

SOCI 3310-600 SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

Professor: Dr. Jennifer G. Correa

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WebEx Virtual Student Office Hour: By appointment

[Dr. Correa's WebEx Meeting Room](#) | Access Code: 2535 733 9720

WebEx Class Meetings: Wednesdays | 5:30–8:15 pm

“In science, when human behavior enters the equation, things go nonlinear. That’s why Physics is easy and Sociology is hard.” – Neil de Grasse Tyson

Course Overview

This course explores sociological theory from the classical to the contemporary, examining how theorists explain social structures, human behavior, identity, interaction, power, and inequality. Some theories focus on large-scale institutions and political-economic systems, while others examine everyday interactions and the self, and still others connect the two. Throughout the semester, we will ground theory in real-world contexts while considering how theorists’ social, political, and historical circumstances shaped their ideas. Through close reading, discussion, and application, you will learn to use sociological theory as a toolkit for interpreting society and contemporary social issues. Theory is not just about learning what sociologists thought. It is about learning new ways to see what is happening around us. Studying theory also builds transferable professional and academic skills by teaching you to analyze complex problems, evaluate competing explanations, identify underlying assumptions, and communicate evidence-based interpretations, skills that are valuable in professional settings and advanced study.

Learning Objectives

- 1.) Explain key classical and contemporary sociological theories and the historical contexts in which they developed.
- 2.) Compare how sociological theories conceptualize social structures, institutions, power, identity, and interaction.
- 3.) Evaluate the epistemological and methodological foundations that shape sociological theory.
- 4.) Apply sociological theories to contemporary social issues and everyday life.

Course Format & Student Expectations

- This course meets via WebEx only on Wednesdays – attendance & active participation are essential.
- Course sessions combine instructor-led discussion, student engagement, and critical reflection.
- Class meetings are not recorded.
- The syllabus serves as our course roadmap; any updates will be announced in class and on Blackboard.

Student Success Tips

- Attend and engage in every class—your presence supports learning and discussion.
- Stay current on assignments and confirm submission receipts.
- Regularly review the syllabus, personal notes, and assigned course readings.
- Ask questions—engaged learners grow the most.

Required Text/E-Book

Dillon, Michele. 2021. *Concise Reader in Sociological Theory*, via [Brytewave](#).

Blackboard

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

Course Policies & Conduct

Academic Freedom (Student Handbook, 8.5.1)

Students will be free to take reasoned exception to the data or views in any course of study and to withhold judgment about matters of opinion, but they are responsible for learning the content of any course of study for which they are enrolled. Students have the right to be evaluated for their participation and work in the classroom in accordance with the parameters as indicated in the course syllabus. A syllabus will be provided to each student at the first-class meeting.

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, including generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT), may constitute academic misconduct under university policy. When in doubt, consult with me before submitting your work.

Preparation & Participation

Come to class prepared by completing assigned readings throughout the entire semester. Active engagement—through questions, discussion, and real-world connections within the scope of the course—enhances your learning and our shared classroom environment.

Attendance & Absences

Consistent attendance is crucial. 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.

Civil Dialogue & Classroom Etiquette

Sociology engages complex and often contentious topics. You are not expected to agree with every idea, but to examine social contexts using a sociological lens. Civil, thoughtful discussion grounded in the readings is expected. To support our shared learning space, please silence your phone during class and notify me in advance of any urgent needs or accessibility concerns.

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

Freedom in the Class (Student Handbook, 4.2.4)

Faculty, in the classroom and in conference, will encourage free discussion, inquiry, and expression as long as such is within the scope of the course they are teaching. Student performance will be evaluated solely on an academic basis, not on opinions or conduct in matters unrelated to academic standards as noted in [Student Handbook](#).

Academic Misconduct & Disruptive Behavior (Student Handbook, 9.4.1)

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. Classroom behavior that interferes with either the instructor's ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to profit from the instructional program as noted in the [Student Handbook](#).

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

Texas A&M University–San Antonio is committed to equitable access for all students. Students with disabilities or learning barriers may be eligible for accommodations and are encouraged to contact Disability Support Services early in the semester.

Location: CAB 210 | [DSS Email](#) | Phone: (210) 784-1335.

Jaguar Writing Center

The Writing Center provides free support for writing, presentations, reading strategies, and academic skills.

Location: CAB 208 | [Jaguar Writing Center Email](#) | Phone: (210) 784-1332.

