Social Theory

Convener: Dr John Rundell

The Ashworth Program in Social Theory draws on high-level expertise and a wide range of related disciplines across the Faculty of Arts. The program provides a context where the theoretical and substantive issues raised in other disciplines may be critically examined and further explored. This makes social theory an appropriate choice for students with an interest in any of the social or human sciences.

The Ashworth Program is home to a vibrant research community and hosts conferences, colloquia and seminar programs on a regular basis. It attracts eminent scholars to the University of Melbourne as visiting research fellows and boasts a distinguished list of international associates. A variety of career pathways is available to students of social theory, drawing on analytical and research knowledge gained in this area of study. Students interested in expanding their interests and knowledge in social theory are provided with an articulated structure of higher degree options at the University of Melbourne.

Social theory is an interdisciplinary program that investigates the everyday assumptions that shape our lives and reflects in a systematic and critical manner on the ways in which social life is organised and, sometimes, transformed. Principal themes addressed in the program include contemporary social and critical theories, psychoanalytic theory and the nature of identity and themes that critique modernity and postmodernity, forms of agency and rationality.

Time commitment to study

As well as scheduled contact hours for lectures, tutorial and seminars a considerable additional time commitment is needed to complete the academic requirements of each subject.

A subject-specific time commitment to study will be provided by your lecturer or tutor at the beginning of semester to help you schedule your workload and successfully manage your time during the semester. In addition, general estimates of the total time commitment required to study a 12.5-point single semester subject in the Faculty of Arts can be found on page 1.

Prerequisites

The social theory program commences at second year. The general prerequisite for entry is the completion of 50 points of first year in any area of study within the Faculty of Arts.

Diploma in Arts (Social Theory)

The Diploma in Arts (Social Theory) is only available to students who are currently enrolled in an undergraduate degree course at the University of Melbourne. It consists of a three-year sequence of study, and adds one year to the duration of your degree.

Students must complete 25 points of first-year arts subjects and 75 points of second/third-year subjects selected from the lists below, including at least three core subjects. Alternatively, students who have completed appropriate background studies at first year may complete 100 points of second/third-year subjects from the list below, including at least three core subjects.

Requirements for a major

Social Theory major

A major in social theory consists of eight 12.5-point subjects, totalling 100 points. It comprises:

- two first-year subjects in any area of study (25 points); and
- six second/third-year subjects in social theory (totalling 75 points), which must include three of the following five core subjects, and three subjects from the list of elective subjects below.

Core subjects		Sem.
136-077	Psychoanalysis and Social Theory *(p.2)*	2
136-073	Critical Theories *(p.2)*	2
136-074	Modernity Revolution to Social Movements *(p.2)*	1
136-076	Social Theory and Political Analysis *(p.2)*	N/A

Elective subjects		Sem.
English		
106-036	Postmodernism *(p.6)*	1
Cinema studies		
107-037	Film and the Body *(p.2)*	N/A
107-079	Feminist Film and Television Theory *(p.3)*	N/A
Geography		
121-015	Development and the Third World *(p.2)*	2
121-026	The Mobile World: Migration and Tourism *(p.3)*	1 rep 2
121-457	Ethnic Nationalism and the Modern World *(p.4)* (third/fourth-year subject)	2
History		
131-033	A History of Sexualities *(p.6)*	1
131-034	Gender, Culture and Identity *(p.6)*	2
History and philosophy of science		
136-040	Science Technology and Society *(p.4)*	N/A
Philosophy		
161-013	Contemporary Political Philosophy *(p.4)*	2
161-020	Classics of Phenomenology *(p.5)*	N/A
Political science		
166-085	Global Movements: Emerging Paradigms *(p.3)*	2
Criminology		
191-428	Crime and Culture *(p.5)*	2
Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning		
702-305	Theories of Architecture *(p.20)*	1

Combined honours entry

There is no pure honours program in Social Theory. This means that students must combine fourth-year honours in Social Theory with another discipline, such as English, history or political science.

The prerequisites for entry to combined honours in Social Theory are:

- completion of all the requirements for the BA; and
- completion of a major in social theory; and
- an average grade of H2A or higher over second/third-year subjects within the major; and
- admission to honours in another program within the Faculty of Arts.

For information on how to apply see *Applying for Honours (p.13)*.

Combined honours requirements

Students undertaking combined honours in Social Theory and another discipline must complete:

- 136-508 Social Theory Thesis *(p.2)* (37.5 points); and
- two honours subjects in Social Theory from the list of core honours subjects below (totalling 25 points); and
- three honours subjects in the combining discipline (totalling 37.5 points).

or

- honours thesis in the combining discipline (37.5 points); and
- two honours subjects in the combining discipline (totalling 25 points); and
- two honours subjects from the list of core honours subjects below (totalling 25 points); and
- a third honours subject from the lists of core or optional honours subjects below (12.5 points).

