

European Theorists (part two)

○ **Émile Durkheim (1858 – 1917)**

Émile Durkheim helped establish sociology as a formal academic discipline by establishing the first European department of sociology at the University of Bordeaux in 1895 and by publishing his *Rules of the Sociological Method* in 1895. Durkheim believed that sociologists could study objective social facts. He also believed that through such studies it would be possible to determine if a society was “healthy” or “pathological.” Healthy societies were stable while pathological societies experienced a breakdown in social norms.

○ **Max Weber (1864 – 1920)**

Prominent sociologist Max Weber established a sociology department in Germany at the Ludwig Maximilians University of Munich in 1919. Weber believed that it was difficult, if not impossible, to use standard scientific methods to accurately predict the behavior of groups as some sociologists hoped to do. Weber argued that the influence of culture on human behavior had to be considered. This even applied to the researchers themselves, who should be aware of how their own cultural biases could influence their research. To deal with this problem, Weber and Wilhelm Dilthey introduced the concept of verstehen, a German word that means to understand in a deep way. In seeking verstehen, outside observers of a social world—an entire culture or a small setting—attempt to understand it from an insider’s point of view.