



## COURSE OUTLINE

# SCS230 Understanding Society: An Introduction to Social Theory

**Course Coordinator:** Phillip Ablett (pablett@usc.edu.au) **School:** School of Law and Society

2021 | Semester 1

USC Sunshine Coast

**ON CAMPUS**

Most of your course is on campus but you may be able to do some components of this course online.

*Please go to the USC website for up to date information on the teaching sessions and campuses where this course is usually offered.*

## 1. What is this course about?

### 1.1. Description

In order to change society, or even to participate effectively in it, some understanding of how society works is essential. Social theory can best be understood as a diverse collection of conceptual frameworks that can enable a deep and critical understanding of such issues as social inequality, difference and change. Social theory is necessary to guide social research and makes it intelligible within broader frameworks of understanding. Contemporary explanations of social problems and issues, have been based on, or developed in response to, 'classical' social theory, which emerged to make sense of the tumultuous and rapid social changes generated in the 19th century and continuing to this day. This course charts both the 'classical' attempts to formulate a universal and synthetic social theory, which are still influential, and the more recent forms of situated, partial and reflexive theories. Accordingly, this course introduces students to some of the most significant thinkers and perspectives in both classical and contemporary social theory.

### 1.2. How will this course be delivered?

ACTIVITY	HOURS	BEGINNING WEEK	FREQUENCY
<b>ON CAMPUS</b>			
<b>Lecture</b> – 2 hours online lecture content for students to review in their own time.	2hrs	Week 1	13 times
<b>Tutorial/Workshop</b> – On campus	1hr	Week 2	10 times

### 1.3. Course Topics

#### COURSE CONTENT

- Why Social Theory? – Introduction to the Course
- The Emergence of Modern Social Theory and an Overview of Some Major Theoretical Dilemmas
- Understanding Marx
- Understanding Durkheim
- Understanding Weber
- Understanding Functionalism and Systems Theory
- Understanding Interpretivism
- Understanding Critical Theory (From Lukács to Habermas)
- Understanding Structuralism and Post-Structuralism
- Understanding Foucault
- Understanding Theories of Identity and Difference: Feminism
- Understanding Heidegger
- Reconfiguring Social Theory: Beyond the Enlightenment Paradigm?

## 2. What level is this course?

200 Level (Developing)

Building on and expanding the scope of introductory knowledge and skills, developing breadth or depth and applying knowledge and skills in a new context. May require pre-requisites where discipline specific introductory knowledge or skills is necessary. Normally, undertaken in the second or third full-time year of an undergraduate programs.

## 3. What is the unit value of this course?

12 units

## 4. How does this course contribute to my learning?

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES	GRADUATE QUALITIES
On successful completion of this course, you should be able to...	Completing these tasks successfully will contribute to you becoming...
1 Evaluate the major social theories (classical and contemporary) employed in understanding society.	Creative and critical thinker
2 Apply social theory to make sense of substantive and complex social problems.	Empowered
3 Link developments in social theory and how they can contribute to transforming society in a more just, participatory and sustainable direction.	Sustainability-focussed
4 Communicate research and findings using appropriate modes to specialist and non-specialist audiences	Engaged

## 5. Am I eligible to enrol in this course?

Refer to the [USC Glossary of terms](#) for definitions of “pre-requisites, co-requisites and anti-requisites”.

### 5.1. Pre-requisites

Not applicable

### 5.2. Co-requisites

Not applicable

### 5.3. Anti-requisites

Not applicable

### 5.4. Specific assumed prior knowledge and skills (where applicable)

Not applicable

## 6. How am I going to be assessed?

### 6.1. Grading Scale

Standard Grading (GRD)

High Distinction (HD), Distinction (DN), Credit (CR), Pass (PS), Fail (FL).

### 6.2. Details of early feedback on progress

The in-class activities commencing in Week 3 will entail early feedback on your comprehension of the learning materials in this course.

6.3. Assessment tasks

DELIVERY MODE	TASK NO.	ASSESSMENT PRODUCT	INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP	WEIGHTING %	WHAT IS THE DURATION / LENGTH?	WHEN SHOULD I SUBMIT?	WHERE SHOULD I SUBMIT IT?
All	1	Activity Participation	Individual	20%	N/A	Throughout teaching period (refer to Format)	In Class
All	2	Activity Participation	Group	40%	1500 words equivalent	Week 7	To be Negotiated
All	3	Examination	Individual	40%	2 hours	Week 13	To be Negotiated