Course Grade Assignments (At a Glance)

Assignments	Brief Description	Points
Essay Exam 1	Explain, compare, and analyze sociological theories from the early course readings through short and extended essay responses.	40 pts
Essay Exam 2	Apply sociological theory from later course readings to a lived experience through a reflective analytical essay.	40 pts
Concept Map Presentation	Visually explain one key theoretical concept from an assigned reading and discuss its broader sociological significance.	20pts
Theoretical Analysis Presentation	Apply one sociological theory to a contemporary social issue or event using a <i>New York Times</i> article.	60 pts
Participation	Demonstrate consistent attendance and meaningful engagement through discussion, active listening, and connections to course readings.	20 pts
Total Points		180 pts

Grading Scale: Points to Letter Grades

162 – 180 = A

144 – 161.5 = B

126 – 143.5 = C

108 – 125.5 = D

Below 108 = F

Course Grade Assignments (Detailed)

Essay Examinations – 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. See below for grading criteria.

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

Covers early course readings (i.e. 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 [American Sociological Association's \(ASA\) citation style](#) for in-text citations and reference section.

Exam 1 Grading Criteria:

- a.) Understanding of readings/theorists – 10 pts
- b.) Analysis (connecting theory to examples) – 10 pts
- c.) Comparison/synthesis across theorists/ideas – 10 pts
- d.) Grammar & organization (thesis, structure, ASA style) – 10 pts

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

This essay will be at least 500 words, and it requires you to apply theory to a personal, lived experience (choose reading 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 [American Sociological Association's \(ASA\) citation style](#) for in-text citations and reference section.

Exam 2 Grading Criteria:

- a.) Understanding of theory (2 assigned readings explained) – 10 pts
- b.) Application of theoretical frameworks/concepts to lived experience – 10 pts
- c.) Communication of thesis & arguments (e.g. clear, logical development) – 10 pts
- d.) Grammar & organization (e.g. 500 word minimum, ASA references) – 10 pts

Concept Map Presentation (Creative & Visualization Skills) – 20 pts

You will create one concept map in Canva based on an assigned course reading and deliver a brief 3-minute presentation during a WebEx class meeting. Your goal is to visually explain one key theoretical concept and show why it matters for understanding society. This is not a summary of the reading; instead, focus on breaking down one important idea and connecting it to broader social dynamics. Multiple students are expected to sign up for the same reading, which allows the class to see how individuals may interpret the same material differently and develop their own understanding of a concept. Sign up early via email to select your reading and presentation date.

Concept Map Grading Criteria:

- 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 Presentation (Analytical, Inference, & Communication Skills) – 60 pts

For this project, you will select a *New York Times* article through A&M–SA Library access and use one sociological theory from the course to analyze a contemporary social issue or event. The goal is not to summarize the article, but to show how theory helps explain the social forces, relationships, institutions, or processes at work. Your analysis should reveal what the theoretical perspective helps us see that may not be immediately obvious. You will present your analysis in a brief 10-minute presentation using approximately 5–7 slides created in Canva, PowerPoint, or Google Slides. Think of it as an analytical story: introduce the issue, establish your theoretical perspective, apply the theory, and conclude by explaining what your analysis teaches us about society.

Presentation Guide & Grading Criteria

Introduction – 10 pts

Briefly introduce the social issue or event from your New York Times article and provide enough context for the class to understand what is happening.

Thesis & Theoretical Perspective – 10 pts

Present a clear thesis identifying the sociological theory you will use and what that perspective helps you examine or explain.

Sociological Analysis – 20 pts

Apply the theory to the issue by developing 2–3 extended analytical points that explain how and why the theory helps interpret the issue. Use concepts, ideas, or brief quotations from assigned course readings to support your analysis. This should be the main focus of your presentation.

Conclusion – 10 pts

Explain what your theoretical analysis reveals about the issue and why those insights matter for understanding society more broadly.

References – 10 pts

Include your New York Times article and assigned course reading(s) in [American Sociological Association's \(ASA\) citation style](#).

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

Participation is based on consistent attendance, preparation, and meaningful engagement throughout the semester. Students are expected to complete assigned readings before class, listen actively to others, contribute relevant ideas or questions, and make connections between course readings, theoretical concepts, and class discussion. Participation is assessed on both the consistency and quality of engagement, not simply how often a student speaks. Attendance is necessary for participation, but attendance alone does not constitute active participation.

Participation Assessment Criteria:

- a.) High Participation = 20 pts Consistently attends class prepared and actively engages in meaningful discussion. Contributions demonstrate familiarity with assigned readings, make relevant connections to theoretical concepts or examples, and help advance class discussion. The student also demonstrates active listening and engagement with others' ideas.
- b.) Moderate Participation = 15 pts Regularly attends class and periodically contributes to discussion. Contributions are generally relevant to course readings or theoretical concepts, although engagement may be less consistent or developed throughout the semester.
- c.) Low Participation = 10 pts Attendance and/or engagement is inconsistent. The student seldom contributes to discussion, asks questions, or demonstrates connections to assigned readings and theoretical concepts.
- d.) No Participation = 0 pts The student does not meaningfully participate in course discussions or demonstrate sustained engagement with assigned readings and class activities throughout the semester.

