

Social Theory 2 | SOU22062

Year	Senior Freshman
ECTS Credits	5
Contact Hours	22
Co-requisite	SOU22061
Semester	2
Module Leader & Lecturer	Prof Richard Layte
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Module Outline:

The objective of the social theory module is to provide you 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? Can we regard societies as organisms with 'systems' and 'needs' and if not, why not? 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 Outcomes:

On successful completion of this module, you will have acquired the ability to:

- 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.

Assessment:

- 1500-word essay (65%)
- 40-item, 1-hour multiple choice term test (25%)
- Tutorial group participation (10%)

Recommended Reading List:

- Hollis, M. (1987) *The Cunning of Reason*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Hollis, M. (1994) *The Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Heath, A. (1976) *Rational Choice and Social Exchange: A Critique of Exchange Theory*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Coleman, J.S. (1990) *Foundations of Social Theory*, Belknap, Cambridge, Mass.