

Module Guide

*THE SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION:
UNDERSTANDING SOCIETY
& SOCIAL ACTION*

Semester 2 2017-2018

DSS_4_TSI

School of Arts and Social Sciences

Level 4

Module Title: The Sociological Imagination:
Understanding Society & Social Action

Level: 1

Reference Number: DSS_4_TSI

Credit Value: 20 Credit

Student Study Hours: Contact hours 36
Student Managed Learning Hours: 80 hours 110

Pre-requisite Learning: None

Requisites/Excluded Combinations: None

Parent School: Law and Social Sciences
Parent Course: BSc (Honours) Sociology and
Sociology with Criminology

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Short Description

This module will introduce you to some of the main questions raised by sociologists. In doing so, the module invites you to explore significant aspects of the origins and development of social inquiry by engaging directly with specific pieces of writings by a number of key thinkers who have established what has been called the 'sociological tradition'. You are also invited to examine a number of relevant commentators. Together these writings will provide the material for you to enjoy familiarity with, and deepened understanding of, some key concepts as well as be exposed to the diversity of approaches to the study of human society. In general, therefore, the Module encourages you to develop what C Wright Mills famously described as 'the sociological imagination'.

Aims

The three principal aims of the Module are to:

- provide an historical and contemporary overview of the main theoretical frameworks or perspectives that have been suggested as ways of analysing human society
- develop a critical synthesis of these ideas
- demonstrate the relevance of a range of debates and concepts for the analysis of contemporary social and political processes.

Learning Outcomes

On completion of the Module you should be able to demonstrate:

- the possession of an introductory body of knowledge about different approaches to sociological inquiry
- an understanding of a number of the seminal theorists and theories in sociology in preparation of more advanced sociology courses offered in the Faculty
- the ability to utilise sociological ideas beyond the specific issues addressed in the Module

Teaching and Learning Pattern

The module will be taught by a combination of lectures and seminars over 12 weeks. Some lectures will be delivered with, when appropriate, the use of overheads, lecture notes and relevant additional articles from academic and popular journals and newspapers. You will be expected to:

- attend all lectures and fully participate in seminars through presentations and group discussions
- work on your own with set readings in order to gain the most from the Module
- read a minimum amount of relevant literature as indicated in your reading list to enable you actively to participate in the seminars and set about writing essays for your assessment

Assessment

This Module will be assessed by a *seen two-hour examination* at the end of the Module (100%). You will be asked to answer two questions from a list of questions covering the Module as a whole.

However, in week 8 you will be required to participate in a *formative exercise* in which you will be asked to write brief notes of on two key concepts that you will have covered in lectures and seminars. This list will be given to you in week 7 for the exercise in week 8. This exercise will help you prepare for the examination at the end of the Module. You are required to do this exercise as part of your learning process in the same way as you are expected to attend lectures and seminars, and take an end of Module examination.

Other relevant details

You are encouraged to consult the COURSE GUIDE 2016-2017 for relevant details about attendance, examination arrangements, the writing of an essay, and how to get help and guidance.

Newspapers, Journals and additional reading

You are encouraged to read at least one daily newspaper, particularly those which carry items relevant to the topics covered in this Module, such as *The Guardian*, *The Times*, *The Independent* or *The Daily Telegraph*. There are, of course, a long list of other relevant daily newspapers and weekly popular publications, such as *The Economist*.

Academic journals that you may want to consult from time to time to familiarise yourself with current debates about several issues discussed in the Module include the following:

American Journal of Sociology

British Journal of Sociology
Social Forces
American Sociological Review
Sociology
Sociological Review
Journal of Classical Sociology
Social Policy
Theory, Culture & Society
Ethnic & Racial Studies

Lecture & Seminar Programme

- Week 1: Introduction: philosophy of social sciences
 Week 2: Karl Marx: socio-economic structures and social change
 Week 3: Max Weber: people's beliefs and social change
 Week 4: Emile Durkheim: the concepts of 'social facts' and the division of labour
 Week 5: Functional explanation in the social sciences
 Week 6: Rational choice theory
 Week 7: Freud and society

Week 8:	<i>Formative exercise</i>
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- Week 9: Sex and Gender
 Week 10: Erving Goffman and the practices of everyday life
 Week 11: Network theory: The strength of weak ties

Week 12: Review of the Module and comments on the Mid-Semester formative exercise

General Literature Guidelines

The books listed below under Key General Texts will introduce you to the main themes and concepts examined in this Module. They will serve as useful source books and it is worth purchasing one which may also prove valuable in a number of the social science modules you are taking at Level 1 as well as some of those you are likely to take at Level 2 and Level 3. Some of the texts listed under the individual lecture topics for each week that the Module runs may also be worth purchasing when necessary in order to gain a closer understanding of the thought of a particular writer or the perspective of a school of sociological thought in which you have an interest.

