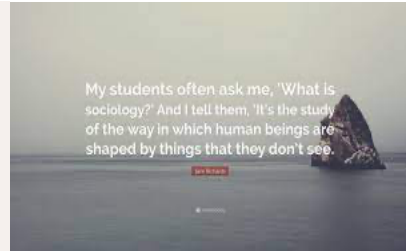


SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY



Professor: Dr. Jennifer G. Correa

Email: jcorrea@tamusa.edu

Phone: 210-784-2249

Office: 350D Central Academic Building (CAB)

WebEx Virtual Student Office Hour: By appointment

WebEx Location: Correa WebEx Personal Room

WebEx Virtual Meeting: <https://tamusa.webex.com/meet/jcorrea> | Access Code: 2535 733 9720

WebEx Class Meetings: Wednesdays, 4:00 – 6:45 pm

“The Sociological Imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relation between the two in society.”

C.W. Mills, Sociologist

“I could shelter myself from conflict by leaving the conversation, but I have come to believe that the comfort we feel when we avoid hard conversations is a dangerous comfort, one that seduces us into ignorance about the experiences of others and about the full meaning of our own lives.” *Mari Matsuda, Law Professor*

THE POWER OF THEORY: From Ideas to the Forces that Shape Society

Course Description: This course explores sociological theory from the classical to the contemporary, asking how social structures shape human behavior and everyday life. Some theorists examine large-scale systems such as political economy and institutions, while others analyze micro-level dynamics like the self, identity, and interaction. Still others trace the connections between the two. Reading theory can sometimes feel abstract, but in this course, you will learn how to ground these ideas in real-world contexts. You will be expected to read closely, participate in discussion, and think critically about how theorists describe, explain, and challenge our understanding of society. Importantly, we will consider how each theorist’s social, political, and economic context shaped their work, showing that theory is not a timeless abstraction but a living response to historical realities. By the end of the course, you’ll be able to use theory as a toolkit to make sense of pressing issues—from inequality and identity to social media and social movements.

Learning Objectives

- 1.) **Investigate** classical and contemporary theories to see how they help us understand social, cultural, political, and economic life.
- 2.) **Evaluate** different ways sociologists build knowledge, including the epistemological and methodological foundations that shape theory.
- 3.) **Analyze** sociological theories by connecting them to real-world issues (e.g. inequality, identity, culture, politics, and institutions).
- 4.) **Understand** how both macro-level structures (like institutions and power systems) and micro-level dynamics (like identity and everyday interactions) work together to shape society.

Course Format & Student Expectations

- This course meets via WebEx on Wednesdays. Attendance and active participation are essential.
- Weekly sessions combine instructor-led discussion, student engagement, and critical reflection.
- No class recordings are provided.
- The syllabus is our roadmap and may be updated as needed; any changes will be announced in class and on Blackboard.

Student Success Tips

- Prioritize attending & engaging in every class meeting—your presence supports your learning and our shared discussions.
- Keep up with assigned work and confirm submission receipts for all uploaded assignments.
- Review class materials regularly: personal notes & textbook resources can all reinforce your understanding.
- Don't hesitate to ask questions—engaged learners grow the most.

Required Text/E-Book

- Dillon, Michele. 2021. "Concise Reader in Sociological Theory."¹

Blackboard

Grades, assignments, announcements, and course materials will be posted in Blackboard.

Course Policies & Conduct

Academic Integrity & Generative AI Policy

Developing your own voice in writing, analysis, and critical thinking is central to this course. All work must be your own. Use of unauthorized sources —generative AI tools (e.g. ChatGPT)—can be considered academic misconduct and subject to university policy. If you are ever uncertain, consult with me before submitting your work.

Preparation & Participation

Come to class prepared by completing assigned readings prior to our meetings. Active engagement—asking questions, contributing to discussions, and connecting material to your own experiences—enhances your learning and our shared classroom environment.

¹ To access your materials, head to brytewave.redshelf.com, log in with your account information, and navigate to My Shelf.. Please contact University Bookstore for information regarding ebook access if you are experiencing trouble (210)784-1070 or 2168mgr@follett.com.

Attendance & Absences

Consistent attendance is crucial in a fast-paced summer session. If an emergency (e.g., illness, family matter) prevents attendance, notify me with documentation if possible. Staying in communication helps support your success.

Late Work & Makeup Policy

Late work is generally not accepted unless advance notice and valid justification are provided. Submitting blank or unreadable files via Blackboard may result in a zero. If you're struggling with a deadline, reach out early.

