

# SS5115: SOCIAL SCIENCES THEORIES FOR SOCIAL WORK

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## Effective Term

Semester B 2025/26

## Part I Course Overview

### Course Title

Social Sciences Theories for Social Work

### Subject Code

SS - Social and Behavioural Sciences

### Course Number

5115

### Academic Unit

Social and Behavioural Sciences (SS)

### College/School

College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CH)

### Course Duration

Non-standard Duration

### Other Course Duration

Pre-semester Workshop

### Credit Units

0

### Level

P5, P6 - Postgraduate Degree

### Medium of Instruction

English

### Medium of Assessment

English

### Prerequisites

Nil

### Precursors

Nil

### Equivalent Courses

Nil

### Exclusive Courses

Nil

## Part II Course Details

### Abstract

This course aims to introduce the foundational knowledge in social sciences for social work. Selected social sciences perspectives such as relational theory, attachment theory, theories of psychosocial development, social psychological theories, theories of abnormal psychological development, conflict theory, structural theories, feminist perspective, and post-modern perspectives will be taught and used for analysing social problems such as adolescent drug abuse, family violence, mental illness; and human predicaments such as death and dying, traumas, aggression and violence. Similarities and differences of selected perspectives will be highlighted, and the importance of a multi-dimensional understanding of and strategies in dealing with social problems and human predicaments will also be stressed. This is a supplementary course and is designed to help students who have little to no knowledge of social sciences to get familiarized with fundamental theories and concepts in selected disciplines in social sciences. The course is run in an intensive mode and is to be completed within the first four weeks of the semester, including weekends. Students who (1) are non-social sciences graduates, or (2) have taken either psychology or sociology but not the other, are required to complete this course. Students who have knowledge of basic psychology (i.e. Sessions 3-6) or sociology (Sessions 7-9) would only need to take the relevant sessions that they have not taken in their previous studies.

### Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

CILOs		Weighting (if app.)	DEC-A1	DEC-A2	DEC-A3
1	Identify the theoretical underpinnings of major social science perspectives for understanding social problems and human predicaments;	25	x	x	
2	Apply the theories to critically analysing social problems and human predicaments;	25	x	x	x
3	Examine critically the strengths and weaknesses of different social science theories for the understanding of social problems and human predicaments; and	25		x	x
4	Appreciate the multi-dimensional nature of understanding and solving social problems and human predicaments.	25	x	x	x

#### A1: Attitude

Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.

#### A2: Ability

Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to real-life problems.

#### A3: Accomplishments

Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.

### Learning and Teaching Activities (LTAs)

LTAs	Brief Description	CILO No.	Hours/week (if applicable)
1	LTA1: Lecture	Lectures are used to introduce the concepts of respective social science theories and perspectives and its application to social situations and problems. Evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of respective social science theories and perspectives will be carried out in the lectures	1, 2, 4
2	LTA2: Video Illustration	In order to stimulate students' understanding and application of learnt social science theories and perspectives to real-life situations and human predicaments, audio visual materials will be used to reach the said effects, in which documentaries, television series and related case and news reports are adopted to enhance students' learning.	2, 3, 4
3	LTA3: Group Discussion	Students will be divided into groups in the second part of the lecture to discuss the learnt social science theories and perspectives in that lecture through related topics and questions provided, which aims to enhance their usage and application of the core elements of the social science theories and perspectives learnt.	1, 3, 4

4	LTA4: Student Presentation	Student presentations allow students to form groups to present a topic that will have them apply a chosen theor(ies) to a specific social problem and issue as a theoretical framework to interpret that social problem and issue and act as the conceptual underpinnings for how to solve the social problem and issue in the chosen topic.	1, 2, 3, 4	
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**Assessment Tasks / Activities (ATs)**

	ATs	CILO No.	Weighting (%)	Remarks ("- " for nil entry)	Allow Use of GenAI?
1	AT1: Class participation Although this is a non-credit bearing as well as pass and fail course, for best enhancing students' sense in social sciences in order to better prepare their future learning in the social work program and practices after graduation, students are strongly encouraged to actively participate in the activities and discussion of the course.	1, 2, 3, 4	10	-Use AI to search academic ideas and clarify the correctness of academic discussions	Yes