Key General Texts

Abrahamson, M (2009)	<u>Classical Theory and Modern Studies</u> , London: Pearson Education
T Bilton, <i>et al</i> (2002)	<u>Introductory Sociology</u> , Palgrave
J Macionis & K Plummer (2002)	<u>Sociology: a Global Introduction</u> , Prentice Hall
A Giddens (1993)	<u>Sociology</u> , Polity Press
J Gubbay et al, (1997)	<u>The Student's Companion to Sociology</u> , Blackwell
S Hall & B Gieben (1992)	<u>Formations of Modernity</u> , Open University Press
T Noble (2000)	<u>Social Theory and Social Change</u> , Macmillan

Note: There are later editions of nearly all these texts but, for this Module, it does not matter which edition of each you secure.

Weekly Teaching & Learning Programme

Week 1:

Lecture Topic: Introduction: The Philosophy of the Social Sciences inquiry
Seminar Question: *Is sociology a science?*

Reading:

Alan Ryan (1970) Philosophy of the Social Sciences (McMillan) Ch1
 Peter Hamilton (1992) 'The Enlightenment and the Birth of Social Science', in, S Hall & B Gieben (eds), Formations of Modernity (Open University), ch 1
 Anthony Giddens (1993) Sociology (Polity Press), chs 1 & 22
 C Wright Mills (1970) The Sociological Imagination (Penguin)
 D Lee & H Newby (1984) The Problem of Sociology (Routledge)

Week 2:

Lecture Topic: Karl Marx: socio-economic structures and social change
Seminar Question: *How does Marx explain changes in human society?*

Essential Reading:

Karl Marx & Frederick Engels (1982) The Communist Manifesto in Marx & Engels, Collected Works, vol 38 (Lawrence & Wishart)
 Karl Marx (1977) 'Preface', A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (Progress Publishers) (handout)
 T Bottomore & M Rubel (eds.) (1956) Marx's Selected Writings in Sociology and Philosophy (Watts)

Contextual Reading:

A Callinicos (2010) The Revolutionary Ideas of Karl Marx (Haymarket)
 G A Cohen (1978) Karl Marx's Theory of History (Oxford)

D McLellan (1973) Marx: His Life and Thought (Macmillan)

R Dahrendorf (1959) Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society
 (Routledge)

T Eagleton (2012) Why Marx Was Right (Yale)

F Parkin (1979) Marx and Class Theory: a Bourgeois Critique
 (Tavistock) **(301.0924)**

B Turner (1999) Classical Sociology, ch 3.

Week 3:

Lecture Topic: Max Weber: people's beliefs and social change
Seminar Questions: *How does Max Weber explain change in modern societies? What are the different bases of power in modern societies?*

Essential reading:

Max Weber (1976) The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism
 (Unwin)

Max Weber (1978) Weber: Selections in Translation, ed W G
 Runciman (Cambridge University Press), ch 7

H Gerth & C Wright Mills (eds) (1947) From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology (RKP)

Contextual Reading:

K Allen (2004) Max Weber: A Critical Introduction (Plut)

R Bendix (1966) Max Weber: An Intellectual Portrait
 (Methuen)

N Gane (2014) Max Weber and Contemporary Capitalism

A Giddens (1971) Capitalism and Social Theory (Cambridge University Press), Section 2

- T Noble (2000) Social Theory and Social Change, Macmillan, pp122-30
- B Turner (1999) Classical Sociology (Sage), ch 5

Week 4:

- Lecture Topic: Emile Durkheim: the concepts of 'social facts' and a 'positive' approach to the study of society
- Seminar Question: *What did Durkheim mean when he spoke about 'social facts'? How does Durkheim explain power in modern societies?*

Essential Reading:

- Emile Durkheim (1938) The Rules of Sociological Method (The Free Press)
- Emile Durkheim (1964) The Division of Labour in Society (Free Press)

Contextual Reading:

- Emirbayer (2003) Emile Durkheim: Sociologist of Modernity (Blackwell)
- S Fenton (1984) Durkheim and Modern Sociology (Cambridge University Press)
- P Kivisto (1998) Key Ideas in Sociology (Sage), chs 1, 4
- S Lukes (1988) Emile Durkheim: His Life and Work (Allen Lane)
- T Noble (2000) Social Theory and Social Change, Macmillan, ch 7
- A Riley (2014) The Social Thought of Emile Durkheim (Sage)

Week 5:

- Lecture Topic: Functional explanation in the social sciences
- Seminar Question: *Can we explain a social event by its latent functions?*

Essential Reading:

Robert K Merton (1957) Social Theory and Social Structure (Free Press)

