

THE EDUCATION UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

Course Outline

Part I

Programme Title	: All Undergraduate Programmes
Programme QF Level	: 5
Course Title	: Social Theory for Critical Thinking
Course Code	: SSC2253
Department	: Social Sciences and Policy Studies
Credit Points	: 3
Contact Hours	: 39
Pre-requisite(s)	: NIL
Medium of Instruction	: English
Course Level	: 2

Part II

The University's Graduate Attributes and seven Generic Intended Learning Outcomes (GILOs) represent the attributes of ideal EdUHK graduates and their expected qualities respectively. Learning outcomes work coherently at the University (GILOs), programme (Programme Intended Learning Outcomes) and course (Course Intended Learning Outcomes) levels to achieve the goal of nurturing students with important graduate attributes.

In gist, the Graduate Attributes for Sub-degree, Undergraduate, Taught Postgraduate, Professional Doctorate and Research Postgraduate students consist of the following three domains (i.e. in short "PEER & I"):

- Professional Excellence;
- Ethical Responsibility; &
- Innovation.

The descriptors under these three domains are different for the three groups of students in order to reflect the respective level of Graduate Attributes.

The seven GILOs are:

1. Problem Solving Skills
2. Critical Thinking Skills
3. Creative Thinking Skills
- 4a. Oral Communication Skills
- 4b. Written Communication Skills
5. Social Interaction Skills
6. Ethical Decision Making
7. Global Perspectives

1. Course Synopsis

This course aims to enable students to use classical and contemporary social theoretical perspectives to engage in critical analyses of the contemporary social issues of capitalism, bureaucracy and rationalization, religion and ritual, authority and power, the nation-state, social identity, alienation, anomie, stigma, social interaction, deviance, civil society, gender, labor, self, democracy, and social movements. Students will be engaged in reading and discussion of short selections of primary material representative of social thinkers including Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Anthony Giddens, Michel Foucault, George Herbert Mead, Erving Goffman, Howard Becker, Manuel Castells, and others. The primary learning objective is for students to develop their capacity for critical and creative thinking on major social issues raised in writings by these social theorists. Whole class and small-group discussions will allow students to extend ideas from theory to students' knowledge and real-life experience and observations.

2. Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

CILO ₁	read and discuss selections of primary source materials from classical and contemporary social theorists on issues of contemporary societal concern
CILO ₂	analyze contemporary social issues in light of different social theoretical perspectives
CILO ₃	challenge commonsense perceptions and understandings and their own thinking on contemporary social issues
CILO ₄	apply knowledge of classical and contemporary social theories to ask and answer significant questions about contemporary social issues

3. Content, CILOs and Teaching & Learning Activities

Course Content	CILOs	Suggested Teaching & Learning Activities
<p><i>Selected Classical and Contemporary Social Theorists Writings on the following concepts:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Structure and Agency• Capitalism and labor• Bureaucracy and Rationalization• Religion and Ritual• Authority and Power• The Nation-State• Social Identity• Alienation -- Anomie -- Stigma• Social Interaction• Deviance• Self• Gender and feminism• Civil Society and Democracy• Social Movements	CILO _{1,2,3,4}	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Lecture, reading and analysis of teaching materials, and video analysis

4. Assessment

Assessment Tasks	Weighting (%)	CILO
(a) Tutorial discussions: Students are required to attend three tutorial sessions and participate in discussions. Reading materials and discussion questions will be announced in due course.	30%	<i>CILO_{1, 2,3 ,4}</i>
(b) Reflective journal (around 1000 words): Students are required to write a commentary on one of the films or documentaries shown in lectures.	20%	<i>CILO_{1, 2,3,4}</i>
(c) Written essay (around 1600 words): Students are required to write an individual essay on a topic related to the course. The list of topics will be announced in due course.	50%	<i>CILO_{1, 2, 3,4}</i>

5. Use of Generative AI in Course Assessments

Please select one option only that applies to this course:

Not Permitted: In this course, the use of generative AI tools is not allowed for any assessment tasks.

