

SOU22061 — Social Theory 1

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Module Information	
Module Code	SOU22061
Module Title	Social Theory 1
Department	Sociology
Year Group	Senior Fresh
Module Personnel	Social Theory 1
Academic Year	2026–27
Credit Weighting	5 credits
Semester	Semester 1
Contact Hours	2 lectures + 1 tutorial per week

Module Content	
Module Description	The objective of social theory 1 is to provide students with a set of concepts and an analytical framework that you can use to understand and explain social and economic phenomena. The course identifies core issues in the theory of the social sciences, particularly sociology, and the conceptual devices which have emerged to solve them. We begin by examining what we mean when we talk about social theory and the role it plays in the explanation of social patterns and processes. What are the ‘objects’ of social analysis and what role should the ‘subjectivity’ of individuals play in social explanation? What role should explanations based on the ‘function’ of the social process or its role in a ‘social system’ play in understanding human groups and societies? Should all social explanation be grounded in the intentions and behaviours of individuals or can we identify structured patterns in social life which should also play a role? If so, what are these structures and how do we conceptualise them and use them in social explanation?
Module Learning Aims	• Understand the different forms of explanation in the social sciences, particularly sociology. • Know why sociology uses structural explanations.

Module Content

	• Understand the difference between types of social structures. • Be able to understand and critically assess 'rational choice' theories of explanation. • Understand the dynamics of choice and uncertainty in social interaction. • Provide examples of how social action and interaction are influenced by and create social patterns. • Deploy the different mechanisms presented in the explanation of novel sociological problems.
Learning Outcomes	• Understand the different forms of explanation used in the social sciences. • Know the components of explanations formed using macro-micro-macro links. • Understand the different forms of structural explanation. • Critically assess different models of human rationality and choice. • Understand the role of resources, power and social interests in explanation. • Understand the dynamics of choice and uncertainty in social interaction. • Explain the bases of cooperation between unrelated people and group solidarity. • Deploy the different concepts presented in the explanation of novel sociological problems.
Indicative Reading / Resources	• Hollis, M. (1987) <i>The Cunning of Reason</i>, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. • Boudon, R. (1981) <i>The Logic of Social Action: An Introduction to Sociological Analysis</i>, Routledge & Kegan Paul, Boston. • Coleman, J.S. (1990) <i>Foundations of Social Theory</i>, Belknap, Cambridge, Mass.

Assessment

Assessment Components	Written Assignment (65%) Multiple Choice Term Test (20%) Tutorial Participation (15%)
Assessment Details	

Additional Information	
Prerequisites	Introduction to Sociology 1 + 2
Co-requisites	Social Theory 2
Any other information	