

# **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, 4:00–6:45 pm

## **Course Description**

### **The Power of Theory: From Ideas to the Forces that Shape Society**

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 class roadmap and may be updated as needed; any major changes 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 course assigned 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. 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 providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. Students with disabilities or who experience learning barriers may be eligible for academic accommodations and should contact Disability Support Services early in the semester to discuss their access needs. If elements of this course present barriers to access, please notify me so that we can explore reasonable adjustments. Location: CAB 210 | Email: [dsupport@tamusa.tamus.edu](mailto:dsupport@tamusa.tamus.edu) | Phone: (210) 784-1335.

## 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](mailto:tutoring@tamusa.edu) | Phone: (210) 784-1332.

## Course Grade Assessments

### 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 [ASA Guide Link](#) 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 no less than 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 [ASA Guide Link](#) 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 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 Wednesdays between Weeks 2–9 (see Course Schedule). 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. See below for grading criteria.

### **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 (Analytical, Inference, & Communication Skills) – 60 pts**

For this project, you will choose a New York Times article (through free A&M-SA access as a student via [library](#) under “Research and Databases,” then “Databases by Type,” then “Newspaper”) use a sociological theory from class to analyze it. Then, you'll deliver a brief 10-minute class presentation. 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, or Google Slides. 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 sociologically matters. See below for grading criteria.

### **Theoretical Analysis Grading Criteria:**

- a.) Introduction: Briefly explain the social issue or event from your NYT article. – 10 pts
- b.) Thesis: State which theory you are using and how it helps analyze the issue. – 10 pts
- c.) Soc Analysis: Apply the theory to show what it reveals about the issue). – 20 pts
- d.) Conclusion: Summarize what your analysis teaches us about society. – 10 pts
- e.) References: Cite your NYT article and course reading(s) in ASA style. – 10 pts

## Thematic Analysis Content Slide Guide:

### 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 assigned readings (Dillon or other course assigned readings).
- Use [ASA Guide Link](#)

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

Your participation grade is based on attendance and level of engagement during class, including active listening, contributing to discussions, and asking questions. Consistent attendance and effort to connect with lectures and the textbook are essential. Meaningful participation is relevant to course content, and productive participation shows critical thinking that helps move discussion forward. Being in attendance matters, but participation is more than attendance alone. See below for assessment criteria.

### Participation Assessment Criteria:

- a.) High Participation = 20 pts (A student frequently participates in meaningful & productive discussion regarding lecture/textbook during class meetings)
- b.) Moderate Participation = 15 pts (A student periodically participates in meaningful & productive discussion regarding lecture/textbook during class meetings)
- c.) Low Participation = 10 pts (A student seldomly participates in meaningful & productive discussion regarding lecture/textbook during class meetings)
- d.) No Participation = 0 pts (A student never participates in any meaningful & productive discussion or exchange throughout entire semester).

## 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 Schedule: Readings, Exams, & Due Dates

## WEEK 1

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

#### January 21, 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.)

#### January 28, 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.)

#### February 4, 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**

**February 11, 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**

**February 18, 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, February 25<sup>th</sup> 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**

**February 25, 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**

**March 4, 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**

**March 18, 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**

**March 25, 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 will be emailed via Blackboard  
Announcement by 8 p.m. Exam 2 is due by Wednesday, April 1<sup>st</sup> at 11:59 p.m. via Blackboard Submission.

## WEEK 10

### Work on Theoretical Analysis Projects/Essay Exam 2 Due

#### April 1, 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

### Work on Theoretical Analysis Projects

#### April 8, 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

#### April 15, 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)

#### April 22, 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

### Theoretical Analysis Student Presentations (Day 2)

#### April 29, 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.