Grading Concerns

You are welcome to schedule a meeting to discuss any concerns about your performance. Grades reflect the evaluation of your work—not a negotiation—but I am here to support your improvement and understanding.

Respectful Dialogue & Classroom Etiquette

Sociology engages difficult and often contentious topics. Your responsibility is not to agree with every idea, but to critically examine multiple perspectives using a sociological lens. Civil, thoughtful discussion led by our readings is expected at all times. Out of respect for our shared learning space, please silence or turn off your phone during class. If you have urgent needs or accessibility concerns, let me know in advance.

Communication & Email

Use your A&M–SA email account for all course-related communication. I typically respond within 24–48 hours during weekdays. Emails sent over the weekend may receive responses the following Monday.

A&M–SA STUDENT CONDUCT POLICIES & RESOURCES

Academic Integrity

Academic honesty is essential to your learning and to the university's mission. All work submitted must reflect your own effort. Cheating, plagiarism, or any attempt to gain an unfair academic advantage violates university policy and may result in penalties including a failing grade or disciplinary action. Refer to the Code of Conduct in the Student Handbook: <https://www.tamusa.edu/university-policies/student-rights-and-responsibilities/documents/Student-Handbook-2022-23.pdf>.

Texas Six-Drop Rule

Texas law limits undergraduates to **six course drops** over their academic career. Exceeding this limit can affect your record.

Disability Support Services (DSS)

If you have a documented disability or face learning barriers, you may be eligible for academic accommodations. Contact DSS early to arrange support.

Location: CAB 210 | Email: dsupport@tamusa.tamus.edu | Phone: (210) 784-1335. If aspects of this course design limit your access, please notify me so we can make adjustments.

Jaguar Writing Center

Need help with writing? The Writing Center offers free tutoring on essays, presentations, reading strategies, and more. Location: CAB 208 | Email: tutoring@tamusa.edu | Phone: (210) 784-1332.

COURSE GRADE ASSESSMENTS (Brief Description)

Assignment	Description	Points	
Essay Exam 1	Traditional, holistic essay questions based on early course readings (Weeks 1–4)	40 pts	<div> 162 – 180 = A 144 – 161.5 = B 126 – 143.5 = C 108 – 125.5 = D Below 108 = F </div>
Essay Exam 2	Introspective exam whereby theory is used to analyze a personal lived experience (Weeks 5–9).	40 pts	
Concept Map Presentation	Visual + verbal explanation of a key concept from course assigned reading	20 pts	
Theoretical Analysis	Visual + verbal analytical explanation using a theory and applying it to a issue or event in NYT article.	60 pts	
Participation	Based on class attendance, engagement, and discussion	20 pts	
Total Points→		180 pts	

ESSAY EXAMS (40 points each)

You will complete two essay-based exams in this course. Both are take-home exams submitted on Blackboard and designed to show your ability to explain, compare, and apply sociological theory. Late exams will not be accepted without justification and approval. Because I carefully read each essay, grading may take 1–2 weeks.

Essay Exam 1: Critical Thinking & Reasoning Skills (40 pts)

Covers early course readings (from Weeks 1-4). You will answer a mix of short and long essay questions. The longer essay may ask you to compare theorists or apply theory to a brief scenario. Use ASA format for in-citations and/or reference section, for link: [ASA Guide Link](#)

Exam 1 Grading Criteria (40 pts total):

- Understanding** or knowledge of readings/theorists – 10 pts
- Application & analysis** (connecting theory to examples) – 10 pts
- Comparisons/synthesis** across theorists/ideas – 10 pts
- Clarity & organization** (thesis, structure, ASA style) – 10 pts

Essay Exam 2: Interpretive & Reflexive Skills (40 pts)

This essay (minimum 500 words) asks you to apply theory to a personal, lived experience (from Weeks 5-9). You must use at least **two assigned readings not part of Exam 1**. Your essay should include an introduction with a clear thesis, a body that applies theory to your example, and a conclusion that reflects on what you learned. Use ASA format for citations in-citations and/or reference section, for link: [ASA Guide Link](#)

Exam 2 Grading Criteria (40 pts total):

- Understanding of theory** (2 assigned readings explained) – 10 pts
- Application** of theoretical frameworks/concepts to lived experience – 10 pts
- Communication** of thesis & arguments (clear, logical development) – 10 pts
- Writing & formatting** (500 word minimum, organization, ASA references) – 10 pts

CONCEPT MAP PRESENTATION (Creative & Visualization Skills) (20 pts)

