“Crafting a sociological theory text that addresses complex and contested ideas in a sophisticated, yet genuinely engaging and accessible way is a tall order. As this new edition of Michele Dillon’s book reveals, she has a remarkable gift for doing just that. Students will be well served by professors who adopt Introduction to Sociological Theory for their theory courses.”

Peter Kivisto, Augustana College and University of Turku

The bestselling Introduction to Sociological Theory has now been extensively revised and updated for a much-anticipated second edition. Leading sociologist, Michele Dillon provides a comprehensive introduction to classical and contemporary sociological theory, whilst relating it to a range of topical issues and processes. Dillon expertly combines primary quotations with thorough discussion and tangible examples chosen from a wide range of societies.

The second edition features new chapters on the changing world economic and social order, and contains a stronger emphasis throughout on the applicability of sociological theory to social change in Asia. In demonstrating the applicability of theories, new examples included throughout the book relate to contemporary economic, social, and cultural changes and tensions in China, South Korea, and India, as well as to developments in other Asian countries.

Written in a clear and engaging style, the second edition of Introduction to Sociological Theory remains the most accessible textbook on and overview of the topic available. Additional resources to support the book include are available at www.wiley.com/go/dillon. The website features multiple choice and essay questions, PowerPoint slides with multimedia links to carefully chosen content illustrative of sociological processes, a list of complementary primary readings, a quotation bank, and other background materials.

Michele Dillon is Professor of Sociology at the University of New Hampshire and has many years of experience teaching sociological theory to undergraduate and graduate students. Her previous publications include Handbook of the Sociology of Religion (ed.) (2003), In the Course of a Lifetime: Tracing Religious Belief, Practice, and Change (with Paul Wink) (2007), and American Catholics in Transition (with W. D’Antonio and M. Gautier) (2013).
Introduction to Sociological Theory
About the website

The *Introduction to Sociological Theory: Theorists, Concepts, and their Applicability to the Twenty-First Century* companion website contains a range of resources created by the author for instructors teaching this book in university courses. Features include:

- Instructor’s manual for each chapter, including
  - Note to the Instructor
  - News Resources that can be used to stimulate classroom discussion
  - Essay Assignment Questions
  - Exam Short Answer Questions
  - Multiple choice questions (and answers)
- PowerPoint teaching slides with photographs and video links
- List of complementary primary readings
- Quote Bank

Instructors can access these resources at: www.wiley.com/go/dillon
Introduction to Sociological Theory

Theorists, Concepts, and Their Applicability to the Twenty-First Century

SECOND EDITION

Michele Dillon
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I am very grateful to Justin Vaughan at Wiley-Blackwell for persuading me to write this book and for his support throughout the process. I also appreciate the editorial production assistance of Annie Rose and Ben Thatcher, and Annie Jackson's careful copyediting. I greatly appreciate the efforts of several reviewers whose close reading of various chapters provided detailed comments that helped make the book stronger. I am especially appreciative of the hard work of those reviewers who read a full draft of the book. I am very grateful to James Tucker, Jennifer Esala, and Jared del Rosso for their helpful comments on the first edition of this book. I also benefited greatly from Andrew Wink's photography skills.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

As you read through the individual chapters in this book, you will find the following features designed to help you to develop a clear understanding of sociological theory and to apply it to everyday life.

Key Concepts  Each chapter opens with a list of its key concepts, presented in the order in which they appear in the chapter. They are printed in blue when they first appear in the text, and are defined in the glossaries at the end of each chapter and at the end of the book (pp. 521–539).

Chapter Menu  A menu gives you the main headings of the chapter that follows.

Biographical Note  These provide background information on the main theorists discussed in the chapter. Their names are given in bold when they first appear in the chapter.

Theorists’ writings  Each of the first three chapters has a chronological list of the major writings of the theorists discussed: Marx, Durkheim, and Weber.

Timelines  Where a historical framework will aid your understanding of the chapter, timelines list major events with their dates.

Boxes  These summarize points relevant to the chapter.

