SS5115: SOCIAL SCIENCES THEORIES FOR SOCIAL WORK

Effective Term

Semester B 2024/25

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	х	x	х

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	

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4	LTA4: Student	Student presentations	1, 2, 3, 4	
	Presentation	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.		

Assessment Tasks / Activities (ATs)

	ATs	CILO No.	Weighting (%)	Remarks (e.g. Parameter for GenAI use)
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	

presentation, and after

	2	AT2: Group Presentation	1, 2, 3, 4	20	
		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 ones, e.g.			
		racism and problems of			
		minority/ ethnicity, crime			
		and delinquency. In fact,			
		the above-mentioned			
		categorization is just a			
		frame of reference, in			
		reality a social problem/			
		issue/ phenomenon is far			
		more from clear-cut, so			
		as you are encouraged to			
		use a multi-dimensional			
		approach to analyze a			
		selected social problem/			
		issue/ phenomenon in			
		a comparative sense.			
		Each group should have			
		20 minutes to do their			
I		nrecentation and after	l .	l .	

3	AT3: Individual term	1, 2, 3, 4	70	
	paper	, , ,		
	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			

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)

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- (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

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

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

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

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

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

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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

	Title
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). Essential social psychology. 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). Abnormal Psychology: An Integrative Approach. 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). Social theory for beginners: 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). Social theory for beginners. 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). Social theory for beginners. Bristol: Policy Press. Chapter 4: Karl Marx, capitalism and revolution; chapter 11: feminist social theory; chapter 13: theories of modernity and postmodernity.

Session 9 - Sundar, P. & Ly M. (2013). Multiculturalism. In M. Gray, and S A. Webb (Eds), Social work theories and methods (chapter 10, pp. 126-136). Los Angles: SAGE.

Additional Readings

	Title
1	Dolgon C., & Baker, C. (2011). Social problems: A service learning approach. 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), Handbook of family theories: A content-based approach (pp. 398-416, chapter 22). New York: Routledge.
3	Glassman W. E. & Hadad M (2009). Approaches to psychology. 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). Human behavior theory and social work practice. 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). Approaches to psychology. 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). Human behavior theory and social work practice. 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). Social psychology. 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). Abnormal psychology. Boston : Pearson. Chapter 16: Psychological disorders of childhood.
7	Schaefer, R. T. (2010). Sociology. New York: McGraw-Hill. Chapter 1: Understanding sociology.
8	Jones, P., Bradbury, L., & Boutillier S. L. (2011). Introducing social theory. 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), 21st Century sociology: A reference handbook (vol. 1, chapter 22, pp. 228-236). Thansand Oaks: SAGE.