

**Unit Essay 1**

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SOCL 401: Sociological Theory

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### **Summary of Changes**

For Unit Essay 1 I scored a 30 out of 33. Places I was marked off were for the length and completion of Question 1. To improve my writing I added more information surrounding each theorist and their major contributions. I did this by expanding on and going into more detail about the major contributions that each theorist had to Sociology. When expanding on the concepts I also was able to add more detail and length to the essay making it more informative and fully answering Question 1. In expanding more on each theorist, I also utilized more lecture material and readings, as reflected in my new references page.

### **Start of Revised UE 1**

Three early figures who helped establish sociology as a scientific discipline are Auguste Comte, Harriet Martineau, and Herbert Spencer. Auguste Comte, born in 1798 was a well educated French Sociologist mentored by Henri Saint-Simon. Comte's main aim was to create a naturalistic science of society that could explain both the past development of mankind and predict its future course (Coser, 2003). One of the major concepts from Comte was the law of three stages, where comte proposed that societies evolved through three stages of thought which are theological, metaphysical, and lastly scientific. Comte also introduced the term sociology, which originated from his concept of social physics. His concept of sociology, or social physics, is divided into subcategories social statics, the study of social structure, and social dynamics, the study of social change (Grether, 2025). Comte also invented positivism, as he believed that the “movement between theory and empirical observation would eventually lead to a small number of laws that will account for most of the observed human actions” (Allan & Daynes, 2017, p.11) meaning that if people keep creating theories and observing what humans do we will eventually find a theme of “rules” or “laws” that explain our behavior.

Harriet Martineau, born in 1802 was a homeschooled British Dissenter and abolitionist who brought a gendered standpoint to the development of Sociology. Martineau aimed to create a systematic science of society that was grounded in observation and easily accessible allowing individuals to “make personal and political decisions guided by a scientific understanding of the principles governing social life” (Lengermann & Niebrugge, 2007, p. 31). When discussing Martineau we must talk about her concepts, morals and manners. Morals are described as societal beliefs and values, and manners are the social practices people partake in. These concepts as argued by Martineau are the important aspects of understanding a person's character. Martineau also introduced a methodology to sociology grounded in impartiality, critique, and sympathy, all of which were concepts she used to uncover the different forms of domination in society related to gender and class (Grether, 2025)

The third figure, Herbert Spencer born in 1820, who was a British Dissenter with no formal education and homeschooled with a heavy emphasis on science. Spencer's main focus was on the evolutionary changes that took place within social structures and institutions (Allan & Daynes, 2017). He argued that the way in which societies evolve, relates similarly to the process of natural selection, which lead to his concept of Social Darwinism and phrase survival of the fittest. Spencer also contributed to early functionalism, as he viewed society as a system of various parts working together (Grether, 2025). He classified societies into two categories, militant, which is organized around hierarchy and power, or industrial, which is focused on cooperation and individual freedom (Allan & Daynes, 2017).

Sociological theory is a set of concepts, or better known as paradigms, that provide us explanations for broad phenomena within society. A paradigm is a worldview, or way of thinking, that can help us to understand the social world around us. Sociological theory is often

informed by our previous experiences, the eras we live in, previous work/theories, and new observations and data. There are several notable features to sociological theory, firstly being these theories attempt to understand the how and why the social world is the way it is. Secondly, sociological theory can range from small interactions between people (micro), to ties between people and groups (meso), and large scale social institutions (macro). Lastly, sociological theory is constantly evolving as society grows and changes over time, making it unique and different from scientific theory.

Although there are some similarities between scientific theories and sociological theories, there are some stark contrasts that differentiate the two. Unlike scientific theories, sociological theories are often more evaluative and are not meant to be predictive like theories in natural sciences (Edles & Appelrouth, 2010). Meaning, sociological theory is likely to engage in the how and why aspect of occurrences in society, but also engage in the what ought to be aspect of society. Another factor that separates sociological theory from scientific, is the nature of the things being studied. Since sociological theory is studying paradigms within society, the theories surrounding them must shift and change as society shifts and changes. This is different from natural science theories as it is harder to make a universal law to explain social dynamics as our behaviors are not the product of one principle, but rather multiple different factors (Edles & Appelrouth, 2010).