Core subjects		Sem.
Social Theory		
136-532	Reading Texts in Social Theory *(p.2)*	1
136-533	Theories of Modernity *(p.2)*	N/A
136-534	Imagined Societies *(p.2)*	2
136-546	The Critical Imagination *(p.3)*	N/A

Optional subjects		Sem.
English		
106-423	Romanticism and Modernity *(p.14)*	2
History		
131-432	Gender in Cross-Cultural Perspective *(p.19)*	1
131-551	Representations of Gender *(p.21)*	2
History and philosophy of science		
136-541	The Risk Society: Remaking Everyday Life *(p.10)*	N/A
136-528	Medicine, Biology and Culture *(p.9)*	2
Political science		
166-550	Human Rights and 'the Political' *(p.12)*	2

For more information

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Second/third-year subjects

136-073 Critical Theories

Note: Formerly available as 136-209/309. Students who have completed 136-209/309 are not eligible to enrol in this subject.

Availability: 2nd and 3rd year

Credit points: 12.5

Coordinator: Dr John Rundell

Prerequisites: Usually 50 points of first-year arts subjects. For cultural studies students these 50 points of arts subjects must include at least 25 points from a specified list of cultural studies approved subject areas.

Contact: A 1-hour lecture and 1.5-hour seminar per week *(Semester 2)*.

Description: The aim of this subject is to introduce students to and critically examine the major debates in contemporary critical theories from Western Marxism to postmodernism. These critical theories include the German Frankfurt School, French poststructuralism, the Budapest School, post-Marxism and feminism, all of which are set against the background of the Enlightenment and the Romantic and Heidegerrean responses to it. On completion of the subject, students should have developed an understanding of the central issues and ideas of the critical theorists covered in this course and be able to convey this understanding through a critical engagement with the issues and theories in the written assessment of the course.

Assessment: A literature review of 1000 words 40% (due early in semester), a classpaper of 500 words based on tutorial discussion 10% (due at the end of semester) and an essay of 2500 words 50% (due at the end of semester).

136-074 Modernity Revolution to Social Movements

Note: Formerly available as 136-251/351. Students who have completed 136-251/351 are not eligible to enrol in this subject.

Availability: 2nd and 3rd year

Credit points: 12.5

Coordinator: Dr John Rundell

Prerequisites: Usually 50 points of first-year arts subjects.

Contact: A 1-hour lecture and 1.5-hour seminar per week *(Semester 1)*.

Description: This subject is primarily concerned with the ideas about society that have anchored the disciplines of sociology and social theory in the 19th and 20th centuries. It critically assesses these ideas through an examination of the works of key social theorists. Students completing this subject should have developed an understanding of the central ideas of key thinkers in the social-theoretical tradition, among them, Marx, Durkheim, Weber, Simmel and Freud; and developed an understanding of some central issues and themes about society such as power, culture, structure and self through a critical engagement with the work of these thinkers.

Assessment: A literature review of 1000 words 40% (due early in semester), a classpaper of 500 words based on tutorial discussion 10% (due at the end of semester) and an essay of 2500 words 50% (due at the end of semester).

136-076 Social Theory and Political Analysis

Note: Formerly available as 136-259/359. Students who have completed 136-259/359 are not eligible to enrol in this subject.

Availability: 2nd and 3rd year

Credit points: 12.5

Prerequisites: Usually 50 points of first-year arts subjects.

Semester: Not Offered

Description: This subject involves the study of theory and empirical research in social and political relations, culture and ideology, and human subjectivity and action. Students who complete this subject should possess an awareness of the ways in which social theory can provide a critical perspective on standard approaches to the study of politics, and knowledge of a repertoire of social theory concepts and approaches which can be drawn upon to analyse political processes.

136-077 Psychoanalysis and Social Theory

Note: Formerly available as 136-260/360. Students who have completed 136-260/360 are not eligible to enrol in this subject.

Availability: 2nd and 3rd year

Credit points: 12.5

Coordinator: Dr John Cash

Prerequisites: Usually 50 points of first-year arts subjects or completion of a first-year gender studies subject.

Contact: Ten 1-hour lectures and ten 2-hour seminars *(Semester 2)*.

Description: Psychoanalysis has informed and influenced contemporary social theory in manifold ways. Psychoanalysis has been central to theorising the decentred subject, it has radically affected conceptualisations of ideology, thrown reason under radical suspicion and has contributed to a better understanding of identities; including identities of nation, race, gender and ethnicity. This subject investigates these issues in the context of a consideration of texts by Freud, Klein, Lacan, Kristeva, Adorno, Fromm, Habermas, Zizek, Mitchell, Giddens and Althusser. Students who complete this subject should gain a sound knowledge of some major traditions in psychoanalytic theory, particularly Freudian, Kleinian and Lacanian, and should come to possess an awareness of why social theory has been drawn to psychoanalysis in order to analyse subjectivities, group processes, intergroup relations, ideological formations, and forms of reason.

