

SO245-15 Modern Social Theory

23/24

Department

Sociology

Level

Undergraduate Level 2

Module leader

Nicholas Gane

Credit value

15

Module duration

10 weeks

Assessment

100% coursework

Study location

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

This module aims to equip students with the skills and confidence to think about the social world in light of diverse perspectives in social theory. Students will be introduced to a few of the key perspectives that are influential in contemporary debates about the social world. We will explore connections and tensions between different perspectives and students will be encouraged to think about social theories as tools for thinking that emerge from real political struggles and in relation to social problems. Students will develop the knowledge to be able to choose between different theoretical perspectives when developing their own arguments and research. They will also develop advanced skills in textual interpretation and critical thinking, alongside team work, collaboration and discussion.

Students will also develop advanced skills in critical thinking and close textual reading. Student led reading groups will also foster skills in team work and discussion.

Module aims

To develop advanced skills in critical thinking, sociological imagination and awareness.

To provide students with an overview of key perspectives in twentieth century social theory, situating theoretical traditions in relation to each other and providing a firm foundation for further study in social and political theory.

To equip students with advanced skills to critique contemporary social issues.

Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

Week 1 – What is Social Theory and Why Do We Need It?

Week 2 - Marxist Cultural Theory: Fascism and Mass Deception

Week 3 - Post-structuralism 1: Pluralising Problems Beyond Capital

Week 4 - Post-structuralism 2: Biopower

Week 5 - Affect Theory 1: Returning to the Body and Vitality

Week 7 - Affect Theory 2: Cruel Optimism

Week 8 - Indigenous Theory 1: Challenging Coloniality in the University

Week 9 – Indigenous Theory 2: Grounded Normativity and Radical Resurgence

Week 10 - Thinking With Theory in and Beyond Essay Writing

Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Advanced skills in critical thinking about modern power and cultural analysis.
- Advanced skills in essay writing.
- Awareness of and ability to discuss contemporary debates in social theory concerning the nature of power.
- Awareness of and ability to discuss contemporary issues in class power.
- In-depth understanding and critical analysis of a specific topic in the sociology/social theory of class power.

Indicative reading list

Adorno, Theodor W. The culture industry: Selected essays on mass culture. Routledge, 2005.

Blencowe, Claire. 2018 'Foucault & Political Sociology' in Outhwaite & Turner Sage Handbook in Political Sociology Sage, UK.

Foucault, M. and Trombadori, D., 1991. Remarks on Marx: Conversations with Duccio Trombadori. Semiotext(e).

Tyler, Imogen. 2013. Revolting Subjects: Social Abjection and Resistance in Neoliberal Britain.

Deleuze, Giles and Guattari, Felix. 1972. AntiOedipus

Berlant, Lauren. 2011. Cruel Optimism.

Césaire, Aimé. Discourse on colonialism. NYU Press, 2001

Smith, L. (1999/ revised 2012) Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples, Zed Books: London

Simpson, Leanne Betasamosake, 2017. As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Resistance as Radical Resurgence

International

The module introduces the tradition of social theory which is an international movement of thought. Care is taken in the design of the module to make the module relevant to international student body . This is the case in terms of selecting examples - where an effort is made to match with students' internationally diverse interests, and also in terms of the traditions of thought.

Subject specific skills

- knowledge and critical understanding of the well-established principles of social theory, and of the way in which those principles have developed
- knowledge of the main methods of enquiry in sociology and social theory and ability to evaluate critically the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems in sociology and social research
- use a range of established social theory techniques to initiate and undertake critical analysis of information, and to propose solutions to problems arising from that analysis
- effectively communicate information, arguments and analysis in a variety of forms to specialist and non-specialist audiences and deploy key techniques of social theory analysis effectively

Transferable skills

- ability to apply underlying concepts and principles of sociological-relational thinking, and critical social analysis outside the context in which they were first studied, including, where appropriate, the application of those principles in an employment context .

