

SYA 4010 UHA: Sociological Theories

Fall 2022 Course Syllabus

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Course Description and Purpose

This course provides a research-oriented and historical approach to the study of sociological theory. It examines the major schools of theory in terms of their premises and perspectives, their key figures, and their evolution from classical roots to contemporary applications. It emphasizes the importance of theory to the construction and interpretation of social science research.

Course Learning Objectives

In this course students will learn to:

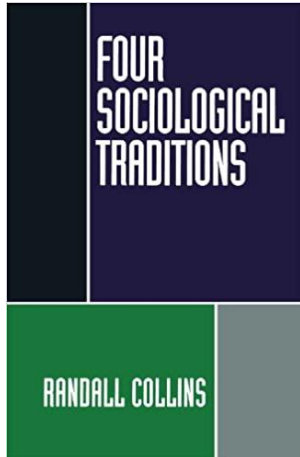
1. Describe the importance of theory to human knowledge and behavior.
2. Distinguish between the everyday theorizing that human actors engage in and the formal theory that characterizes social science.
3. Compare and contrast the principal schools of sociological theories in terms of their premises, procedures, knowledge claims, and implications for social structures and social change.
4. Identify key theorists within these schools and their relationship to the historical, societal and global contexts of their eras.
5. Apply sociological theory to the analysis of contemporary social issues and the formation of sound research questions.

To accomplish those objectives, students will read texts that examine the basic characteristics of social theory and the most important theoretical traditions in sociology since the rise of the discipline in the 19th century. They will participate in class sessions to advance these discussions and develop a critical perspective on the usefulness of particular theories for addressing specific kinds of questions and issues. They will produce a term paper that analyzes the ways in which sociological theories can be applied to develop a feasible research project on an important social issue.

Course Prerequisites

None.

Textbook and Course Materials



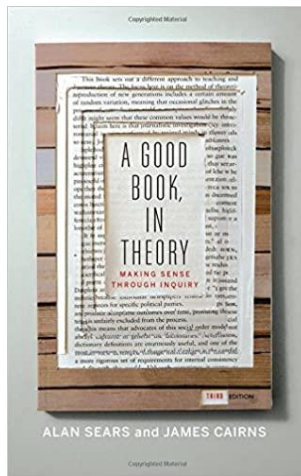
Four Sociological Traditions (Required)

Randall Collins

Oxford University Press, 1994

ISBN-13: 978-0-19-508208-1

You may purchase your textbook online at the [FIU Bookstore](#).



A Good Book, in Theory: Making Sense Through Inquiry (Recommended)

Alan Sears and James Cairns

University of Toronto Press, 3rd Edition, 2015

ISBN-13: 978-1-4426-0077-5

You may purchase your textbook online at the [FIU Bookstore](#).

Additional Readings and Materials

The following selections are accessible online:

- Patricia Hill Collins, “Black Feminist Thought,” in Appelrouth and Edles, *Sociological Theory in the Contemporary Era*. Los Angeles: Sage, 2016. Pp. 168-178.
- Fanon, Frantz, *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press, 2004 [1963]. Pp. 63-81.
- Hochschild, Arlie Russell, “The Managed Heart,” in Appelrouth and Edles, *Sociological Theory in the Contemporary Era*. Los Angeles: Sage, 2016. Pp. 313-321.

- Johnson, Doyle P., *Contemporary Sociological Theory: An Integrated Multi-Level Approach*. New York: Springer, 2008. Ch. 1. Pp. 3-12.
- Memmi, Albert, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1965. Pp. 79-91
- Smith, Dorothy, “Institutional Ethnography,” in Appelrouth and Edles, *Sociological Theory in the Contemporary Era*. Los Angeles: Sage, 2016. Pp. 381-385.

Videos

Streaming links for the videos listed below will be provided in the course:

- **Eyes on the Prize: Fighting Back, 1957-1962.** New York: Films Media Group, 1994 (74 min.)
- **Abacus: Small Enough to Jail.** New York: PBS, 2017 (1 hr. 30 min.)

Presentations

Instructor PowerPoints to guide lectures, reading discussions and other activities will be presented in each class session and subsequently posted on the course website.

Expectations of this Course

This is a hybrid course. Hybrid courses require self-motivation, self-discipline, and technology skills, which sometimes make these courses more demanding for some students. If you find that you are having difficulty keeping up with the out-of-class work, please contact the professor.

Students are expected to:

- **Review the how to get started information** located in the getting started module.
- **Introduce themselves to the class** during the first week by posting a self-introduction in the appropriate discussion forum.
- **Take the practice quiz** to ensure that your computer is compatible with Canvas.
- **Attend the weekly class sessions** on time and for the full class period.
- Submit assignments by the corresponding deadlines.