Topics  These features draw on information reported in the news about an event or issue that has particular salience for the concepts being discussed in the chapter. The stories highlight how particular everyday events can be used to illustrate or probe larger social processes.

Summary  The text of the chapter is summarized in a final paragraph or two.

Points to Remember  These list in bullet note form the main learning points of the chapter.
**How to Use This Book**

**Glossary**  At the end of each chapter its key concepts are listed again, this time in alphabetical order, and defined. The glossary at the end of the book combines the end-of-chapter glossaries to define all the key concepts covered in the book.

**Questions for Review**  At the end of each chapter, questions are listed that prompt you to discuss some of the overarching points of the chapter.
INTRODUCTION

WELCOME TO SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

KEY CONCEPTS

sociological theory
concepts
conceptual frameworks
pluralistic
macro
social structures
micro
culture
agency
classical theory
canon
contemporary theory
Enlightenment
democracy
reason
rationality
inalienable rights
utilitarianism
scientific reasoning
empiricism
positivist
objectivity
interpretive understanding
emancipatory knowledge

CHAPTER MENU

Analyzing Social Life  4
Immersion in Theory  10
Classical and Contemporary Theory  11
Societal Transformation and the Origins of Sociology  12
The Enlightenment: The Elevation of Reason  13
The Individual and Society  14
Scientific Reasoning  16

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### Timeline I.1  
Major pre-Enlightenment influences, and events from the Enlightenment to the establishment of sociology

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<td>1490–1664</td>
<td>The Age of Discovery</td>
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<td>1599</td>
<td>Francis Bacon, <em>Essays</em></td>
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<td>1620</td>
<td>English Pilgrims arrive at Plymouth Rock, Massachusetts</td>
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<td>1633</td>
<td>Galileo summoned by the Inquisition to defend his theory that the earth moves around the sun</td>
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<tr>
<td>1636</td>
<td>Harvard College founded</td>
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<td>1637</td>
<td>René Descartes, “I think, therefore, I am”</td>
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<tr>
<td>1665–1774</td>
<td>The Enlightenment</td>
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<td>1670</td>
<td>Blaise Pascal, “Man is only a reed, the weakest thing in nature; but he is a thinking reed”</td>
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<td>1687</td>
<td>Isaac Newton explains laws of motion and theories of gravitation</td>
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<td>1689</td>
<td>John Locke, <em>On Civil Government</em></td>
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<td>1702</td>
<td>Cambridge University establishes faculty chairs in the sciences</td>
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<td>1733</td>
<td>Voltaire praises British liberalism</td>
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<td>1752</td>
<td>Benjamin Franklin invents a lightning conductor; demonstrates the identity of lightning and electricity</td>
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<td>1762</td>
<td>Jean-Jacques Rousseau, <em>The Social Contract</em></td>
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<td>1771</td>
<td>The right to report parliamentary debates established in Britain</td>
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Welcome to sociological theory. It might seem unusual to begin a theory book with an excerpt about hotel bedrooms (Topic I.1) and the burdens plush mattresses impose on housekeepers. But it is precisely this sort of daily occurrence that sociological theory, with its breadth of concepts or analytical ideas, is well suited to illuminating. Although theory, by definition, is abstract, this book illustrates the richness of sociological theory by emphasizing its practical application and explanatory relevance to daily life. I will introduce you to the major theorists whose writings and conceptual frameworks inform sociological thinking. The book will equip you with the theoretical vocabulary and understanding that will enable you to appreciate the plurality of perspectives within sociological theory. It will give you confidence to apply these
ideas to the many sociological topics you study (e.g., inequality, crime, medical sociology, race, political sociology, family, gender, sexuality, culture, religion, community, globalization, etc.), and help you to think analytically about the many occurrences in daily life far beyond the classroom.