Assessment: An oral presentation of a 400-word tutorial paper 10%, an essay of 1600 words 30% (due mid-semester), a second essay of 2000 words 50% (due during the examination period), class participation and contribution 10%.

Fourth-year/postgraduate subjects

136-508 Social Theory Thesis

Availability: 4th year and postgraduate

Credit points: 37.5

Coordinator: Dr John Rundell

Prerequisites: Admission to the postgraduate diploma or fourth-year combined honours in social theory, or a masters program and permission of the subject coordinator.

Contact: Regular meetings with the supervisor over two consecutive semesters of enrolment *(Semester 1, repeat 2)*.

Description: An approved topic will be selected in consultation with the coordinator.

Assessment: A 12 000 word thesis 100% (due at the end of the second semester of enrolment).

136-532 Reading Texts in Social Theory

Note: Formerly available as 136-079. Students who have completed 136-079 are not eligible to enrol in this subject.

Availability: 4th year and postgraduate

Credit points: 12.5

Coordinator: Dr John Rundell

Prerequisites: Admission to the postgraduate diploma or fourth-year combined honours in social theory, or a masters program and permission of the subject coordinator.

Contact: A 2-hour seminar per week *(Semester 1)*.

Description: This subject is designed to provide students with a detailed familiarity with the works of at least one of the major classical social theorists. Students who complete this subject should be able to demonstrate a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of at least one significant social theorist or theoretical tradition; have developed the reading and analytical skills for such comprehension and understanding which can be readily used for other texts and subject matter; and have established a basis for postgraduate research if desired.

Assessment: A class paper of 1000 words 45% (due a fortnight after the class paper is presented in the seminar) and an essay of 4000 words 55% (due on the final day of semester).

136-533 Theories of Modernity

Note: Formerly available as 136-080. Students who have completed 136-080 are not eligible to enrol in this subject.

Availability: 4th year and postgraduate

Credit points: 12.5

Prerequisites: Admission to the postgraduate diploma or fourth-year combined honours in social theory, or a masters program and permission of the subject coordinator.

Semester: Not Offered

Description: In this subject images of the 'city', 'progress', 'the public' and 'the nation' will be used to establish some of the features of modernity. The way modernity is understood will also be explored through various critical theories of modernity. Students completing this subject should have developed an understanding of the major conceptual debates concerning the meaning of modernity; gained an awareness of the selected philosophical and theoretical traditions through which this debate has been generated; and demonstrated this understanding through a critical engagement with the historical and theoretical literature.

136-534 Imagined Societies

Note: Formerly available as 136-082. Students who have completed 136-082 are not eligible to enrol in this subject.

Availability: 4th year and postgraduate

Credit points: 12.5

Coordinator: Dr John Cash

Prerequisites: Admission to the postgraduate diploma or fourth-year combined honours in social theory, or a masters program and permission of the subject coordinator.

Contact: A 2-hour seminar per week *(Semester 2)*.

Description: This subject critically engages with questions regarding the place of subjectivity in the constitution and organisation of social and political relations, at both the theoretical and empirical levels. It involves the study of political subjectivities, including race, gender and ethnicity. By engagement with such theorists as Lacan, Castoriadis, Kristeva, Foucault, Giddens and Habermas, the subject highlights the place of the imaginary and the unconscious in the formation of ideologies and subjectivities. Students who complete this subject should possess knowledge of some major contemporary debates regarding the formation and organisation of subjectivities; an understanding of the centrality of subjectivity to the organisation of social and political relations; an awareness of the difficulties associated with analysing subjectivities in late or postmodernity; and an acquaintance with some attempts to bring contemporary theories of subjectivity to the study of empirical cases.

Assessment: An oral presentation of a 600 word seminar paper 10%, a research essay of 5400 words for masters students and 4400 words for 4th year students/postgraduate diploma students (due during the examination period), class participation and contribution 10%.

136-546 The Critical Imagination

Note: Formerly available as 136-078. Students who have completed 136-078 are not eligible to enrol in this subject.

Availability: 4th year and postgraduate

Credit points: 12.5

Semester: Not Offered

Description: This subject explores the three currents that social and critical theorising grows out of: the Enlightenment, revolutionary tradition and romanticism. It critically assesses these currents through an examination of the works of key classical critical and social theorists. Students completing this subject should have developed an understanding of the central ideas of key thinkers in the social and critical theory tradition among them, Kant, Schiller, Hegel, Marx and Nietzsche; and developed an understanding of some of the key issues and theories including their critiques of modernity.