-critical thinking.

-textual interpretation and analysis.

-teamwork, co-operation and discussion.

- an understanding of the limits of their knowledge, and how this influences analyses and interpretations based on that knowledge.
- have an enhanced capacity to undertake independent research, develop existing skills and acquire new competences that will enable them to assume significant responsibility within organisations.
- attain the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and decision-making, in particular being better able to think critically about power relations at play in all social processes including knowledge production.

Study

Study time

Type	Required
Lectures	9 sessions of 1 hour (6%)
Seminars	9 sessions of 1 hour (6%)
Other activity	7 hours (5%)
Private study	125 hours (83%)
Total	150 hours

Private study description

125 hours private study will be spent reading and writing for the seminars and assessment.

Other activity description

Student led reading group, meeting in groups of 4-5, to discuss the weekly reading in advance of the seminar.

The student led reading groups will feed directly into seminar preparation and the group work assessment.

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

You do not need to pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Students can register for this module without taking any assessment.

Assessment group A3

Assessment component	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
Assessed Essay	70%		Yes (extension)
Assessed essay. Questions set by the module convenor.			

Reassessment component is the same

	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
Assessment component			
Reading Group Portfolio	30%		Yes (extension)
Student led reading groups will meet each week and prepare critical reading notes on the weekly reading. A selection of these will be submitted and marked collectively as a group portfolio. The word limit will be 1000 words per group member, so the portfolio for a group including 5 members will be 5000 words.			
Reassessment component			
Critical Reading Notes			Yes (extension)
Summarise and critically evaluate one of the set seminar readings for the module.			

Feedback on assessment

Written comments and verbal feedback on formative written exercise. Verbal feedback on students' ideas, arguments and developing analyses during seminars. Written feedback on summative assessments.

Availability

Courses

This module is Core for:

- Year 2 of USOA-L301 BA in Sociology
- Year 2 of UCEA-Y205 Undergraduate Social Studies (Full-time)
- Year 2 of USOA-L314 Undergraduate Sociology and Criminology

This module is Core optional for:

- Year 2 of ULAA-ML34 BA in Law and Sociology (Qualifying Degree)
- Year 3 of UAS2-LM4A Undergraduate Health & Social Policy (2+2)
- Year 2 of UHIA-VL13 Undergraduate History and Sociology
- Year 2 of UHIA-VL15 Undergraduate History and Sociology (with a term in Venice)
- Year 2 of ULAA-M135 Undergraduate Law and Sociology
- Year 2 of ULAA-ML33 Undergraduate Law and Sociology
- Year 2 of UPOA-ML13 Undergraduate Politics and Sociology
- Year 2 of UIPA-L3L8 Undergraduate Sociology and Global Sustainable Development

This module is Optional for:

- Year 2 of USOA-L301 BA in Sociology

This module is Core option list A for:

- Year 3 of USX2-Y202 Undergraduate Social Studies [2 + 2]

This module is Core option list B for:

- UPDA-Y201 Undergraduate Social Studies (Part-time)
 - Year 1 of Y201 Social Studies
 - Year 2 of Y201 Social Studies
 - Year 3 of Y201 Social Studies
 - Year 4 of Y201 Social Studies
 - Year 5 of Y201 Social Studies
 - Year 6 of Y201 Social Studies
 - Year 7 of Y201 Social Studies
 - Year 8 of Y201 Social Studies
 - Year 9 of Y201 Social Studies

This module is Option list A for:

- Year 2 of ULAA-ML33 Undergraduate Law and Sociology

This module is Option list B for:

- USOA-L301 BA in Sociology
 - Year 2 of L305 Sociology with Specialism in Cultural Studies
 - Year 2 of L303 Sociology with Specialism in Gender Studies
- Year 2 of UPOA-ML13 Undergraduate Politics and Sociology

This module is Option list G for:

- Year 2 of UPHA-V7ML Undergraduate Philosophy, Politics and Economics