You will create one concept map using the Canva platform based on an assigned reading not yet covered in class. Then, you'll deliver a brief **3-minute** presentation during a WebEx session. Presentations are scheduled on Tuesdays and Thursdays between Weeks 1–4. Your task: Choose a key concept from your selected reading, visually map it out, and explain its relevance. There are 3 rubric objectives for your map: **1.) Identify a concept** – e.g. why is this concept important? **2.) Define or Explain concept** – e.g. how does the author/theorist defines (or describes) this concept? **3.) “Big picture” of concept** – e.g. discuss how the concept helps us better understand society. This is not a summary—focus on breaking down one powerful idea and showing how it connects to broader social dynamics. Sign-up early via email to reserve your reading and presentation date. Concept Map Grade Rubric (see below):

Concept Map Grading Criteria (20 pts total)

- a.) **Identify a concept:** Choose one key concept and explain why it matters. – 5 pts
- b.) **Define/explain the concept:** Show how the theorist defines it and what it means. – 5 pts
- c.) **Big picture:** Explain what this concept teaches us about society. – 5 pts
- d.) **Map Presentation:** Share & briefly discuss your map (3-minutes) with the class. – 5 pts

Theoretical Analysis (Analytical, Inference, & Communication Skills) (60 pts)

For this project, you will choose a **New York Times article** (through your free A&M–SA student account) and use a sociological theory from class to analyze it. Then, you'll deliver a brief **10-minute** presentation during a WebEx session. The goal is not to summarize the article, but to **apply theory** to explain the social processes at work. You will create a short presentation (5–6 content slides) using Canva, PowerPoint, Google Slides, or a similar tool. Presentations will be shared in class.

Theoretical Analysis Project Grading Criteria (60 pts total)

1. **Introduction:** Briefly explain the social issue or event from your NYT article. – 10 pts
2. **Thesis:** State which theory you are using and how it helps analyze the issue. – 10 pts
3. **Sociological Analysis:** Apply the theory to show what it reveals about the issue (social, political, or economic implications). – 20 pts
4. **Conclusion:** Summarize what your analysis teaches us about society. – 10 pts
5. **References:** Cite your NYT article and course reading(s) in ASA style. – 10 pts

Instructions for Creating a New York Times Account: As an A&M-SA student, you have free access to NYT. Go to the A&M-SA homepage, use the search key and type in “library.” Once on the library landing page, scroll down on the page and search for “Databases by Type” then click on “Newspapers” on the list. You will see the page you are on then states A-Z Databases: Newspapers, below you will see the alphabet, click on the letter “N.” After clicking on “N” the following page is all the newspapers that start with that letter, choose the first selection that states “New York Times All Access Digital Pass (The New York Times Company).” You will then be asked to continue using your university credentials – username and password – in order to begin the process of registering for a free account with the NYT.

Theoretical Analysis Project: Presentation Structure

Your overall presentation should have **5–7 slides total**. Think of it as telling a story: introduce the issue, explain your perspective, analyze it with theory, and end with why it matters.

Thematic Analysis Slide Guide & Points

Slide 1 – Introduction (10 pts)

- Briefly introduce the social issue or event from your NYT article.
- Give just enough background for your audience to understand the context (who, what, where, when).

Slide 2 – Thesis Statement (10 pts)

- End your introduction with a clear thesis:
 - State the main issue you are analyzing.
 - Identify the sociological theory you will use to interpret it.

Slides 3–5 – Sociological Analysis (20 pts)

- This is the heart of your presentation.
- Show how your chosen theory helps explain the issue.
- Make 2–3 key points using the theory.
- Use short quotes, ideas, or key terms from class readings to strengthen your analysis.

Slide 6 – Conclusion (10 pts)

- Summarize your findings: What did the theory reveal about the issue?
- Why is this knowledge important for understanding society more broadly?
- End with a big-picture reflection (not just a restatement).

Slide 7 – References (10 pts)

- Include:
 - Your NYT article (full citation).
 - Course readings (Dillon and/or others you used).
- Use **ASA style** for citations. [ASA Guide Link](#)

Participation (Active Listening, Civic Awareness, Public Speaking Skills) (20 pts)

Your participation grade reflects your engagement during WebEx class sessions. This includes contributing to discussions, asking questions, and actively listening. Different students engage in different ways—what matters most is your consistent presence and effort to connect with the material²:

1. **High Participation** = 20 pts (A student *frequently* participates in meaningful & productive discussion regarding lecture/textbook during class meetings)
2. **Moderate Participation** = 15 pts (A student *periodically* participates in meaningful & productive discussion regarding lecture/textbook during class meetings)
3. **Low Participation** = 10 pts (A student *seldomly* participates in meaningful & productive discussion regarding lecture/textbook during class meetings)
4. **No Participation** = 0 pts (A student *never* participates in any meaningful & productive discussion or exchange throughout entire semester).