Course Communication

Communication in this course will take place in class sessions and via the Canvas Inbox. Check out the [Canvas Conversations Tutorial](#) or [Canvas Guide](#) to learn how to communicate with your instructor and peers using Announcements, Discussions, and the Inbox.

Assignments

1. Video Discussions

Students will participate in two **online discussions** of assigned videos on social issues provided in the course. Each video discussion is worth a maximum of 30 points **(60 points total)**.

- The video discussions are to be completed in the Discussions section of the course website.
- Each student is expected to post a minimum of four times to each discussion.
- Each discussion will run for several weeks.

Note: keep in mind that your discussion forum postings will likely be seen by other members of the course. Care should be taken when determining what to post.

2. Reading Discussion Exercises

Students will participate in 6 **discussions** of assigned topics and readings based on questions provided by the instructor. Each discussion is worth a maximum of 15 points **(90 points total)**. Detailed assignment instructions for each exercise are provided in the specific guide that can be found within the appropriate module and week.

Initial posts to the Discussion Exercise board for the scheduled week(s) will be due three days after the discussion opens. Each student is then required to post at least three more times before the discussion closes; more posts are encouraged.

A discussion rubric will be used to evaluate your posts. Access the [viewing discussion rubrics guide \(Links to an external site.\)](#) in order to see how you will be evaluated.

3. Quizzes

In order to mitigate any issues with your computer and online assessments, it is very important that you take the "Practice Quiz" from each computer you will be using to take your graded quizzes and exams. It is your responsibility to make sure your computer meets the minimum [hardware requirements \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

- There are 12 **quizzes**, each worth a maximum of 10 points. The two lowest quiz scores will be dropped. **(100 points total)**.
- The quizzes consist of multiple choice and short answer questions based on the readings assigned during the week on which the quiz is due.
- There is no time limit to complete the quiz while it is open.
- Each quiz will become **available on Tuesday at 2:00 pm ET** and will usually be **due the following Tuesday by 11:00 am ET**.

- Students will be able to see the quiz results within three (3) days of the quizzes closing date. The results include scores, questions, and correct answers.

4. Term Paper

Students will write an essay applying sociological theories to the study of a specific social issue.

- A list of possible social issues will be provided to students by **October 7** along with more specific instructions for the project. Papers will be submitted through Turnitin.com no later than **December 4**.
- Papers will be evaluated according to proper form, organization and clarity, theoretical accuracy, soundness of conclusion, and quality of references.
- Evaluation and grades for papers will be provided by **December 10 (90 possible points)**.
- Review the detailed [Turnitin instructions](#) on how to submit your assignments and how to review the Grademark comments (feedback) from your professor.

General Participation

Students will complete all quizzes, attend and participate in all class discussions, be consistent contributors to online activities and discussions, and show evidence of regular and sustained presence on the course website. **(60 possible points)**.

Grading

Course Requirements	Number of Items	Points for Each	Total Points Available	Weight
Quizzes* *The lowest two scores will be dropped.	12	10	100	25%
Reading Discussion Exercises	6	15	90	25%
Video Discussions	2	30	60	15%
General Participation	N/A	N/A	60	15%

Course Requirements	Number of Items	Points for Each	Total Points Available	Weight
Term Paper	1	90	90	20%
Total	21	N/A	400	100%

Letter	Range%	Letter	Range%	Letter	Range%
A	92 or above	B	82 - 87	C	70 - 77
A-	90 - 91	B-	80 - 81	D	60 - 69
B+	88 - 89	C+	78 - 79	F	59 or less

Course Modules

Module 1: The Importance of Theory in Social Science

In this section students will be introduced to sociological theories through a more general consideration of what constitutes a theory, and more specifically how the kinds of theories that are used in social science can be distinguished from the everyday forms of explanation that all individuals engage in. The pluralism of contemporary social theories will be illustrated through consideration of the conflict, social order, and postmodern theoretical perspectives. The formal theoretical models that serve to guide social science research involve a methodical approach, analytical rigor, and a cumulative (or historical) understanding of prior theoretical work.

Week 1: Course introduction; thinking theoretically

Week 2: Historical conditions for social theory; rise of the social science disciplines

Module learning objectives: after completing this module, students will be able to: 1) articulate the distinction between facts and assumptions and the importance of standpoint in constructing theoretical explanations; 2) describe the key premises and ways of knowing that differentiate the conflict, social order, and postmodern theoretical perspectives; 3) state important formative ideas in the early development of the social sciences, particularly sociology and anthropology.

