

# SCS230 Understanding Society: An Introduction to Social Theory

**School:** School of Law and Society

2026 | Trimester 1

UniSC Sunshine Coast  
UniSC Moreton Bay

**BLENDED  
LEARNING**

Most of your course is on campus but you may be able to do some components of this course online.

Online

**ONLINE**

You can do this course without coming onto campus, unless your program has specified a mandatory onsite requirement.

Please go to [usc.edu.au](http://usc.edu.au) for up to date information on the teaching sessions and campuses where this course is usually offered.

## 1. What is this course about?

### 1.1. Description

To change society, or participate effectively in it, understanding how society works is essential. Social theory enables a critical understanding of social inequality, difference and change. Social theory guides social research and makes it intelligible within broader frameworks of understanding. This course charts classical attempts to formulate universal and synthetic social theory and more recent forms of situated, partial and reflexive theories. Accordingly, this course introduces students to significant thinkers and perspectives in classical and contemporary social theory.

### 1.2. How will this course be delivered?

ACTIVITY	HOURS	BEGINNING WEEK	FREQUENCY
<b>BLENDED LEARNING</b>			
<b>Learning materials</b> – 1 hour online weekly Learning Material content for students to review in their own time prior to Tutorial/Workshop or seminar.	1hr	Week 1	12 times
<b>Tutorial/Workshop 1</b> – On campus	2hrs	Week 2	10 times
<b>ONLINE</b>			
<b>Learning materials</b> – 1 hour online weekly Learning Material content for students to review in their own time prior to Tutorial/Workshop or seminar.	1hr	Week 1	12 times
<b>Tutorial/Workshop 1</b> – Online Workshop	2hrs	Week 2	10 times

### 1.3. Course Topics

#### COURSE CONTENT

- Why Social Theory? – Introduction to the Course
- The Emergence of Modern Social Theory and an Overview of Some Major Theoretical Dilemmas
- Understanding Marx
- Understanding Durkheim
- Understanding Weber
- Understanding Functionalism and Systems Theory
- Understanding Interpretivism
- Understanding Critical Theory (From Lukács to Habermas)
- Understanding Structuralism and Post-Structuralism
- Understanding Foucault
- Understanding Theories of Identity and Difference: Feminism
- Understanding Heidegger
- Reconfiguring Social Theory: Beyond the Enlightenment Paradigm?

### 2. What level is this course?

200 Level (Developing)

Building on and expanding the scope of introductory knowledge and skills, developing breadth or depth and applying knowledge and skills in a new context. May require pre-requisites where discipline specific introductory knowledge or skills is necessary. Normally, undertaken in the second or third full-time year of an undergraduate programs.

### 3. What is the unit value of this course?

12 units

### 4. How does this course contribute to my learning?

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES	GRADUATE QUALITIES
On successful completion of this course, you should be able to...	Completing these tasks successfully will contribute to you becoming...
1 Identify key concepts in social theory for making sense of social problems in a changing world	Knowledgeable
2 Apply social theory to make sense of substantive and complex social problems.	Empowered
3 Communicate research findings using appropriate media to specialist and non-specialist audiences	Knowledgeable Engaged
4 Evaluate the major social theories (classical and contemporary) employed in understanding society.	Creative and critical thinker
5 Link developments in social theory and how they can contribute to transforming society in a more just, participatory and sustainable direction.	Engaged Sustainability-focussed

### 5. Am I eligible to enrol in this course?

Refer to the [UniSC Glossary of terms](#) for definitions of “pre-requisites, co-requisites and anti-requisites”.

#### 5.1. Pre-requisites

Not applicable

#### 5.2. Co-requisites

Not applicable

#### 5.3. Anti-requisites

Not applicable

#### 5.4. Specific assumed prior knowledge and skills (where applicable)

Not applicable

## 6. How am I going to be assessed?

### 6.1. Grading Scale

Standard Grading (GRD)

High Distinction (HD), Distinction (DN), Credit (CR), Pass (PS), Fail (FL).

### 6.2. Details of early feedback on progress

The in-class activities commencing in Week 3 will entail early feedback on your comprehension of the learning materials in this course.

### 6.3. Assessment tasks

DELIVERY MODE	TASK NO.	ASSESSMENT PRODUCT	INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP	WEIGHTING %	WHAT IS THE DURATION / LENGTH?	WHEN SHOULD I SUBMIT?	WHERE SHOULD I SUBMIT IT?
All	1	Artefact - Creative, and Written Piece	Group	40%	1500 words equivalent	Week 7	To be Negotiated
All	2	Quiz/zes	Individual	20%	The summative quiz component shall remain open for one week (7 days -- Week 12) and must be completed in that period. It shall entail 20 multiple-choice questions.	Week 12	Online Test (Quiz)
All	3	Examination - not Centrally Scheduled	Individual	40%	1 Week (7 Days) -- Total of 1850 words.	Week 12	To be Negotiated