Permitted: In this course, generative AI tools may be used in some or all assessment tasks. Instructors will provide specific instructions, including any restrictions or additional requirements (e.g., proper acknowledgment, reflective reports), during the first lesson and in relevant assessment briefs.

6. Required Text(s)

Nil

7. Recommended Readings

Allan, Kenneth (2013) *Explorations in Classical Sociological Theory: Seeing the Social World*. California: Sage.

Andersen, Margaret L., Logio, Kim A., Taylor, Howard F. (2015). *Understanding Society: An Introductory Reader 5th ed.* Cengage Learning.

Appelrouth, Scott and Edles, Laura Desfor (2012) *Classical and Contemporary Social Theory*. California: Sage.

Baert, Patrick and da Silva, Filipe Carreira (2010) *Social Theory in the Twentieth Century and Beyond*. Cambridge: Polity.

Best, Shaun (2003) *A Beginner's Guide to Social Theory*. London: Sage.

Bratton, John and Denham, David (2024). *Capitalism and Classical Social Theory*. University of Toronto Press.

Calhoun, Craig (et al.) (2012) *Classical Sociological Theory*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.

Calhoun, Craig (et al.) (2012) *Contemporary Sociological Theory*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.

Chambers, Clare (2019). Gender. In Catriona McKinnon et al. (eds.). *Issues in Political Theory 4th ed.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Crossley, Nick (2005). *Key Concepts in Critical Social Theory*. London: Sage Publications.

Delanty, Gerard (2005) *Social Science: Philosophical and Methodological Foundations*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Dillon, Michele (ed.) (2021). *Concise Reader in Sociological Theory*. Wiley.

Elliott, Anthony (ed.) (2010) *The Routledge Companion to Social Theory*. London: Routledge.

Elliott, Anthony (2014) *Contemporary Social Theory: An Introduction*. London: Routledge.

Elliott, Anthony and Lemert, Charles (2014) *Introduction to Contemporary Social Theory*. London: Routledge.

Foucault, Michel (1994). *Ethics: subjectivity and truth, essential works of Foucault 1954-84, volume one*. London: Penguin Books.

Gerth, H. H. and Mills, C. Wright (1964). *From Max Weber: essays in sociology*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Giddens, Anthony (1995) *Politics, Sociology and Social Theory: Encounters with Classical and Contemporary Social Thought*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Go, Julian (ed.) (2013) *Postcolonial Sociology*. Bingley: Emerald.

Inglis, David (2012) *An Invitation to Social Theory*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Jenks, Chris (ed.) (1998). *Core Sociological Dichotomies*. London: Sage Publications.

Joas, Hans (2009) *Social Theory: Twenty Introductory Lectures*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jones, Pip, Bradbury, Liz and LeBoutillier, Shaun (2011) *Introducing Social Theory*. Cambridge: Polity.

Miles, Steven (2001) *Social Theory in the Real World*. London: Sage.

Law, Alex (2011). *Key concepts in classical social theory*. London: Sage.

Loyal, Steven & Malesevic, Sinisa (2021). *Contemporary Sociological Theory*. London: Sage.

Newman, David M. (2017). *Sociology: exploring the architecture of everyday life 11th ed.* London: Sage.

Owen, David (2019). Power. In Catriona McKinnon et al. (eds.). *Issues in Political Theory 4th ed.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Ransome, Paul (2010) *Social Theory for Beginners*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Taylor, Charles (1989) *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. Harvard: Harvard University Press.

Ritzer, George (2010) *Contemporary Sociological Theory and Its Classical Roots*. New York: McGraw Hill Higher Education.

Wolff, Jonathan (2002). *Why Read Marx Today?* New York: Oxford University Press.

8. Related Web Resources

Nil

9. Related Journals

Nil

10. Academic Honesty

The University upholds the principles of honesty in all areas of academic work. We expect our students to carry out all academic activities honestly and in good faith. Please refer to the *Policy on Academic Honesty, Responsibility and Integrity* (<https://www.eduhk.hk/re/uploads/docs/00000000016336798924548BbN5>). Students should familiarize themselves with the Policy.

11. Others

Nil

Updated July 2025