2	<p>AT2: Group Presentation</p> <p>In the final session (session 10), students are required to form a 4/5-person learning group and select at least one theory/ perspective, or more than one for comparative purpose, to analyze a social problem/ issue/ phenomenon. Students should give background and significance of the selected social problem/ issue/ phenomenon, how the theory(ies)/ perspective(s) are related to it, and also need to elucidate the selected topic theoretically in terms of its etiology causes, and contents, as well as consequences and solutions if applicable. Example social problems/ issues/ phenomena include individual-level ones, e.g. mental and behavioral problems, homelessness, alcohol and drugs use, sex orientation; family-level ones, e.g. divorce, single-parent family, family violence, the working poor; and societal-level ones, e.g. educational system, social discrimination and inequality, as well as cross-level</p>	1, 2, 3, 4	20	-Use AI to search literature, check the correctness of theories integrated to explain real social contexts, and grammar check	Yes
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3	<p>AT3: Individual term paper</p> <p>At the end of the course, students need to write and submit a term paper in around 1500 words. As mentioned forehand, each student should select a social problem/ issue/ phenomenon as the discussion in the paper, and apply learned theory(ies)/ perspective(s) to analyze it adequately and theoretically, or even comparatively, which means students need to employ the social science theory(ies)/ perspective(s) to expound the nature and contents of the selected problem/ issue/ phenomenon. The student should give rationale why he/ she selects this topic, how it is related to social work profession, and what is the background and nature about this social problem/ issue/ phenomenon, as well as what are the relationships between the selected topic and relevant theory(ies)/ perspective(s). In addition, solutions and recommendations for tackling the problem/ issue/ phenomenon are encouraged</p>	1, 2, 3, 4	70	-	No
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**Continuous Assessment (%)**

100

**Assessment Rubrics (AR)**

**Assessment Task**

1. Class participation (10%) (for students admitted before Semester A 2022/23 and in Semester A 2024/25 & thereafter)

**Criterion**

1. capacity for showing active participation in class discussion and idea exchange regarding the application of social science theories in the societal settings

**Pass (P)**

(P) Show active and constructive participation in class discussion and idea exchange

**Failure (F)**

(F) Show inactive or low participation in class discussion and idea exchange

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**Assessment Task**

2. Group Presentation (20%) (for students admitted before Semester A 2022/23 and in Semester A 2024/25 & thereafter)

**Criterion**

2.1 capacity of showing understanding of the core elements of social science theories selected for a social issue or topic

2.2 capacity of showing the application of the social science theories selected in the social issue or topic

2.3 capacity of using a critical view to evaluate the social science theories selected regarding its strengths and weaknesses in relation to the social issue or topic

**Pass (P)**

(P) Show capability of understanding the social science theories selected for application in a social issue or topic, and can present the contents clearly and logically

**Failure (F)**

(F) Lack capability of understanding the social science theories selected for application in a social issue or topic, and can present the contents clearly and logically

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**Assessment Task**

3. Individual term paper (70%) (for students admitted before Semester A 2022/23 and in Semester A 2024/25 & thereafter)

**Criterion**

3.1 capacity of showing understanding of the core elements of social science theories selected for a social issue or topic

3.2 capacity of showing the application of the social science theories selected in the social issue or topic

3.3 capacity of using a critical view to evaluate the social science theories selected regarding its strengths and weaknesses in relation to the social issue or topic

3.4 capacity of knowing how the application of social science theories to help the social work profession in doing judgement, orientations, service delivery, and practices

**Pass (P)**

(P) Show capability of using and the selected social science theories to interpret and analyze a social issue or topic, and see how these selected theories that can enhance the social work profession, as well as be able to realize the strengths and weaknesses of the selected theories

**Failure (F)**

(F) Lack capability of using and the selected social science theories to interpret and analyze a social issue or topic, and see how these selected theories that can enhance the social work profession, as well as be able to realize the strengths and weaknesses of the selected theories

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**Assessment Task**

1. Class participation (10%) (for students admitted from Semester A 2022/23 to Summer Term 2024)

**Criterion**

1. capacity for showing active participation in class discussion and idea exchange regarding the application of social science theories in the societal settings.