Assessments: Quiz 1, Group Discussion Exercise 1

Materials: Course readings, instructor PowerPoint presentation

Module 2: The Conflict Perspective

This section covers the distinguishing features of the conflict approach in sociological theory and the principal branches of that approach, particularly those associated with Karl Marx and Max Weber. Theories of social stratification, organization, political power, and large-scale social change are presented. The module also includes consideration of social scientific reasoning and the difference among positivist, interpretive and critical approaches to developing knowledge through social research.

Week 3: Conflict theory; the world according to Marx and Engels

Week 4: Weber and social stratification; contemporary conflict theories

Week 5: Applying conflict theory to colonialism

Module learning objectives: after completing this module, students will be able to: 1) state the fundamental premises of the conflict theoretical perspective in sociology; 2) describe the differences among class and stratification theories within the conflict tradition and apply them to specific societal and historical contexts; 3) distinguish among the positivist, interpretive and critical approaches to knowledge claims in sociological research.

Assessments: Quizzes 2-4, Group Discussion Exercises 2 and 4, Video Discussion 1

Materials: Course readings, instructor PowerPoint presentations, video

Module 3: The Durkheimian Perspective

This section introduces the most important theoretical branches associated with the work of Emile Durkheim and the generations of social theorists who have built on his conceptual approach. The problem of social order for society will be introduced, leading to the functionalist theoretical perspective that dominated American sociology in the postwar era. The section also covers a second branch of Durkheimian theory that stems from his sociology of religion, leading to the analysis of the importance of interaction rituals in the reproduction of social hierarchies and institutions.

Week 6: Durkheim and the problem of social order; functionalist theories

Week 7: Durkheim's theory of religion; rituals and social structure

Week 8: Patricia Hill Collins and Black Feminist Theory

Module learning objectives: after completing this module, students will be able to: 1) state the fundamental premises of the social order perspective in sociology; 2) identify the key ideas and theorists associated with the functionalist approach in sociology; 3) describe the importance of rituals in social analysis following Durkheimian theory; 4) apply the theory of ritual interactions to the analysis of gender relations in contemporary society.

Assessments: Quizzes 5-7, Group Discussion Exercises 3 and 4, Video Discussion 1

Materials: Course readings, instructor PowerPoint presentations, video

Module 4: The Rational/Utilitarian Perspective

This section examines the theoretical perspective associated with utilitarian and rational action models of social interaction. Some of the most important traditions associated with this perspective are game theory, exchange theory, split labor and marriage markets, and solidarity theory. An important issue addressed within this perspective is how collective action and social structures can be analyzed in terms of individual rational choices and behavior. The section also considers the process of abstraction in social theorizing and the influence of perspective, ways of knowing, and framing choices.

Week 9: Utilitarian thinking; exchange theory

Week 10: Neo-rationalism and social solidarity

Week 11: Arlie Hochschild and The Managed Heart

Module learning objectives: after completing this module, students will be able to: 1) state the fundamental premises of the utilitarian and rational action perspective in sociology; 2) identify key ideas and theorists associated with this perspective; 3) describe some of the ways in which social hierarchies and institutions can be explained at the individual level of rational action; 4) demonstrate the importance of standpoints and framing decisions in constructing abstract explanations.

Assessments: Quizzes 8-10, Group Discussion Exercise 5, Video Discussion 2

Materials: Course readings, instructor PowerPoint presentations, video

Module 5: The Microinteractionist/Interpretive Perspective

This section examines the theoretical perspectives associated with microinteractionist and interpretive approaches to social analysis. It rejects the structural and materialistic dimensions of other theoretical traditions, and instead proposes that the social world is constructed out of human consciousness and agency. The most important theories within this tradition include

symbolic interactionism, role theory, and phenomenology. The section also considers the interpretive basis for so -called post-modern theories.

Week 12: Philosophical roots, early theorists, and symbolic interactionism

Week 13: Phenomenology and ethnomethodology

Week 14: Dorothy Smith and standpoint theory

Module learning objectives: after completing this module, students will be able to: 1) state the fundamental premises of the microinteractionist perspective in sociology; 2) identify the key ideas and theorists associated with phenomenology, symbolic interactionism, and interpretive sociology; 3) describe the underlying concepts of post-modern theory in challenging the assumptions of rational scientific inquiry in mainstream social science; 4) apply the microinteractionist theories to the explanation of social profiling.