Contextual Reading:

Arthur Stinchcombe (1970) Constructing Social Theories

I Craib (1992) Modern Social Theory: From Parsons to Habermas (Harvester)

G A Cohen (1978) Karl Marx's Theory of History (Oxford)

Week 6:

Lecture Topic: Rational Choice Theory
Seminar Question: *Can rational choice theory explain group formation and social norms?*

Essential Reading:

J Elster (1989) Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences (Cambridge) ch 3

M Hechter (1987) Principles of Group Solidarity (University of California Press)

Contextual Reading:

J Elster (2000) Making Sense of Marx (Cambridge)

J Coleman (1990) Foundations of Social Theory (Harvard)

Week 7:

Lecture topic: Freud and society
Seminar question: *How does Freud's understanding of the 'unconscious' inform his sociology?*

Essential reading:

Sigmund Freud [1929] (1979) Civilisation and its Discontents (Hogarth Press)

R. Bocock (1976) Freud and modern society: an outline and analysis of Freud's sociology (Van Nostrand Reinhold)

Contextual reading:

T. Bottomore (1984) The Frankfurt School (Tavistock Publications)

I. Craib (2001) Psychoanalysis: a critical introduction (Polity)

A. Elliott (2000) 'Psychoanalysis and social theory' in B.S. Turner (ed) The Blackwell Companion to social theory 2nd edition (Blackwell)

A. Elliott & S. Frosh (eds.) (1995) Psychoanalysis in contexts: between theory and modern culture (Routledge)

Week 8: *Formative exercise 09.30 – 10.30 hours*

Week 9:

Lecture Topic: Sex and Gender

Seminar Question: *How do Oakley's and Pinker's work help us to understand the relationships between sex and gender?*

Essential Reading:

R W Connell (1987) Gender, Power and Society (Polity), esp. chs 1 & 2

A Oakley (1972 / 1985) Sex, Gender and Society (Polity), all, but esp. ch 7

S Pinker (2003) The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature (Penguin) Ch 18

J Weeks (1986) Sexuality (Routledge), especially chapter 2

Contextual Reading:

- P Abbott & C Wallace (1990) An Introduction to Sociology: Feminist Perspectives (Routledge)
- S Garrett (1987) Gender (Tavistock)
- A Giddens (1993) Sociology (Polity),
M Humm (1992) Feminism: A Reader (Harvester)
- J Katz (1996) The Invention of Heterosexuality (Plume), Chapter 3
- M MacIntosh (1981) 'The Homosexual Role', in, K Plummer (ed.) The Making of the Modern Homosexual (Hutchinson)
- J Weeks (1989) Sexuality and its Discontents: Meanings Myths and Modern Sexualities (Routledge)

Week 10:

Lecture Topic: Erving Goffman and the practices of everyday life

Seminar Question: *What light does the work of Goffman shed on our understanding of social interaction?*

Essential Reading:

- Erving Goffman (1956) The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (Anchor Books)
- Erving Goffman (1961) Asylums (Anchor Books)
- Erving Goffman (1961) Stigma (Prentice Hall)
- S Cohen & L Taylor (1995) Escape Attempts: the Theory and Practice of Resistance to Everyday Life (Routledge)

Contextual Reading:

- T Burns (1992) Erving Goffman (Routledge)
- J Charon (2009) Symbolic Interactionism: An Introduction, an Interpretation, an Integration
- J Ditton (ed.) (1980) The View from Goffman (Macmillan)

P Drew & A Wootton
(eds.) (1988)

Erving Goffman: exploring the interaction order
(Polity)

A Giddens (1987)

Social Theory and Modern Sociology (Polity), ch 5

Week 11:

Lecture Topic:

Social Network Theory

Seminar Question:

What are the relative benefits of weak and strong ties?

Essential Reading:

Mark Granovetter (1973)

'The Strength of Weak Ties' *American Journal of Sociology*

Contextual Reading:

Duncan Watts (1999)

Networks, Dynamics and the Small World Phenomenon

Wasserman and Faust (1994)

Social Network Analysis: Methods and Applications (Cambridge)

Week 12:

Lecture Topic:

Review of the Module, general comments on the Mid-Semester formative exercise and the forthcoming examination

*appendices****appendix 1:*****Past formative exercise and examination**

One past mid-semester formative test paper and one past examination paper are reproduced below. These are entered here in order to give you a clear idea of the kind of knowledge you will be expected to have acquired by the end of this Module. The following are NOT the questions that you will be asked to answer in this Module in 2016-2017. You will be given new questions for the formative exercise which will take place in week 8; you will also be given new questions for the final examination at the end of the Module.

formative exercise**THE SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION: UNDERSTANDING SOCIETY &
SOCIAL ACTION*****Instructions***

Choose 2 of the following 6 questions set out below. Write brief statements about each of the 2 concepts you have chosen. Use all the time allowed for answering the questions.