All - Assessment Task 1: Social Theory Portfolio

<b>GOAL:</b>	<p>This task aims to develop your understanding of social theory through a series of learning activities, tutorial participation and peer to peer work.</p> <p>This on-going task aims to develop your understanding of the learning outcomes for this course:            Evaluation of social theories            Application of social theories            Linking developments in social theories            And communicating social theories.</p> <p>Through these learning activities you will receive formative feedback from the beginning of the course.</p>										
<b>PRODUCT:</b>	Activity Participation										
<b>FORMAT:</b>	<p>The format for the portfolio will include weekly learning activities and participation.</p> <p>This includes:            Learning activities - summary, discussion, prepared discussion questions and a summative quiz in Week 12</p> <p>For more details see Blackboard Task 1 Folder.</p>										
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## All - Assessment Task 2: Social Issues in the Media

<b>GOAL:</b>	One of the main purposes of social theory is to help us make sense of particular social issues by placing them in a broader context of understanding. This understanding is generally critical of popular 'common-sense' stereotypes or 'dominant constructions' because it exposes underlying social processes and assumptions that may not be evident to those affected by the issue. This exercise encourages you to use some aspects of classical social theory to develop a more critical understanding of a social issue that can be found in the popular media																
<b>PRODUCT:</b>	Activity Participation																
<b>FORMAT:</b>	<p>Academic Assignment. Group task (4 Max). Poster Display which is referenced.</p> <p>The poster can be either a large physical board with illustrative images and text boxes pasted on it for in-class presentation (examples will be shown to you in-class) OR presented in a PowerPoint format. If presenting in PowerPoint or digital mode, each Poster shall normally contain 1 cover/title slide (with all participants names and student numbers clearly identified on it), 8-10 slides for the actual presentation of the analysis of a social issue using the selected theory, and a final single slide for your reference list. So, normally the entire digital poster presentation should be no more than 12 slides in total.</p> <p>Each member of the group must contribute to a short oral reflective statement (in-class) on how this application of critical theory enabled a new understanding of the social issue and its potential resolution.</p> <p>All group members must equally contribute towards the production of the poster - some time will be given in tutorials to plan and manage this project. However, the bulk of the work will be completed out of class time and you will need to have the contact details and be able to communicate frequently with other members of your group.</p> <p>It is an expectation that students will consult at least six scholarly sources in constructing the presentation (in addition to media sources), which should be evident in the referencing on the slides (or, if using a physical poster), attached reference list at the end. In the normal course of events each group shall be awarded a collective grade. However, in the unusual event of a dispute over the extent of a team member's contributions, your tutor can make a determination on the basis of individual written contributions to award different grades to each team member.</p> <p>Please avoid quoting directly from the sociological dictionary, as this is a thinking exercise requiring research.</p> <p>NB* THE POSTER GROUPS SHALL BE FORMED IN THE FIRST TUTORIAL IN WEEK 2 ON CAMPUS. PLEASE DO NOT MISS THE GROUP SIGN-UP PROCESS. PENALTIES MAY APPLY TO YOUR ASSESSMENT IF YOU ARE NOT IN A GROUP. GROUPS ARE NOT ALLOCATED AUTOMATICALLY – YOU FORM THEM IN-CLASS.</p>																
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1 2 3 4

### All - Assessment Task 3: Social Theory Exam

<b>GOAL:</b>	The purpose of this assessment is for you to demonstrate your understanding of social theory; how social theory can help us to make sense of complex social problems; and how developments in social theory can potentially contribute to transforming society.		
<b>PRODUCT:</b>	Examination		
<b>FORMAT:</b>	Academic format. Individual. This exam will have a mix of one Short Answer response and one comparative Long Answer response selected from a menu of questions.		
<b>CRITERIA:</b>	<b>No.</b>		<b>Learning Outcome assessed</b>
	1	Application of social theory to create an argument.	
	2	Identification of all main issues/concepts.	
	3	Explanation of relevant concepts (such as power, knowledge, inequality, domination, emancipation and difference) and contested areas.	
	4	Critical comparative analysis of your selected social theories.	
	5	Making links between social theory and transformation of society.	
	6	Communication.	

## 7. Directed study hours

A 12-unit course will have total of 150 learning hours which will include directed study hours (including online if required), self-directed learning and completion of assessable tasks. Directed study hours may vary by location. Student workload is calculated at 12.5 learning hours per one unit.

## 8. What resources do I need to undertake this course?

Please note: Course information, including specific information of recommended readings, learning activities, resources, weekly readings, etc. are available on the course Blackboard site– Please log in as soon as possible.

### 8.1. Prescribed text(s) or course reader

Please note that you need to have regular access to the resource(s) listed below. Resources may be required or recommended.

