

## 👑 Foundational Sociologists (19th - Early 20th Century)

These thinkers established sociology's core questions, methods, and theoretical traditions.

### Auguste Comte (1798–1857)

- Time Period: 19th Century
- Key Contribution: Coined the term "sociology" and founded the positivist school of thought, arguing that society could be studied scientifically to reveal governing laws.

### Karl Marx (1818–1883)

- Time Period: 19th Century
- Key Contribution: Developed conflict theory, analyzing history and society through the lens of class struggle and economic relations.

### Émile Durkheim (1858–1917)

- Time Period: Late 19th - Early 20th Century
- Key Contribution: Legitimized sociology as an academic discipline; pioneered the study of "social facts" and analyzed how social integration affects behavior, famously in his work Suicide.

### Max Weber (1864–1920)

- Time Period: Late 19th - Early 20th Century
- Key Contribution: Emphasized understanding (verstehen) subjective meanings in social action; famously analyzed the link between Protestant ethics and the rise of capitalism.

### Harriet Martineau (1802–1876)

- Time Period: 19th Century
- Key Contribution: Considered the first female sociologist; translated Comte's work and conducted early comparative analyses of social institutions and women's rights.

### W.E.B. Du Bois (1868–1963)

- Time Period: Late 19th - Mid 20th Century

- Key Contribution: A foundational figure in social science, his empirical research and writings, such as *The Souls of Black Folk*, pioneered the study of race and society in America.



## Mid-20th Century Theorists

Building on the classics, these sociologists developed influential mid-level theories and concepts.

George Herbert Mead (1863–1931) & Charles Horton Cooley (1864–1929)

- Time Period: Early to Mid-20th Century
- Key Contribution: Founders of the symbolic interactionist tradition, which explores how the self and society are constructed through social interaction and symbols.

Talcott Parsons (1902–1979)

- Time Period: Mid-20th Century
- Key Contribution: A leading proponent of structural functionalism, which analyzes society as a complex

system whose parts work together to promote stability.

### Pierre Bourdieu (1930–2002)

- Time Period: Mid to Late 20th Century
- Key Contribution: Renowned for his concepts of cultural capital, habitus, and field, which explain how social inequality is reproduced through everyday practices and tastes.

### Erving Goffman (1922–1982)

- Time Period: Mid-20th Century
- Key Contribution: Developed dramaturgical analysis, using the metaphor of theater to study social interaction and the presentation of self.

### Influential Contemporary Sociologists (Late 20th Century - Present)

These scholars continue to shape the discipline with new theoretical and methodological approaches.

## Judith Butler (born 1956)

- Area of Specialization: Critical theory, Gender theory
- Key Contribution: A highly influential gender theorist whose work on performativity, notably in *Gender Trouble*, argues that gender is a socially constructed performance rather than a biological essence.

## Bruno Latour (1947–2022)

- Area of Specialization: Social constructionism, Actor–network theory
- Key Contribution: Co-developed Actor-Network Theory (ANT), which argues that both human and non-human actors (like technology) form networked associations that shape social outcomes.

## Patricia Hill Collins (born 1948)

- Area of Specialization: Black feminist thought, Intersectionality
- Key Contribution: Developed the concept of "intersectionality," a critical framework for analyzing

how overlapping systems of power and oppression (like race, gender, class) shape individual experiences.

Manuel Castells (born 1942)

- Area of Specialization: Urban sociology, Information society
- Key Contribution: Known for his seminal trilogy *The Information Age*, which analyzes the social and economic structures of the network society in the digital era.

Jürgen Habermas (born 1929)

- Area of Specialization: Social theory, Political theory
- Key Contribution: A major social philosopher known for his theory of communicative action and his analysis of the "public sphere" as a space for democratic deliberation.

## Key Theoretical Perspectives in Sociology

Sociologists use different theoretical lenses to

frame their research and understand society:

- Structural Functionalism: Views society as a complex system whose parts (institutions, norms) work together to promote solidarity and stability.
- Conflict Theory: Focuses on the competition between groups for power and resources, highlighting inequality and social change.
- Symbolic Interactionism: Examines small-scale, everyday interactions between individuals, and how they use symbols and language to create shared meanings and social reality.