### All - Assessment Task 1: Social Issues in the Media

<b>GOAL:</b>	This exercise encourages you to use some aspects of classical social theory to develop a more critical understanding of a social issue that can be found in the popular media		
<b>PRODUCT:</b>	Artefact - Creative, and Written Piece		
<b>FORMAT:</b>	<p>Academic Assignment. Group task (4 Max). Poster Display which is referenced.</p> <p>Each member of the group must contribute to a short oral reflective statement (in-class) on how this application of critical theory enabled a new understanding of the social issue and its potential resolution.</p>		
<b>CRITERIA:</b>	<b>No.</b>		<b>Learning Outcome assessed</b>
	1	Identification of research on a contemporary social issue presented in the media.	1 2 3
	2	Explanation of relevant concepts from the work of a classical social theorist for critical-analytical purposes.	2
	3	Creative engagement with social theory to provide a broader and more critical understanding of a social issue than what is normally found in the media (engaging and insightful reflection).	1 2 4
	4	Communication – orally and text.	3
<b>GENERIC SKILLS:</b>	Communication, Collaboration, Problem solving		

### All - Assessment Task 2: Social Theory Quiz

<b>GOAL:</b>	<p>This task aims to develop your understanding of social theory through a series of learning activities, tutorial participation and peer to peer work.</p> <p>The main summative component shall consist of a quiz to test your knowledge of key terms in theorising social inequality and social change.</p>		
<b>PRODUCT:</b>	Quiz/zes		
<b>FORMAT:</b>	<p>The format for the portfolio leading up to the quiz will include weekly learning activities and participation.</p> <p>This includes:</p> <p>Learning activities - summary, discussion, prepared discussion questions and a summative quiz in Week 12</p> <p>For more details see Canvas - Task 1 Folder.</p>		
<b>CRITERIA:</b>	<b>No.</b>		<b>Learning Outcome assessed</b>
	1	Evaluation of social theories – discussion in tutorials.	4
	2	Application of social theories- discussion in tutorials and learning activities.	2
	3	Communicating social theories – oral and written.	1
	4	Literacy in basic concepts of social theory	1
<b>GENERIC SKILLS:</b>	Communication, Problem solving		

### All - Assessment Task 3: Social Theory Exam

<b>GOAL:</b>	The purpose of this assessment is for you to demonstrate your understanding of social theory; how social theory can help us to make sense of complex social problems; and how developments in social theory can potentially contribute to transforming society.		
<b>PRODUCT:</b>	Examination - not Centrally Scheduled		
<b>FORMAT:</b>	Academic format. Individual. This exam will have a mix of one Short Answer (350 words) response and one comparative Long Answer (1500 words) response selected from a menu of questions.		
<b>CRITERIA:</b>	<b>No.</b>		<b>Learning Outcome assessed</b>
	1	Application and evaluation of social theory to create an argument.	1 4 5
	2	Explanation of relevant concepts (such as power, knowledge, inequality, domination, emancipation and difference) and contested areas.	1 4 5
	3	Critical comparative analysis of your selected social theories.	4
	4	Making links between social theory and transformation of society.	5
	5	Communication.	3
<b>GENERIC SKILLS:</b>	Communication, Problem solving, Applying technologies		

## 7. Directed study hours

A 12-unit course will have total of 150 learning hours which will include directed study hours (including online if required), self-directed learning and completion of assessable tasks. Student workload is calculated at 12.5 learning hours per one unit.

## 8. What resources do I need to undertake this course?

Please note: Course information, including specific information of recommended readings, learning activities, resources, weekly readings, etc. are available on the course Canvas site– Please log in as soon as possible.

### 8.1. Prescribed text(s) or course reader

Please note that you need to have regular access to the resource(s) listed below. Resources may be required or recommended.

REQUIRED?	AUTHOR	YEAR	TITLE	EDITION	PUBLISHER
Required	Steven Seidman	2016	Contested Knowledge	6th	John Wiley & Sons

### 8.2. Specific requirements

Nil

## 9. How are risks managed in this course?

Health and safety risks for this course have been assessed as low. It is your responsibility to review course material, search online, discuss with lecturers and peers and understand the health and safety risks associated with your specific course of study and to familiarise yourself with the University's general health and safety principles by reviewing the [online induction training for students](#), and following the instructions of the University staff.

## 10. What administrative information is relevant to this course?

### 10.1. Assessment: Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is the ethical standard of university participation. It ensures that students graduate as a result of proving they are competent in their discipline. This is integral in maintaining the value of academic qualifications. Each industry has expectations and standards of the skills and knowledge within that discipline and these are reflected in assessment.

Academic integrity means that you do not engage in any activity that is considered to be academic fraud; including plagiarism, collusion or outsourcing any part of any assessment item to any other person. You are expected to be honest and ethical by completing all work yourself and indicating in your work which ideas and information were developed by you and which were taken from others. You cannot provide your assessment work to others. You are also expected to provide evidence of wide and critical reading, usually by using appropriate academic references.

