College of Social Sciences

Course Title:	**Introduction to Social Theory for Researchers**
Course Code:	SPS5036
Course Co-ordinator:	Alison Eldridge (alison.eldridge@glasgow.ac.uk)

Lectures: Tuesdays 5.30pm – 6.30pm from 8th January – 19th March 2019 **Semester Two** (11 weeks)
VENUE: St Andrew's Building, Room 234

Tutorials: Tuesdays 6.45pm -7.45pm from 8th January – 19th March 2019 **Semester Two** (11 weeks)
Tutorial 01: Adam Smith Building: 712
Tutorial 02: Adam Smith Building: 1102
Tutorial 03: Adam Smith Building: 1104
Tutorial 04: Adam Smith Building: 702

Course aims

The course aims to introduce students to the main debates and issues in social theory. The course will be structured broadly historically, looking at the dominant theoretical positions in social theory as it has developed over the last century or so. It will, for instance, look at the ways in which the methodological concerns that underlie social research stem from debates and issues in social theory and the philosophy of social science (issues such as the nature of scientific knowledge, the role of values in social scientific research, and the difference between individualistic and holistic methodologies/structure and agency, amongst others).

The course aims to show the integral role that theory plays in the grounding of all research projects and in the successful integration with, and defence of, these projects in the wider academic community. As such, special emphasis is placed on exploring the manner in which the various theoretical positions map onto the students' own individual projects. At the end of the course students should be able to place their own research somewhere along the social theory continuum, making their own projects more robust and penetrating, and providing a platform for greater assuredness and confidence throughout their programme of studies at Glasgow and beyond.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students should be able to:
- provide a critical account of the development of social theory;
- display a wide-ranging awareness of a number of recent influential developments in, and reassessments of, social theory;
- display knowledge of the way in which social theory connects to social research methodology, and, where appropriate, to their own research projects;
- examine the debates regarding the scientific nature of social research;
- reflect on the social nature of scientific research;
- compare individualistic and holistic methodologies in social research.
- demonstrate an understanding of key terms such as: 'historical materialism', 'functionalism', 'interpretivism', 'interactionism, 'structuralism', 'postmodernism', 'poststructuralism'.

Assessment

The sole assessment (100% of the total assessment) will be in the form of an essay to be submitted by April 2018**.**

Essay topics

There is no set essay question or questions. The course organisers are concerned that the assessment for ITSTFR should have added value for the students' research rather than distract from it. We hope, therefore, that each student will devise an essay topic which applies one or more of the themes of the course to the subject matter of their prospective thesis or dissertation, or which relates to their research interests in some other way. Do this in consultation with your tutor.

The purpose of this assessment is to assess students' understanding of social theory through the application of theories and relevant concepts in social sciences research.

Students are expected to select a theoretical framework and/or concepts introduced in the course and reflect on the usefulness and applicability of this in their own research field

Specifically the essay should include:
- A section, which will outline and discuss the selected theory and relevant concepts, and provide a - discussion of the epistemological value of the selected theory/ies.
- A section which discusses and assesses the applicability of such theory in a particular research field or a research field of interest drawing on relevant research literature. This section may also highlight gaps or summarise the ways in which such theory has been applied which may differ from the way student's wish to utilise this in their own research.
- A section which introduces the research topic and explores the ways in the selected concepts and theory/ies will be applied
- A section that reflects on the strengths and limitations of concepts and theories in light of the research topic.

Course Summary
This course aims to introduce students to the main debates and issues in the philosophy of social science. It will examine the philosophical foundations of the social sciences, explore the nature of scientific knowledge, and the differences between the social and the natural sciences. The course will be structured historically and its emphasis will be on the foundations of empirical research.

Further information about tutorials and required readings will be available on Moodle from September.