**Pass (P)**

(P) Show active and constructive participation in class discussion and idea exchange

**Failure (F)**

(F) Show inactive or low participation in class discussion and idea exchange

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**Assessment Task**

2. Group Presentation (20%) (for students admitted from Semester A 2022/23 to Summer Term 2024)

**Criterion**

2.1 capacity of showing understanding of the core elements of social science theories selected for a social issue or topic

2.2 capacity of showing the application of the social science theories selected in the social issue or topic

2.3 capacity of using a critical view to evaluate the social science theories selected regarding its strengths and weaknesses in relation to the social issue or topic

**Pass (P)**

(P) Show capability of understanding the social science theories selected for application in a social issue or topic, and can present the contents clearly and logically

**Failure (F)**

(F) Lack capability of understanding the social science theories selected for application in a social issue or topic, and can present the contents clearly and logically

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**Assessment Task**

3. Individual term paper (70%) (for students admitted from Semester A 2022/23 to Summer Term 2024)

**Criterion**

3.1 capacity of showing understanding of the core elements of social science theories selected for a social issue or topic

3.2 capacity of showing the application of the social science theories selected in the social issue or topic

3.3 capacity of using a critical view to evaluate the social science theories selected regarding its strengths and weaknesses in relation to the social issue or topic

3.4 capacity of knowing how the application of social science theories to help the social work profession in doing judgement, orientations, service delivery, and practices

**Pass (P)**

(P) Show capability of using and the selected social science theories to interpret and analyze a social issue or topic, and see how these selected theories that can enhance the social work profession, as well as be able to realize the strengths and weaknesses of the selected theories

**Failure (F)**

(F) Lack capability of using and the selected social science theories to interpret and analyze a social issue or topic, and see how these selected theories that can enhance the social work profession, as well as be able to realize the strengths and weaknesses of the selected theories

**Part III Other Information****Keyword Syllabus**Session 1

Social Sciences theories (I): The nature of social sciences and its reasoning and lens on understanding of social phenomenon/ problems; Systems theory

Session 2

Social Sciences theories (II): Family dynamics and functions, Problems in contemporary families, and its theories and perspectives

Session 3

Psychological theories (I & II): What is psychology? Psychology as science; Basic psychological perspectives: Psychoanalytic/ psychodynamic and humanistic approaches; behavioural and cognitive approaches, including learning, memory, language and thought, and cognitive development

Session 4

Psychological theories (III): Theories/ perspectives related to social psychology: socialization, group formation and conflicts, aggression and violence, prejudice

Session 5

Psychological theories (IV): Theories/ perspectives related to abnormal psychology: anxiety disorders, mood disorders, substance-related disorders, childhood disorders

Session 6

Applying psychological theories/ perspectives to social problems and human predicaments

Session 7

Sociological theories (I): What is sociology? Structural-functionalism approach and symbolic interactionism

Session 8

Sociological theories (II): Conflict Theory; Social constructionism

Session 9

Sociological theories (III): Multi-culture and diversity; social class and social stratification

Session 10

Towards a multi-dimensional perspective in understanding social problems and human predicaments

**Reading List****Compulsory Readings**

	<b>Title</b>
1	Session 1 - Dale, O. et al. (2009). Human behavior and the social environment: Social systems theory. Boston: Pearson Education. Chapter 3: Social systems theory: General features.
2	Session 1 - Perry, J. A., & Perry, E. K. (2016) (14th Edition). Contemporary society: An introduction to social science. Boston: Pearson Education. Chapter 1: Through the lens of science
3	Session 2 - Dale, O. et al. (2009). Human behavior and the social environment: Social systems theory. Boston: Pearson Education. Chapter 9: The family as a system of roles.
4	Session 2 - Saxbe D. E. et al. (2013). Understanding conflicts in families: Theoretical frameworks and future directions. In Mark A. Fine and Frank D. Fincham (Eds), Handbook of family theories: A content-based approach (pp. 169-189, chapter 10). New York: Routledge.
5	Session 3 - Comer R. et al. (2013). Psychology. West Sussex, UK: Wiley. Chapter 1: Psychology: Yesterday and Today; Chapter 2: Psychology as a science.