Assessments: Quizzes 11-12, Video Discussion 2

Materials: Course readings, instructor PowerPoint presentations, video

Module 6: The Use of Theory in Sociological Research

The last section of the course brings together the various traditions and perspectives of sociological theory into consideration of how they can be selectively applied to the analysis of specific social issues. Attention will be given to the kind of research that would need to be conducted to address different theoretical questions.

Week 15: Course conclusion

Module learning objectives: after completing this module, students will be able to: 1) formulate alternative theoretical approaches for doing research on social issues; 2) present a comparative analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches applied to a specific issue in a term paper.

Assessments: Video Discussion 2, Term Paper

Materials: Course readings, instructor PowerPoint presentations, video

Course schedule

Week	Topics	To-Do List
Week 1 Aug. 22-28	Topic: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to the Course • Thinking about Theory 	Readings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Johnson, Introduction, pp. 3-12
		Discussions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-introduction post in Discussion Forum: due Wednesday, Aug. 24 at 11:59 pm
		Quizzes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiz 1: opens Tuesday, Aug. 23 at 2:00 pm and due Tuesday, Aug. 30 at 11:00 am
Week 2 Aug. 29 - Sept. 4	Topic: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical conditions for social theory • Rise of the Social Sciences 	Readings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collins, pp. 3-46
		Discussions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion Exercise 1: Distinguishing Facts and Assumptions, opens Tuesday Aug. 30 and due Monday Sept. 13 by 11:59 pm (first post due Sept. 2)
		Quizzes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiz 1: due Tuesday, Aug. 30 at 11:00 am • Quiz 2: opens Tuesday, Aug. 30 at 2:00 pm and due Tuesday, Sept. 6 at 11:00 am
Week 3 Sept. 5 - 11	Topic: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict theory • The world according to Marx and Engels 	Readings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collins, Ch. 1, pp. 47-81
		Discussions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion Exercise 1: Distinguishing Facts and Assumptions, continues • Video Discussion 1, Eyes on the Prize, opens Friday, Sept. 9 and due Friday, October 14 at 11:59 pm
		Quizzes

Week	Topics	To-Do List
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quiz 2: due Tuesday, Sept. 6 at 11:00 am Quiz 3: opens Tuesday, Sept. 6 at 2:00 pm and due Tuesday, Sept. 13 at 11:00 am
Week 4 Sept. 12 - 18	Topic: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conflict theory Weber and social stratification Contemporary conflict theories 	Readings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collins, Ch. 1, pp. 81-112 Memmi
		Discussions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion Exercise 1: Distinguishing Facts and Assumptions, due Monday Sept. 12 by 11:59 pm Discussion Exercise 2: Colonial Relations, opens Tuesday Sept. 13 and due Monday Sept. 26 by 11:59 pm (first post due Sept. 16) Video Discussion 1, Eyes on the Prize, continues (first post due Friday Sept. 16)
		Quizzes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quiz 3: due Tuesday, Sept. 13 at 11:00 am Quiz 4: opens Tuesday, Sept. 13 at 2:00 pm and due Tuesday, Sept. 20 at 11:00 am
Week 5 Sept. 19 - 25	Topic: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applying conflict theory to colonialism 	Readings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fanon
		Discussions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion Exercise 2: Colonial Relations, continues Video Discussion 1, Eyes on the Prize continues
		Quizzes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quiz 4: due Tuesday, Sept. 20 at 11:00 am Quiz 5: opens Tuesday, Sept. 20 at 1 pm and due Tuesday, Sept. 27 at 11:00 am
Week 6 Sept. 26 – Oct. 2	Topic: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Durkheim and the problem of 	Readings

Week	Topics	To-Do List
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> social order Functionalism theories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collins, Ch. 3, pp. 181-203 <p>Discussions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion Exercise 2: Colonial Relations, due Monday Sept. 26 by 11:59 pm Discussion Exercise 3: The Importance of Social Rituals, opens Tuesday Sept. 27 and due Monday Oct. 10 at 11:59 pm (first post due Sept. 30) Video Discussion 1, Eyes on the Prize. continues <p>Quizzes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quiz 5: due Tuesday, Sept. 27 at 11:00 am Quiz 6: opens Tuesday, Sept. 27 at 2:00 pm and due Tuesday, Oct. 4 at 11:00 am <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collins, Ch. 3, pp. 203-236 <p>Discussions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion Exercise 3: The Importance of Social Rituals, continues Video Discussion 1, Eyes on the Prize, closes Friday, Oct. 8 at 11:59 pm <p>Quizzes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quiz 6: due Tuesday, Oct. 4 at 11:00 am Quiz 7: opens Tuesday, Oct. 4 at 2:00 pm and due Tuesday, Oct. 11 at 11:00 am
Week 7 Oct. 3 - 9	<p>Topic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Durkheim's theory of religion Rituals and social structure 	
Week 8 Oct. 10 -16	<p>Topic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Patricia Hill Collins and Black Feminist Theory 	<p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> P.H. Collins <p>Discussions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion Exercise 3: The Importance of Social Rituals, due Monday Oct. 10 at 11:59 pm Discussion Exercise 4: Interaction rituals and social power, opens Tuesday Oct. 11 and