Course Schedule: Readings, Exams, & Due Dates

WEEK 1

Why is Theory Important? Studying the Social Charles Wright Mills /Emile Durkheim

August 26, Wednesday (WebEx Meeting)

- Course Introduction
- Read via Blackboard Course Content
 - Jennifer Correa, “Importance and Underpinnings of Theory,” pp. 1-2.
- Read A&M-San Antonio Library:
 - Charles Wright Mills’s chapter on [“The Promise”](#) pp. 3-11.
- 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 discussions on Mills’ [Sociological Imagination](#) and Durkheim’s [Social Facts](#).

WEEK 2

Structural Functionalist Theory Mills/Durkheim (cont.)

September 2, 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 discussions on [Egoistic and Altruistic Forms](#) and [Anomic and Fatalistic Forms](#) of Suicide.

WEEK 3

Structural Functionalist Theory Durkheim (cont.)

September 9, 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, Karl Marx, “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844,” pp. 17-26.
- Watch discussion on Karl Marx’s [Class Struggle](#) and [Alienation](#).

WEEK 4
Marxian Theory
Karl Marx: Labor & Alienation

September 16, 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, Max Weber, "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism," pp. 50-58.
- Watch discussion on Max Weber's [The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism](#).

WEEK 5
Weberian Theory
Max Weber: Protestantism & Capitalism/Essay Exam 1

September 23, 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. Exam 1 will be emailed via Blackboard Announcement by 8:30 p.m. Exam 1 is due by Wednesday, September 30th 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 discussion on Mead and Goffman as part of [Symbolic Interaction](#) theory.

WEEK 6
Symbolic Interaction Theory
Mead & Goffman/ Essay Exam 1 Due

September 30, 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.
- 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 discussion on Foucault's [The History of Sexuality, Volume 1](#).

WEEK 7
Power Theory
Michel Foucault: Power & Sexuality

October 7, 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, WEB Du Bois, "The Souls of Black Folk," pp. 264-270.
- Watch discussion on [What is Postcolonialism?](#) and DuBois's [The Souls of Black Folk](#).

WEEK 8
Postcolonial Theories on Race
W.E.B. DuBois: Race & Identity

October 14, Wednesday (WebEx Meeting)

- Date Open for Students' Discussion of Concept Map
 - Concept Map Options: DuBois's "The Souls of Black Folk"
- Read via Textbook:
 - Concise Reader, Arlie Hochschild, "Emotion Work, Feeling Rules and Social Structure," pp. 231-232.
 - Concise Reader, Dorothy Smith, "The Conceptual Practices of Power: A Feminist Sociology of Knowledge," pp. 233-238.

WEEK 9
Feminist Theory
Arlie Hochschild: Emotion/Dorothy Smith: Relations of Ruling/ Essay Exam 2

October 21, Wednesday (WebEx Meeting)

- Date Open for Students' Discussion of Concept Map
 - Concept Map Options: Hochschild's "Emotion Work..." OR Smith's "The Conceptual Practices."
- Essay Exam 2 Discussion: Discuss Format for Exam 2. Exam 2 will be emailed via Blackboard Announcement by 8:30 p.m. Exam 2 is due by Wednesday, October 28th at 11:59 p.m. via Blackboard Submission.

WEEK 10

Begin Work on Theoretical Analysis Projects/Essay Exam 2 Due

October 28, Wednesday (WebEx Meeting)

- Essay Exam 2 Due: Submit your Exam 2 by 11: 59 p.m. in Blackboard under Exams & Quizzes.
- 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

Theoretical Analysis Project Check-In

November 4, Wednesday (WebEx Meeting)

- Theoretical Analysis Project Check-In: Professor will review individual student progress. Students should be prepared to show and discuss their developing article selection, theoretical framework, and analysis.

WEEK 12

Theoretical Analysis Project Progress Review

November 11, Wednesday (WebEx Meeting)

- Theoretical Analysis Project Final Progress Review: Students should arrive with a nearly complete project and be prepared to show and discuss their analysis, slides, and remaining questions.

WEEK 13

Theoretical Analysis Student Presentations (Day 1)

November 18, Wednesday (WebEx Meeting)

- Theoretical Analysis Presentations: Approximately 10-11 students will present their work to the class; each student will have 10 minutes total for their presentation.

November 26th – November 28th Thanksgiving Break

WEEK 14

Theoretical Analysis Student Presentations (Day 2)

December 2, Wednesday (WebEx Meeting)

- Theoretical Analysis Presentations: Approximately 10-11 students will present their work to the class; each student will have 10 minutes total for their presentation.