**ANALYZING SOCIAL LIFE**

The short excerpt on housekeepers and hotel mattresses provides a single snapshot of contemporary society, but its elements can be used to highlight the different ways that sociological theorists approach the study of society. For example, Karl Marx (1818–1883), a towering figure in the analysis of modern capitalism (see chapter 1), would focus on the relations of
economic inequality and exploitation that underlie hotel maids’ injuries. His theory highlights the extent to which the capitalist pursuit of profit structures the service production process in hotels (and in factories, corporations, etc.) – e.g., the number of hotel rooms that have to be cleaned every day by each worker – and determines the low wages paid to workers, as well as consolidating the economic or class inequality that is part and parcel of capitalism. You might suggest that if the maids are unhappy, they should just leave the Westin. But if they leave, what are their options? Very limited, Marx would respond. Because hotel maids (and other workers) have to live, they need money in order to survive (especially in a “welfare-to-work” society in which there is very little government economic support available to those who are unemployed long term). Therefore, while the maids are free to leave the Westin they are not free to withhold labor from every hotel – they must work someplace. Hence wage-workers must sell their labor on the job market, even if what they receive in exchange for their labor will always be significantly less than the profit the capitalist will make from their work. Although hotel-owners have to pay the many costs associated with the upkeep and running of a hotel, there still remains a large gap between the minimum wage paid to hotel maids (and waitresses, etc.; approx. $7 an hour) and the price paid by hotel guests for a one-night stay in the luxury hotel room ($399 and upwards) that the maids clean.

Further, the competitive nature of capitalism and the economic competition between hotels (as noted in the excerpt) mean that the profit-driven working conditions in one luxury hotel will not vary much from those in another. If a hotel company were to lose “the battle of the beds,” in the competition for affluent customers, profit decline spells that particular company’s likely demise too. Low wages and occupational injuries, therefore, are what maids can expect, regardless of the particular hotel (whether the Westin or the Hilton). Moreover, if hotel maids are unable to work as a result of their injuries, there will always be others waiting to take their place; one of the effects of globalization (a topic discussed in chapter 14) is to increase the competition between low-wage-workers whose pool is expanded by the increasing numbers of immigrant and migrant workers available to the low-paying service industries (e.g., Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002; Sassen 2007).

In focusing on the profit and economic relations within capitalist societies, Marx also alerts us to how ideology, i.e., a society’s taken-for-granted ideas about work, achievement, freedom, consumption, luxury, etc., determines how we explain and justify all sorts of social phenomena, whether social inequality, the Olympic Games, or the latest consumer fad. Marx – and more recent theorists influenced partly by Marx, such as Critical Theorists (see chapter 5) – would argue that the ideology of freedom – typically used to denote political freedom and democracy – has in today’s world become the freedom to shop. We all (more or less) want the plush consumer lifestyle that we associate with luxury hotels, a pursuit promoted by the (globalizing) capitalist class, and especially by advertising, mass media, and pop culture industries. Thus the popularity of, for example, “Louie,” a Blood Raw/Young Jeezy song celebrating Louis Vuitton merchandise. Similarly, Kanye West’s “Flashing Lights” reminds us that consumption trumps everything else. Indeed, Marx would argue that it is largely because hotel housekeepers (and their families and neighbors) buy into the allure of consumption that they consent to work as hard as they do, despite their injuries, and without fully realizing or acknowledging the inequality of the capitalist system with its ever-growing gap between the rich and the poor.
Max Weber (1864–1920) (his surname is pronounced vayber), also offers an analysis of modern capitalism. But unlike Marx, he orients us to the various subjective motivations and meanings that lead social actors – either individually, or collectively as workers, hotel companies, trade unions, religious organizations, states, or trans-national alliances (e.g., the EU) – to behave as they do (see chapter 3). Among the many engines driving behavior, Weber, somewhat like Marx, highlights the centrality of strategic or instrumental motivations underlying social behavior, including the maids’ actions. In particular, hotel-owners and unions pursue their own economic and political interests by making cost–benefit assessments of which courses of action are the most expedient given the respective objectives of each group. Hotel companies, for example, are suspicious of the union’s objectives beyond the specific issue of housekeeper injuries; the companies are concerned that their strategic interests (in making money, hiring particular workers, and competing with other hotel chains) will be undermined if their work force is unionized. And union leaders, too, are concerned if they think that workers can garner a good wage deal without the union’s intervention. Not surprisingly, as some contemporary theorists highlight (e.g., Ralph Dahrendorf; see chapter 6), inter-group conflict is common in democratic societies as various economic and other interest groups compete for greater recognition of their respective agendas.