Time allowed: 09.30 – 10.30 (1 hour)

1. Emile Durkheim's notion of 'social facts'
2. Inductive and deductive reasoning
3. Karl Marx's concept of the mode of production
4. Max Weber's description of 'the Protestant ethic'
5. Robert Merton's concepts of manifest and latent function.
6. The Prisoners' dilemma game
7. Freud's understanding of what 'constitutes the human psyche'
8. Max Weber's concepts of class, status and party.
9. Emile Durkheim's concept of the collective conscience.
10. Karl Marx's concept of class struggle.

appendix 2:

End of Module examination (Note: this is not the exam you will take this year)

End of Module examination

Examination

THE SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION: UNDERSTANDING SOCIETY & SOCIAL ACTION

Answer only TWO questions.

Time Allowed: 2 hours

1. 'Sociology is a science.' Critically discuss this statement.
2. Compare and contrast Karl Marx's and Max Weber's theories of class?
3. What role does the concept of the Mode of Production play in Marx's theory of historical and social change?
4. Critically assess the role Max Weber assigns the Protestant Ethic in the development of modern capitalism?

5. Critically evaluate Erving Goffman's statement, 'All the world is not, of course, a stage but the crucial ways in which it isn't are not easy to specify.'
6. Compare and contrast the role of the Collective Conscience in maintaining mechanical and organic solidarity?
7. Why, according to Sigmund Freud, does increased civilization fail to lead to increased happiness?
8. Does Anne Oakley's conceptual distinction between sex and gender lead her to underestimate biological causes of differences between the places of men and women in society?
9. Critically evaluate Robert Merton's arguments that social phenomena can be explained by their latent functions.
10. Discuss how the rational actions of individuals can lead to socially irrational outcomes.
11. What, according to Mark Granovetter, makes weak ties strong?

appendix 3: **Marking criteria**

At all levels, five areas of assessment objective can be recognised:

1. Knowledge of the topic - ideas, concepts and institutions
2. Analysis of issues and an awareness of different viewpoints
3. Evaluation of competing explanations or theories applied to a problem
4. Ability to identify relevant sources of evidence, both empirical and theoretical, and to use these to produce an informative referencing system
5. Skill in the presentation of an answer with accuracy, clarity and coherence.

With these objectives in mind, the following model marking scheme should apply:

Fail	0-30%	Badly misunderstands the question; contains factual errors; none of basic objectives are achieved
	30-35%	Some knowledge of topic and examples, but objectives 2-5 not met
	35-39%	Exhibits some knowledge of topic, but essentially descriptive; cannot identify alternative viewpoints; objective 1 is present but 2-5 poorly met
Third	40-49%	Demonstrates limited basic knowledge of the topic, but essentially descriptive; displays an attempt at evaluation of material, but low on clarity and coherence; limited achievement of objectives 1,2,3,4,; low on objective 5
2:ii	50-59%	Exhibits good knowledge of the topic; can distinguish different approaches or viewpoints, and some ability of evaluation present, but may to some extent lack clarity and coherence; reasonable attempt at referencing; very good on objective 1, weaker on 2-5
2:i	60-69%	Very good knowledge of basic ideas, concepts and institutions with good analysis of issues and evaluation; good uses of sources and references; meets objectives 1,2,4,5, weaker on 3
First	70+%	Excellent knowledge of the topic, with high level analysis of a balanced nature. Strong on critical evaluation, clarity, coherence. All assessment objectives covered

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the act of taking the words or ideas of others and passing them off as your own. In many cases plagiarism takes the form of copying from books and articles without full and accurate acknowledgement of sources. This can happen unintentionally when you use notes taken from a book/journal article and put them directly into your essay without properly attributing the source. Whether intentional or not, plagiarism is not acceptable in any circumstances. It is regarded as a form of cheating and there are strict University regulations to deal with it if it is discovered. You will find a summary of the University regulations & procedures governing plagiarism in your Student Handbook. You must read this carefully.

It is vital when taking notes to:

- (1) Note the FULL reference of the book/article at the top of the first page of notes.
- (2) Keep a precise note of the page numbers of any quoted material (for example in the margins of your notes)
- (3) Use precise double quote marks at the beginning & end of any quotes in your notes and check that any quotes/material used in your essay is accurately and carefully attributed.

NOTE:

You will be assessed in this module by a seen examination requiring you to write in your own words 2 essays. It is not expected that you will use extensive quotations from the sources you have read. However, if you do use quotations, you must be able properly to reference them; it may be more profitable to summarize what writers have said in your own words and simply acknowledge these writers.