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**Unit Essay 2**

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SOCL 401: Sociological Theory

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### **Summary of Changes**

For Unit Essay 2 I scored a 29 out of 33. Places I was marked off were for the clarity, APA format, and completion of Question 1 and 3. To improve my writing I added more information surrounding the major social issues that influenced Du Bois work. I did this by discussing the time period he lived within and how this era in turn influenced the way he thought and the concepts he came up with. When expanding on the social issues of his time period and how that affected his theoretical interests, I was able to add more detail fully answering Question 1. I also went in and added more context and detail to help answer Question 3. I did this by discussing how Du Bois work is still prevalent within today's society by comparing the color line to disparities seen in education and the criminal justice system. I also mentioned how double consciousness can still be applied to BIPOC individuals and their experiences within professional and academic settings. Upon adding in more detail I also cited more sources, as reflected in my new references page, and cleaned up my essay to fit the APA format and be more concise.

### **Start of Revised UE 2**

W.E.B. Du Bois was a theorist whose work laid the foundations for understanding and assessing the shared racial experiences of BIPOC individuals in American society. As the first African American to earn a PhD from Harvard, Du Bois was not only a professor of history, sociology, and economics but also a co-founder of both the NAACP and American Sociology (Grether, 2025). Du Bois' work was majorly concerned with racial inequality, the social condition of Black Americans, and the societal structures that maintained racial oppression. A lot of his work can be related back to the time period he lived within. Being born in 1868, Du Bois

lived in a post Civil War period of Reconstruction and Jim Crow. Throughout this period of time there was a lot of change and institutional racism that took place. By having to live through this first hand, it caused Du Bois to develop insight and concepts surrounding the issues of his time. Not only was he able to see the issues embedded within society, but Du Bois was also able to see how these issues affected individuals' internal experiences, which relates to his work surrounding identity.

W.E.B. Du Bois made several key theoretical contributions to sociology including the concepts of the color line, the veil, double consciousness, mixed methods research, and race as a social construct. The color line as described by Du Bois is the global and systemic division between races, particularly between Black and white individuals, shaping social structures and opportunities (Morris, 2015). An idea that is still central to discussions of racial disparities in today's society. A subcategory concept to the color line is the veil, which is a symbolic metaphor for the barrier that separates Black Americans from full participation in society, in terms of social mobility and the way white individuals perceive them (Grether, 2025). The color line and the veil then lead into his concept of double consciousness, which describes the psychological conflict experienced by Black individuals who see themselves both through their own self-perception and through the lens of a racist society (Kaufman, 2013). These ideas highlight how racial identity is shaped by external forces and the struggle for self-definition. Du Bois also helped lay the groundwork for race as socially constructed. In saying this, Du Bois argued that racial differences were not biological but rather created and maintained by society to justify inequality (Grether, 2025). In addition to his contributions to social identity, Du Bois also helped pioneer the research method, mixed methods. Mixed methods research involves combining quantitative data with qualitative analysis (Grether, 2025). In Du Bois' case, he would utilize this method of

research to get a more comprehensive and detailed understanding of racial inequality. This can be shown through his work within *The Philadelphia Negro*, which is where he demonstrated how social conditions, rather than inherent racial traits, shaped the experiences of Black Americans (Crash Course, 2017).

W.E.B. Du Bois contributions remain relevant in studying and understanding society today as racial inequality still persists in social institutions and shapes individuals' experiences. The color line is still present within social institutions such as education and the criminal justice system. In education, this is evident in the disparities in school funding between predominantly white and predominantly Black schools, which directly affect resources, staffing, and student outcomes (Raikes, 2019). Similarly, the color line manifests in the criminal justice system through racial disparities in arrest and incarceration rates, with Black individuals disproportionately affected by systemic biases (Krisberg et al., 2019). Additionally, Du Bois concept of double consciousness still plays out within society as Black or Brown individuals continue to face internal conflict when navigating dominant cultural expectations. This especially manifests within professional and academic settings where individuals may feel pressured to code switch or alter their behavior to please their white counterparts and “fit in.” All of these examples show how Du Bois concepts are still prevalent within today's times.