Life, however, is not all about economic and strategic interests. One of the theoretical achievements of Weber was to demonstrate that values and beliefs also matter; they orient social action (something subsequently emphasized by Talcott Parsons, an American theorist who was highly influential for several decades (1940s–1970s) in shaping sociological thinking and research; see chapter 4). Individuals, groups, organizations, and whole countries are motivated by values, by commitments to particular understandings of friendship, family, patriotism, environmental sustainability, education, religious faith, etc. Subjective values, such as commitment to their family, to providing for their children, may explain why hotel housekeepers work as hard as they do; and indeed why many immigrant women leave their children and families in their home country while they work abroad earning money to send home so their children can have a more economically secure life (e.g., England 2005; Sassen 2007). The strong cultural value of individualism in the US, for example, also helps to explain why labor unions have a much harder time gaining members and wielding influence in the US than in Western European countries such as the UK, Ireland, and France. The historical-cultural influence of Protestantism and its emphasis on self-reliance and individual responsibility in the US means that Americans tend to believe that being poor is largely an individual’s own responsibility (and a sign of moral weakness), beliefs that impede the expansion of state-funded social welfare programs.

As recognized by both Marx and Weber, differences in economic resources are a major source of inequality (or of stratification) in society, determining individuals’ and groups’ rankings relative to one another; e.g., upper-class, middle-class, lower-class strata. Additionally, Weber, unlike Marx, argues that social inequality is not only based on differences in income but also associated with differences in lifestyle or social status. Weber and contemporary theorists influenced by his conceptualization of the multiple sources of inequality – such as Pierre Bourdieu – argue that individuals and groups acquire particular habits that demonstrate and solidify social class differences. Such differences are evident
not only between the upper and lower classes, but also between those who are closely aligned economically. This helps to explain why affluent people stay in premier rather than economy hotels and why some affluent people prefer the Ritz Carlton to the Westin. For similar status reasons, some women will spend hundreds of dollars on a Louis Vuitton handbag rather than buy a cheaper, though equally functional one by Coach (see especially Bourdieu; chapter 13).

The cultural goals (e.g., consumption, economic success) affirmed in society are not always readily attainable. Children who grow up in poor neighborhoods with under-funded schools are disadvantaged by their limited access to the social institutions (e.g., school) that provide the culturally approved means or path toward academic, occupational, and economic success (e.g., MacLeod 1995). Thus, as the American sociologist Robert Merton (see chapter 4) shows, society creates deviance (e.g., stealing) as a result of the mismatch between cultural goals (e.g., consumer lifestyle) and blocked access to the acceptable institutional means to attain those goals.

Although deviance is a social creation and is “normal” – as classical theorist Emile Durkheim (1858–1917) emphasizes, because it comes from society and exists in all societies (e.g., as indicated by crime rates) – “too much” deviance (or crime) may threaten the social order. Social order and cohesion are Durkheim’s core theoretical preoccupation (see chapter 2). He is basically interested in what knits society together; what binds and ties individuals into society. Therefore, rather than focusing on what Marx, for example, would see as exploitation, Durkheim would highlight the social interdependence suggested in our story of the hotel maids. For Durkheim, hotel-owners, workers, guests, unions, and occupational health scientists are all part of the social collectivity, a collectivity whose effective functioning is dependent on all doing their part in the social order. In like manner, Talcott Parsons sees social institutions such as the economy, the family, and the political and legal systems as working separately but also interdependently to produce an effectively functioning society (see chapter 4).