6	Session 4 - Crisp, R. J. et al. (2010). <i>Essential social psychology</i> . London: SAGE. Chapter 5: Group processes; Chapter 7: Prejudice; Chapter 8: Intergroup relations; Chapter 9: Aggression.
7	Session 5 - Barlow, D. H., & Durand, V. M. (2012). <i>Abnormal Psychology: An Integrative Approach</i> . Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. Chapter 5: Anxiety disorders; Chapter 7: Mood disorders & suicide; Chapter 11: Substance-related and impulse-control disorders.
8	Session 6 - Ransome, P. R. (2010). <i>Social theory for beginners</i> : Bristol. Policy Press. Chapter 6: Talcott Parsons, Functionalism and the social system; Chapter 7: Social interactionism and the real lives of social actors.
9	Session 7 - Ransome, P. R. (2010). <i>Social theory for beginners</i> . Bristol. Policy Press. Chapter 4: Karl Marx, capitalism and revolution; chapter 11: feminist social theory; chapter 13: theories of modernity and postmodernity.
10	Session 8 - Ransome, P. R. (2010). <i>Social theory for beginners</i> . Bristol: Policy Press. Chapter 4: Karl Marx, capitalism and revolution; chapter 11: feminist social theory; chapter 13: theories of modernity and postmodernity.
11	Session 9 - Sundar, P. & Ly M. (2013). Multiculturalism. In M. Gray, and S A. Webb (Eds), <i>Social work theories and methods</i> (chapter 10, pp. 126-136). Los Angles: SAGE.

### Additional Readings

Title	
1	Dolgon C., & Baker, C. (2011). <i>Social problems: A service learning approach</i> . Thousand Oaks CA.: Sage. Chapter 1: Do we make the world or does the world makes us? Concepts and theories.
2	Fiese B. H., & Hammons, A. (2013). Theories of family health: An integrative perspective and look towards the future. In Mark A. Fine and Frank D. Fincham (Eds), <i>Handbook of family theories: A content-based approach</i> (pp. 398-416, chapter 22). New York: Routledge.
3	Glassman W. E. & Hadad M (2009). <i>Approaches to psychology</i> . London: McGraw-Hill. Chapter 3: The behaviorist approach; Chapter 4: The cognitive approach; Chapter 5: The psychodynamic Approach; and Chapter 6: The humanistic approach. Greene, R. R. (1998). <i>Human behavior theory and social work practice</i> . New York: Aldine De Gruyter. Chapter 3: Classical psychoanalytical thought; Chapter 6: Cognitive theory for social work practice.
4	Glassman W. E. & Hadad M (2009). <i>Approaches to psychology</i> . London: McGraw-Hill. Chapter 3: The behaviorist approach; Chapter 4: The cognitive approach; Chapter 5: The psychodynamic Approach; and Chapter 6: The humanistic approach. Greene, R. R. (1998). <i>Human behavior theory and social work practice</i> . New York: Aldine De Gruyter. Chapter 3: Classical psychoanalytical thought; Chapter 6: Cognitive theory for social work practice.
5	Michener, H. A. et al. (2004). <i>Social psychology</i> . Belmont, CA.: Wadsworth. Chapter 3: Socialization; Chapter 6: Attitudes; Chapter 13: Group cohesion and conformity; Chapter 15: Intergroup conflict; Chapter 18: Deviant behavior and social reaction.
6	Oltmanns T. F., & Emery R. E. (2012). <i>Abnormal psychology</i> . Boston : Pearson. Chapter 16: Psychological disorders of childhood.
7	Schaefer, R. T. (2010). <i>Sociology</i> . New York: McGraw-Hill. Chapter 1: Understanding sociology.
8	Jones, P., Bradbury, L., & Boutillier S. L. (2011). <i>Introducing social theory</i> . Cambridge, UK: Polity. Chapter 8: Postmodernity, Postmodernism and its Critics.
9	Kerbo H. R. (2007). Social stratification. In C. D. Bryant, and D. L. Peck (Eds), <i>21st Century sociology: A reference handbook</i> (vol. 1, chapter 22, pp. 228-236). Thansand Oaks: SAGE.