² **Note:** Meaningful in this context refers to its relevance to the subject/topic as embedded in class lecture and the textbook. Productive in this context refers to input that illustrates critical thinking and can potentially positively elevate the subject matter in an evidence-based direction. Participation is not solely focused on whether a student is present, although that is a major factor.

Course Schedule: Readings, Exams & Due Dates

WEEK 1

Why is Theory Important? Studying the Social

Charles Wright Mills – Sociological Imagination/Emile Durkheim – Social Facts

AUGUST 27, WEDNESDAY (WEBEX MEETING)

- Course Introduction
- **READ via Blackboard Course Content:**
 - Correa, Jennifer G. “Importance and Underpinnings of Theory” Class Guide pp. 1-2.
 - Charles Wright Mills’s “The Promise” pp. 1-5.
- **READ via Textbook:**
 - *Concise Reader*, “Introduction,” pp. 1-6.
 - *Concise Reader*, “Emile Durkheim,” pp. 31-34.
 - *Concise Reader*, Emile Durkheim, “The Rules of Sociological Method,” pp. 34-40.
- **Watch YouTube Films:**
 - **Charles W. Mills “C.W. Mills Sociological Imagination”:** URL:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a2BKcboLgmw>.
 - **Emile Durkheim “Social Facts”** URL:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cd9rraNMZbs&t=11s>.

WEEK 2

Structural Functionalist Theory

Mills & Durkheim Social Facts...(cont.)/Emile Durkheim: Suicide Types

SEPTEMBER 3, WEDNESDAY (WEBEX MEETING)

- **Date Open for Students’ Discussion of Concept Map**
 - Concept Map Options: Mills’s “The Promise” OR Durkheim “*The Rules of Sociological Method*” & pp. 1-5.
- **READ via Textbook:**
 - *Concise Reader*, Emile Durkheim, “Suicide: A Study in Sociology,” pp. 41-46
- **Watch YouTube Films:**
 - **Emile Durkheim “Egoistic and Altruistic Suicide”** URL:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zgxZm9p4wwA>.
 - **Emile Durkheim “Anomic and Fatalistic Suicide”** URL:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qpc30S4bpEo>.

WEEK 3

Structural Functionalist Theory

Durkheim Suicide...(cont.)

SEPTEMBER 10, WEDNESDAY (WEBEX MEETING)

- Date Open for Students' Discussion of Concept Map
 - Concept Map Option: Durkheim "*Suicide: A Study in Sociology*"
- **READ via Textbook:**
 - *Concise Reader*, "Karl Marx," pp. 9-12.
 - *Concise Reader*, "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844," pp. 17-26.
- **Watch YouTube Films:**
 - **Karl Marx "Class Struggle" URL:**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZvGX1Xl1HnE&list=PLgIPpm6tJZoS-H43l2Sw3_-ghbGwNVM1D&index=36
 - **Karl Marx "Alienation" URL:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TTzFwnk8CIQ>

WEEK 4

Marxian Theory

Karl Marx: Labor & Alienation

SEPTEMBER 17, WEDNESDAY (WEBEX MEETING)

- Date Open for Students' Discussion of Concept Map
 - Concept Map Option: Marx "*Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*"
- **READ via Textbook:**
 - *Concise Reader*, "Max Weber," pp. 47-50.
 - *Concise Reader*, "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism," pp. 50-58.
- **Watch YouTube Film:**
 - **"The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism" URL:**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CpGupes7NvI&list=PLgIPpm6tJZoS-H43l2Sw3_-ghbGwNVM1D&index=55

WEEK 5

Weberian Theory

Max Weber: Protestantism & Capitalism/Essay Exam 1

SEPTEMBER 24, WEDNESDAY (WEBEX MEETING)

- Date Open for Students' Discussion of Concept Map
 - Concept Map Option: Weber's "*The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*."
- **Essay Exam 1 Discussion:** Discuss Format for Exam 1 - Essay Questions will draw be emailed via Blackboard Announcement by 8 p.m. *Exam 1 is due by Wednesday, October 1st at 11:59 p.m. via Blackboard Submission.
- **READ via Textbook:**
 - *Concise Reader*, "Symbolic Interaction" pp. 131-134.
 - *Concise Reader*, George Herbert Mead, "Mind, Self & Society," pp. 134-136.
 - *Concise Reader*, Erving Goffman, "The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life," 136-140.
- **Watch YouTube Film:**
 - "Symbolic Interaction" URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jFQIIM8IRZU>.