Social interdependence for Durkheim is underscored by the fact that without guests, for example, there would be no hotel maids and no hotel-owners (this is well understood by people living in seaside towns; business is seasonal and with hotels/restaurants closed for the winter, there are fewer work opportunities). Durkheim is not interested in analyzing the (unequal) economic relations in the hotel industry or the historical origins of tourism. What is relevant to him is how, for example, occupations, hotels, tourism, and consumption patterns (and all other social things) have a determining force on individual social behavior; all of these for Durkheim are collective, social forces that shape, constrain and regulate social behavior, and in the process, tie individuals and groups into social relationships with one another.

Tipping hotel maids and restaurant waitresses is not required by law. But we are constrained into doing so – even though no one other than the maid can tell whether or not you left money for her in the hotel room – by the (equally strong) collective force of social custom. As Durkheim would stress, all social customs (and laws) both come from society and function to affirm and bolster the interdependence of individuals within society. Moreover, as contemporary network theorists demonstrate, even weak ties among individuals, among acquaintances who chat (share information) when they occasionally run into
one another on the street, are socially beneficial to individuals (in finding a good restaurant, or a job, etc.) and to enhancing community well-being (e.g., in mobilizing people to participate in neighborhood projects; see chapter 7).

In contrast to Durkheim, exchange theorists emphasize that we tip and give gifts and invite friends to dinner with the expectation that this will yield some specific return to us. In this exchange view of self-interested action, all social exchange has use-value: one never gets or gives something for nothing (e.g., George Homans; Peter Blau; chapter 7). Therefore, when I tip the hotel maid even though I don't expect to return to that hotel (and with the tip-related expectation of better service), I must be getting something in return, such as the validation of my own status relative to the maid – perhaps found in the slight nod of the head or smile when passing the maid and her cart in the corridor. For exchange theorists, exchange relationships are not just those based on money (as for Marx), but those based on the exchange of status (see also Bourdieu, chapter 13), information, friendship, advice, housework, political influence, etc., and the power imbalances in relationships (e.g., between friends, spouses, governments, etc.) that they reflect and perpetuate. In all relationships, rational choice theorists contend, we assess what we get and what to give on the basis of its probable use-value to us as (resource maximization) individuals (see chapter 7).

So far I have not commented on the fact that the hotel worker quoted in our excerpt is a woman. Indeed, the very word “maid” is a gendered word, i.e., used to denote a woman and “women's work.” Male domestic servants, by contrast, are referred to in more elegant language as “butlers.” They, as depicted in Downton Abbey, have a higher status and more independence even as they are, nonetheless, at the beck and call of their masters/superiors. Today, despite the advances in women's equality, women comprise a disproportionate share of low-wage service workers. Feminist standpoint theorists (e.g., Dorothy Smith; Patricia Hill Collins; see chapter 10), coming out of a tradition that focuses on women's inequality in society, have much to say about these matters. In particular, they highlight the day-in/day-out routines and experiences of women who make 25 beds a day, and who, after the paid work-day ends, make the beds and cook dinner and do many other chores for their families. Feminist theorists also underscore that women's chores, experiences, and opportunities are typically different than men's, and when similar, women's work is rewarded very differently than men's work (at work and at home); women continue, for example, to remain on the margins of the decision-making power elites in society (see C. Wright Mills; see chapter 6).

The phenomenological tradition (see chapter 9) emphasizes the significance of ordinary everyday knowledge in defining individuals' concrete “here-and-now” social realities. Partly influenced by phenomenology, feminist standpoint theorists (e.g., Smith) underscore how the knowledge that derives from women's everyday experiences is very different to the knowledge that is recognized as the legitimate, objective knowledge in society. Whether in politics, in corporate offices, in law courts, or even among sociologists, the knowledge that comes from women's experiences – as mothers and homemakers, and from the challenges they face as, increasingly, they simultaneously move within the “man-made” world of work and public life – tends to be demeaned. It does not fit well with the male-centered (see chapter 10) and indeed heterosexist bias (see chapter 11) that characterizes sociology and other established sources of knowledge.