Week	Topics	To-Do List
		<p>due Monday Oct. 24 (first post due Oct. 14)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video Discussion 1, Eyes on the Prize, closes Friday, Oct. 14 at 11:59 pm <p>Quizzes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiz 7: due Tuesday, Oct. 11 at 11:00 am • Quiz 8: opens Tuesday, Oct. 11 at 2:00 pm and due Tuesday, Oct. 18 at 11:00 am <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collins, Ch. 2, pp. 121-153 <p>Discussions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion Exercise 4: continues • Video Discussion 2, Abacus: Small Enough to Jail, opens Friday, Oct. 21 and due Monday Nov. 21 at 11:59 pm <p>Quizzes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiz 8: due Tuesday, Oct. 18 at 11:00 am • Quiz 9: opens Tuesday, Oct. 18 at 2:00 pm and due Tuesday, Oct. 25 at 11:00 am
<p>Week 9 Oct. 17 - 23</p>	<p>Topic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilitarian thinking • Exchange theory 	<p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collins, Ch. 2, pp. 153-179 <p>Discussions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion Exercise 4: Interaction Rituals and Social Power, due Monday Oct. 24 at 11:59 pm • Discussion Exercise 5: Emotions and Gender, opens Tuesday Oct. 25 and due Monday Nov. 7 (first post due Oct. 28) • Video Discussion 2, Abacus: Small Enough to Jail, continues (first post due Friday Oct. 28) <p>Quizzes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiz 9: due Tuesday, Oct. 25 at 11:00 am • Quiz 10: opens Tuesday, Oct. 25 at 2:00 pm and due Tuesday, Nov. 1 at 11:00 am
<p>Week 10 Oct. 24 - 30</p>	<p>Topic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neo-rationalism and social solidarity 	

Week	Topics	To-Do List
Week 11 Oct. 31 – Nov. 6	Topic: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arlie Hochschild and The Managed Heart 	Readings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hochschild
		Discussions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion Exercise 5: continues Video Discussion 2, Abacus: Small Enough to Jail, continues
		Quizzes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quiz 10: due Tuesday, Nov. 1 at 11:00 am Quiz 11: opens Tuesday, Nov. 1 at 2:00 pm and due Tuesday, Nov. 8 at 11:00 am
Week 12 Nov. 7 - 13	Topic: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Symbolic interactionism 	Readings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collins, Ch. 4, pp, 242-266
		Discussions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion Exercise 5: Emotions and Gender, due Monday Nov. 7 at 11:59 pm Video Discussion 2, Abacus: Small Enough to Jail, continues
		Quizzes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quiz 11: due Tuesday, Nov. 8 at 11:00 am Quiz 12: opens Tuesday, Nov. 8 at 2:00pm and due Tuesday, Nov. 15 at 11:00 am
Week 13 Nov. 14 - 20	Topic: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phenomenology Ethnomethodology 	Readings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collins, Ch. 4, pp. 266-290; Epilogue
		Discussions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion Exercise 6: What's your standpoint? opens Tuesday Nov.15 and due Monday Nov. 28 (first post due Nov. 18) Video Discussion 2, Abacus: Small Enough to Jail, continues
		Quizzes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quiz 12: due Tuesday, Nov. 15 at 11:00 am

Week	Topics	To-Do List
Week 14 Nov. 21 - 27	Topic: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Dorothy Smith and standpoint theory	Readings <ul style="list-style-type: none">Smith
		Discussions <ul style="list-style-type: none">Discussion Exercise 6: continuesVideo Discussion 2, Abacus: Small Enough to Jail, closes Monday Nov. 21 at 11:59 pm
		Quizzes <ul style="list-style-type: none">Quiz 12: due Tuesday, Nov. 23 at 11:00 am
Week 15 November 28- December 4	Topic: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Course Conclusion	Readings
		Discussions <ul style="list-style-type: none">Discussion Exercise 6: What's your standpoint? due Monday Nov. 28 at 11:59 pm
		Term Paper <ul style="list-style-type: none">Term Paper: due Sunday, Dec. 4 at 11:59 pm