

Sociological Theory (Tutorials)

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1 Course Objectives

In this paper you will investigate a variety of theoretical perspectives on social life. Some perspectives examine how social structures are built up from individual action, whether driven by evolutionary psychology, decided by rational choice, or motivated by meaningful values. Others identify the emergent properties of social life, ranging from face-to-face interaction to social networks to systems of oppression. You will use these perspectives to investigate substantive problems. Why do social norms change? How do some groups manage to solve problems of collective action? What similarities exist between states and mafias? Throughout, you will learn how the insights of classical sociologists are being advanced in contemporary research.

2 Course Syllabus

Theoretical perspectives which may include rational choice; evolutionary psychology; interpersonal interaction; social integration and networks; functionalism. Substantive problems which may include stratification; gender; nationalism, race and ethnicity; collective action; norms; ideology; economic development; gangs and organized crime. Candidates will be expected to use theories to explain substantive problems.

3 Tutorial Syllabus

The list of topics for each tutorial week is provided below. Required readings and essay questions are available on the official reading list for this paper (see '218 Sociological Theory 24-25.pdf'). Each week, please select one essay question from the relevant topic and submit your essay at least 24 hours prior to the tutorial.

Weekly Tutorial Topics in Hilary 2025

1. Rational Choice
2. Interpersonal interaction
3. Norms
4. Social networks
5. Strategic interactions, games, and trust
6. Collective action
7. Gender
8. Micro and macro