
   April 2, 2001

8. **Date Approved by college curriculum committee**
   April 20, 2001

9. **Date approved by CAA**
   April 21, 2001

Departmental contact person: Gary Foster

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