REQUIRED?	AUTHOR	YEAR	TITLE	PUBLISHER
Required	Steven Seidman	2016	Contested Knowledge	John Wiley & Sons

### 8.2. Specific requirements

Nil

## 9. How are risks managed in this course?

Health and safety risks for this course have been assessed as low. It is your responsibility to review course material, search online, discuss with lecturers and peers and understand the health and safety risks associated with your specific course of study and to familiarise yourself with the University's general health and safety principles by reviewing the [online induction training for students](#), and following the instructions of the University staff.

## 10. What administrative information is relevant to this course?

### 10.1. Assessment: Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is the ethical standard of university participation. It ensures that students graduate as a result of proving they are competent in their discipline. This is integral in maintaining the value of academic qualifications. Each industry has expectations and standards of the skills and knowledge within that discipline and these are reflected in assessment.

Academic integrity means that you do not engage in any activity that is considered to be academic fraud; including plagiarism, collusion or outsourcing any part of any assessment item to any other person. You are expected to be honest and ethical by completing all work yourself and indicating in your work which ideas and information were developed by you and which were taken from others. You cannot provide your assessment work to others. You are also expected to provide evidence of wide and critical reading, usually by using appropriate academic references.

In order to minimise incidents of academic fraud, this course may require that some of its assessment tasks, when submitted to Blackboard, are electronically checked through SafeAssign. This software allows for text comparisons to be made between your submitted assessment item and all other work that SafeAssign has access to.

## 10.2. Assessment: Additional Requirements

Your eligibility for supplementary assessment in a course is dependent of the following conditions applying:

The final mark is in the percentage range 47% to 49.4%

The course is graded using the Standard Grading scale

You have not failed an assessment task in the course due to academic misconduct.

## 10.3. Assessment: Submission penalties

Late submission of assessment tasks may be penalised at the following maximum rate:

- 5% (of the assessment task's identified value) per day for the first two days from the date identified as the due date for the assessment task.

- 10% (of the assessment task's identified value) for the third day - 20% (of the assessment task's identified value) for the fourth day and subsequent days up to and including seven days from the date identified as the due date for the assessment task.

- A result of zero is awarded for an assessment task submitted after seven days from the date identified as the due date for the assessment task. Weekdays and weekends are included in the calculation of days late. To request an extension you must contact your course coordinator to negotiate an outcome.

## 10.4. Study help

For help with course-specific advice, for example what information to include in your assessment, you should first contact your tutor, then your course coordinator, if needed.

If you require additional assistance, the Learning Advisers are trained professionals who are ready to help you develop a wide range of academic skills. Visit the [Learning Advisers](#) web page for more information, or contact Student Central for further assistance: +61 7 5430 2890 or [studentcentral@usc.edu.au](mailto:studentcentral@usc.edu.au).

## 10.5. Wellbeing Services

Student Wellbeing provide free and confidential counselling on a wide range of personal, academic, social and psychological matters, to foster positive mental health and wellbeing for your academic success.

To book a confidential appointment go to [Student Hub](#), email [studentwellbeing@usc.edu.au](mailto:studentwellbeing@usc.edu.au) or call 07 5430 1226.

## 10.6. AccessAbility Services

Ability Advisers ensure equal access to all aspects of university life. If your studies are affected by a disability, learning disorder mental health issue, injury or illness, or you are a primary carer for someone with a disability or who is considered frail and aged, [AccessAbility Services](#) can provide access to appropriate reasonable adjustments and practical advice about the support and facilities available to you throughout the University.

To book a confidential appointment go to [Student Hub](#), email [AccessAbility@usc.edu.au](mailto:AccessAbility@usc.edu.au) or call 07 5430 2890.

## 10.7. Links to relevant University policy and procedures

For more information on Academic Learning & Teaching categories including:

- Assessment: Courses and Coursework Programs
- Review of Assessment and Final Grades
- Supplementary Assessment
- Administration of Central Examinations
- Deferred Examinations
- Student Academic Misconduct
- Students with a Disability

Visit the USC website: <http://www.usc.edu.au/explore/policies-and-procedures#academic-learning-and-teaching>

## 10.8. General Enquiries

### In person:

- **USC Sunshine Coast** - Student Central, Ground Floor, Building C, 90 Sippy Downs Drive, Sippy Downs
- **USC Moreton Bay** - Service Centre, Ground Floor, Foundation Building, Gympie Road, Petrie
- **USC SouthBank** - Student Central, Building A4 (SW1), 52 Merivale Street, South Brisbane
- **USC Gympie** - Student Central, 71 Cartwright Road, Gympie
- **USC Fraser Coast** - Student Central, Student Central, Building A, 161 Old Maryborough Rd, Hervey Bay
- **USC Caboolture** - Student Central, Level 1 Building J, Cnr Manley and Tallon Street, Caboolture

**Tel:** +61 7 5430 2890

**Email:** [studentcentral@usc.edu.au](mailto:studentcentral@usc.edu.au)