In order to minimise incidents of academic fraud, this course may require that some of its assessment tasks, when submitted to Canvas, are electronically checked through Turnitin. This software allows for text comparisons to be made between your submitted assessment item and all other work to which Turnitin has access.

## 10.2. Assessment: Additional Requirements

### Eligibility for Supplementary Assessment

Your eligibility for supplementary assessment in a course is dependent of the following conditions applying:

- (a) The final mark is in the percentage range 47% to 49.4%; and
- (b) The course is graded using the Standard Grading scale

## 10.3. Assessment: Submission penalties

Late submissions may be penalised up to and including the following maximum percentage of the assessment task's identified value, with weekdays and weekends included in the calculation of days late:

- (a) One day: deduct 5%;
- (b) Two days: deduct 10%;
- (c) Three days: deduct 20%;
- (d) Four days: deduct 40%;
- (e) Five days: deduct 60%;
- (f) Six days: deduct 80%;
- (g) Seven days: A result of zero is awarded for the assessment task.

The following penalties will apply for a late submission for an online examination:

Less than 15 minutes: No penalty

From 15 minutes to 30 minutes: 20% penalty

More than 30 minutes: 100% penalty

## 10.4. SafeUniSC

UniSC is committed to a culture of respect and providing a safe and supportive environment for all members of our community. For immediate assistance on campus contact SafeUniSC by phone: [07 5430 1168](tel:0754301168) or using the [SafeZone](#) app. For general enquires contact the SafeUniSC team by phone [07 5456 3864](tel:0754563864) or email [safe@usc.edu.au](mailto:safe@usc.edu.au).

The SafeUniSC Specialist Service is a Student Wellbeing service that provides free and confidential support to students who may have experienced or observed behaviour that could cause fear, offence or trauma. To contact the service call [07 5430 1226](tel:0754301226) or email [studentwellbeing@usc.edu.au](mailto:studentwellbeing@usc.edu.au).

## 10.5. Study help

For help with course-specific advice, for example what information to include in your assessment, you should first contact your tutor, then your course coordinator, if needed.

If you require additional assistance, the Learning Advisers are trained professionals who are ready to help you develop a wide range of academic skills. Visit the [Learning Advisers](#) web page for more information, or contact Student Central for further assistance: +61 7 5430 2890 or [studentcentral@usc.edu.au](mailto:studentcentral@usc.edu.au).

## 10.6. Wellbeing Services

Student Wellbeing provide free and confidential counselling on a wide range of personal, academic, social and psychological matters, to foster positive mental health and wellbeing for your academic success.

To book a confidential appointment go to [Student Hub](#), email [studentwellbeing@usc.edu.au](mailto:studentwellbeing@usc.edu.au) or call 07 5430 1226.

## 10.7. AccessAbility Services

Ability Advisers ensure equal access to all aspects of university life. If your studies are affected by a disability, learning disorder mental health issue, injury or illness, or you are a primary carer for someone with a disability or who is considered frail and aged, [AccessAbility Services](#) can provide access to appropriate reasonable adjustments and practical advice about the support and facilities available to you throughout the University.

To book a confidential appointment go to [Student Hub](#), email [AccessAbility@usc.edu.au](mailto:AccessAbility@usc.edu.au) or call 07 5430 2890.

## 10.8. Links to relevant University policy and procedures

For more information on Academic Learning & Teaching categories including:

- Assessment: Courses and Coursework Programs
- Review of Assessment and Final Grades
- Supplementary Assessment
- Central Examinations
- Deferred Examinations
- Student Conduct
- Students with a Disability

For more information, visit <https://www.usc.edu.au/explore/policies-and-procedures#academic-learning-and-teaching>

## 10.9. Student Charter

UniSC is committed to excellence in teaching, research and engagement in an environment that is inclusive, inspiring, safe and respectful. The [Student Charter](#) sets out what students can expect from the University, and what in turn is expected of students, to achieve these outcomes.

## 10.10. General Enquiries

### In person:

- **UniSC Sunshine Coast** - Student Central, Ground Floor, Building C, 90 Sippy Downs Drive, Sippy Downs
- **UniSC Moreton Bay** - Service Centre, Ground Floor, Foundation Building, Gympie Road, Petrie
- **UniSC SouthBank** - Student Central, Building A4 (SW1), 52 Merivale Street, South Brisbane
- **UniSC Gympie** - Student Central, 71 Cartwright Road, Gympie
- **UniSC Fraser Coast** - Student Central, Student Central, Building A, 161 Old Maryborough Rd, Hervey Bay
- **UniSC Caboolture** - Student Central, Level 1 Building J, Cnr Manley and Tallon Street, Caboolture

**Tel:** +61 7 5430 2890

**Email:** [studentcentral@usc.edu.au](mailto:studentcentral@usc.edu.au)