WEEK 6

Symbolic Interaction Theory

Mead & Goffman/ Essay Exam 1 Due

OCTOBER 1, WEDNESDAY (WEBEX MEETING)

- Date Open for Students' Discussion of Concept Map
 - Concept Map Options: Mead's *Mind, Self & Society* OR Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*.
- **ESSAY EXAM 1 Due:** Submit your Exam 1 by 11: 59 p.m. in Blackboard under Exams & Quizzes tab.
- **READ via Textbook:**
 - *Concise Reader*, "Michel Foucault and Queer Theory," pp. 209-212.
 - *Concise Reader*, Michel Foucault, "The History of Sexuality," pp. 212-216.
- **Watch YouTube Film:**
 - "Foucault Power and Knowledge" URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=brqCtHSlaAQ>.

WEEK 7

Power Theory

Michel Foucault: Power & Sexuality

OCTOBER 8, WEDNESDAY (WEBEX MEETING)

- Date Open for Students' Discussion of Concept Map
 - Concept Map Option: Foucault's *The History of Sexuality*.
- **READ via Textbook:**
 - *Concise Reader*, "Postcolonial Theories," pp. 263-264.
 - *Concise Reader*, "The Souls of Black Folk," pp. 264-270.
- **Watch YouTube Films:**
 - "What is Postcolonialism? A Short Introduction to Postcolonial Theory" URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1nC428rtMB8>.
 - "WEB DuBois's The Souls of Black Folk" URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=de8MTsguFgU&t=51s>.

WEEK 8

Postcolonial Theories on Race

W.E.B. DuBois: Race & Identity

OCTOBER 15, WEDNESDAY (WEBEX MEETING)

- Date Open for Students' Discussion of Concept Map
 - Concept Map Options: DuBois's "*The Souls of Black Folk*"
- **READ via Blackboard Course Content:**
 - bell hooks "Understanding Patriarchy," pp. 1-4.
 - Kimmel, Michael "Masculinity as Homophobia," pp. 213-219.

WEEK 9

Gender Theory

hooks: Gender & Patriarchy/Kimmel: Masculinity/* **Essay Exam 2*

OCTOBER 22, WEDNESDAY (WEBEX MEETING)

- Date Open for Students' Discussion of Concept Map
 - Concept Map Options: hooks's "*Understanding Patriarchy*" OR Kimmel's "*Masculinity as Homophobia*"
- **Essay Exam 2 Discussion:** Discuss Format for Exam 2 will be emailed via Blackboard Announcement by 8 p.m. *Exam 2 is due by Wednesday, Oct 29th at 11:59 p.m. via Blackboard Submission.

WEEK 10

Work on Theoretical Analysis Projects/Essay Exam 2 Due

OCTOBER 29, WEDNESDAY (WEBEX MEETING)

- **ESSAY EXAM 2 Due:** Submit your Exam 2 by 11: 59 p.m. in Blackboard under Exams & Quizzes tab.
- **Discuss Theoretical Analysis Projects** – assist students with project & questions during class. Students will need to create a New York Times (NYT) complimentary (student) account with the NYT via university library website and begin process of searching for a suitable NYT article for analysis.

WEEK 11

Work on Theoretical Analysis Projects

NOVEMBER 5, WEDNESDAY (WEBEX MEETING)

- Theoretical Analysis Projects – Professor will check-in individually with students to assess progress on project. Students should work on their projects by analyzing their respective NYT article.

WEEK 12

Work on Theoretical Analysis Projects

NOVEMBER 12, WEDNESDAY (WEBEX MEETING)

- Theoretical Analysis Projects – Professor will check-in individually with students to assess progress on project. Students should work on their projects by analyzing their respective NYT article.

WEEK 13

Theoretical Analysis Student Presentations (Day 1)

NOVEMBER 19, WEDNESDAY (WEBEX MEETING)

- **Theoretical Analysis Presentations:** Approximately 10 students will present their work to the class; each student will have 10 minutes total for their presentation.

WEEK 14

NOVEMBER 19, WEDNESDAY (WEBEX MEETING)

- **Study Day – No University Classes Held**

THANKSGIVING BREAK November 27th – 29th

WEEK 15

Theoretical Analysis Student Presentations (Day 2)

DECEMBER 3, WEDNESDAY (WEBEX MEETING)

- **Theoretical Analysis Presentations:** Approximately 10 students will present their work to the class; each student will have 10 minutes total for their presentation.