

Theorize Something Paper
S303: Suarez
Fall 2016

Your Task:

Theorize Something. What does that mean you ask? Find something that you are interested in and apply theories used in class to offer a sociological explanation. Being able to use theory is a key process of *doing* sociology. Asking research questions and even collecting data alone are insufficient without theoretical explanations.

This is not a research paper; this does not require an extensive literature review chronicling what other sociological work has been done on this topic. I am interested in your own theoretical effort to explain your phenomenon of interest using the material from class. Which theorists and which theoretical perspectives are most helpful in explaining the social phenomenon of interest and why?

Paper should be 7-9 pages, standard margins, 12 pt. standard font (Arial, TNR, etc.).

The paper will be completed in separate parts that will keep you on track. Keep all of these separate assignments after they are handed back. **You will turn all of the previous assignments in with the final paper on December 12.**

All assignments associated with the paper and the final paper are due at the **beginning of class.**

Stages of the Assignment:

Stage 1: Object of Study (10 points) **DUE Friday, 9/9**

Write 1-2 pages about what you are going to theorize, and why, this semester. Remember to use your sociological imagination to ask your question. Your object should *vary* and your theorizing can explain that variation. The variation can occur over genders, race, age, location, or time (and others).

For example, you may theorize about the trend of increasing age of first marriage in the United States (a “public issue”.) But, you may NOT theorize why your second cousin, Louise, just got married for the first time at the age of 47 (“personal trouble.”) Clearly, the two are related, but remember that sociologists look at patterns and trends.

For the second part of this assignment, tell me why you want to theorize this. This is where you can mention cousin Louise, but you need to expand upon that reason. Why is the fact that Louise waited until 47 to get married interesting to you? Tell me why your object is puzzling. Louise’s delayed marriage may seem puzzling to you because you have read a lot of sociological research on the benefits of marriage and you think being married makes economic and personal sense, so you do not understand why she did not

marry earlier. Here is where you can discuss “personal trouble” but locate it within historical setting and the larger social structure as Mills suggests.

This assignment needs to include: the object you are going to theorize, your personal motivations for choosing this object, and an explanation of why this is a puzzle to you.

Stage 2: Provide Evidence that Object Exists (10 points) **DUE Friday, 9/30**

Write 1-2 pages providing some evidence that your object exists. If you are planning to theorize the increasing age at first marriage, you need to provide reputable sources (i.e. NOT Wikipedia) that this that the average age of first marriage is actually trending upward. This can be in the form of newspaper articles, Census data, and/or peer reviewed journal articles. You should not trust just one source to provide evidence. Cross check reports and find several pieces of evidence from diverse sources. You should include a works cited in ASA style (see examples at end of handout.) Remember that this is an academic paper so your tone must be formal. Tips: Do NOT list the title of the article or journal. Always refer to the author as the subject (i.e. journals/articles don’t “say/discuss,” etc.)

Stage 3: Theoretical Orientations (20 points) **DUE Wednesday, 10/26**

By this point, we have covered all the classical theories. Surely something we have talked about in class applies to the object you are theorizing. Remember that to theorize something is to explain something.

Do any of the perspectives we have discussed so far offer possible explanations to your social objects? Which ones and how so? This assignment should also be 2-3 pages and work through the logical progression of the theory and your theorizing. Work through the expectations of this theory for your social object.

*You can still use Contemporary theories, if you wish, for the final paper. But for this assignment use one or more of the Classical theories.

Stage 4: Workshop draft (10 points) **DUE Monday 12/5**

You should combine Steps 1-3 into a *coherent* full first draft, taking suggestions for revision into account. Here, you can elaborate on step 3 and incorporate contemporary theories.

Remember, this is a paper. It needs to have an introductory paragraph that explains to the reader what you will be doing in the paper and why it is important. Likewise, you need a concluding paragraph.

Revise your first draft based on feedback from previous sections.

Turn in the marked-up copy of all previous stages **in addition to** the final paper.

Grading:

Your paper grade will be composed of two parts:

1. The successful and on time completion of each stage (50 points total)
 - Late assignments will be marked down 5 points
 - Assignments evaluated based on how well you met the objectives of each assignment (outlined above)
 - Your assignments should have few grammar and spelling errors
2. Quality of theoretical argument and improvement over the semester. **50 points**
 - See rubric on the next page
 - Your final paper should **have minimal grammar and spelling errors!**

Works Cited Page:

You must include a Works Cited page at the end of the paper (**must be alphabetized**). Here are some examples of the format to use (if using ASA):

Goffman, Erving. 1959. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Anchor Books.

Gordon, Elisa and Christopher K. Daughtery. 2003. "Hitting You Over the Head: Oncologists' Disclosure of Prognosis to Advanced Cancer Patients." *Bioethics* 17: 142-168.

Rowell, Bridget, Pauline Norris, Kath Ryan, and Melissa Weenink. 2000. "Assessing and Managing Risk and Uncertainty: Women Living with Breast Implants." *Health, Risk, and Society* 2: 205-218.

Weitz, Rose. 2001. "Uncertainty and the Lives of Persons with AIDS." Pp. 126-136 in *The Sociology of Health and Illness: Critical Perspectives*, edited by Peter Conrad. New York: Worth Publishers.

Rubric for Final Paper: S303

Criteria	Exemplary (A)	Good (B)	Acceptable (C)	Unacceptable (D)
Purpose	Writer's central purpose is apparent to the reader	The writing has a clear purpose or argument, but may sometimes digress.	The central purpose or argument is not consistently clear.	The purpose or argument is unclear
Content	Presentation of relevant, legitimate information that clearly supports argument. Accurate application of theoretical concepts to social object.	Information provides reasonable support for a central purpose or argument and displays evidence of basic understanding of theoretical concept.	Information supports the argument at times. Application of theory is not generally accurate.	Application of theory (ies) is vague or not evident.
Organization	Ideas are arranged logically to support purpose or argument. They flow smoothly from one to another and are clearly linked. The reader can easily follow the line of reasoning.	Ideas arranged logically, for the most part, to support the central argument. Clarity of argument and application of theory is not always clear.	Writing is generally logically arranged, though ideas occasionally fail to make sense together.	Writing is not logically organized. Ideas often fail to make sense together. The reader cannot identify a consistent argument and line of reasoning.
Improvement	Many of the suggested revisions are adopted. Significant rewriting from first to full draft (if needed).		Low level of improvement over the semester, with very little rewriting.	Changes over the semester limited to editorial changes: grammar, spelling and punctuation.