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**Unit Essay 3**

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SOCL 401: Sociological Theory

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### **Summary of Changes**

For Unit Essay 3 I scored a 30 out of 34. Places I was marked off were for the length, APA format, and completion of Question 2 and 3. To improve my writing I added more information surrounding the theoretical contributions of Jane Addams and Charlotte Perkins Gilman. I did this by discussing major concepts related to each theorist and defining the concept. When expanding on the theoretical contributions of each theorist, rather than giving a personal biography and history of them, I was able to add more detail fully answering Question 2. I also went in and added more context and detail to help answer Question 3. I did this by discussing modern day issues that relate to the concepts of each theorist, rather than discussing how their own work relates to feminist theory. Upon adding in more detail I also cited more sources, as reflected in my new references page, cleaned up my essay to fit the APA format, and added length and conciseness to the essay.

### **Start of Revised UE 3**

The major concerns surrounding feminism were a result of individuals seeing the inequality that women faced within society and helping bring about change. Feminism by definition is the “consciousness-raising movement based on the idea that women and men should be accorded equal opportunities and respect” (Grether, 2025). This theoretical tradition was not set out to harm or bash men, but rather to bring light to the inequalities that women were facing.

Feminism came in multiple different phases, with each phase signifying a new call to justice or advocacy. The first wave of feminism occurred in 1848-1920 and was organized around women's suffrage (Grether, 2025). The second wave of feminism occurred in the

1960s-1980s, and was focused on the issues of women's equal access to employment, pay, education, & reproductive rights (Grether, 2025). The third wave occurring in the 1990s-2010s keyed in on diversity, the variety of identities a woman can possess, and addressed the past inequalities of the previous feminist movement (Grether, 2025). The third wave began to incorporate and fight for all types of women and began to be less exclusive. Although some say we are currently in a fourth wave of feminism it is hard to clearly see the picture. Some recent feminist movements and ideas that have come up in the present time are the Me Too Movement along with addressing patriarchal norms and practices, and embracing intersectionality.

Jane Addams, born in 1860 was a feminist and social activist whose ideas and insights developed from her lived experiences, community engagement, and hands-on social work. Driven by her sympathetic character and a belief that real social change required direct engagement with those most affected, Addams founded Hull House and engaged in real life interactions with marginalized individuals (Lengermann & Niebrugge, 2007). There, she developed her sociological perspective through direct interaction with immigrants, the poor, and working-class women, allowing her to bridge the gap between theory and practice (Lengermann & Niebrugge, 2007). The creation of Hull House, one of the first settlement houses in the United States, also directly relates to Addams concept of social ethics. Social ethics as described by Addams is the "importance of social responsibility and the interconnectedness of individual and societal well-being" (Addams, 1902). Meaning, everyone has a moral duty to help improve others lives and that an individual's wellbeing is also connected to the overall well being of society. In addition to her focus on poverty and inequality, Addams brought a feminist lens to sociology by elevating the value of women's social labor. She highlighted roles traditionally assigned to women such as caregiving, education, and community building as central to the

successful functioning of society. In doing so, she challenged prevailing gender norms that devalued women's contributions to public life and social reform ("The Greatest Woman in the World," 2020).

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, born in 1860 was another vital feminist and social reformer. Gilman's major concepts revolved around critiquing the roles women were expected to play within society, particularly in the private and domestic sphere, while also advocating for gender equality. Gilman offered a more critical view arguing that women should reject the traditional domestic norms they have been constrained within, and instead pursue independence through access to paid work, education, and broader social participation (Lengermann & Niebrugge, 2007). A vital part of achieving this economic dependence comes from understanding Gilman's concept of the Sexuo-economic relation, which is the "the intertwined relationship between sexual and economic inequality between men and women" (Gilman, 1998). In Gilman's view, women's economic dependence on men was not natural or inevitable, but rather socially constructed and reinforced by marriage, motherhood, and societal expectations. She believed that because women were economically reliant on their husbands or male relatives, they were forced into roles that limited their intellectual and personal growth. This structural economic inequality also reinforced gender hierarchies, where men held power in both public and private life (Allan, 2017). Gilman argued that if women were allowed to fully participate in the labor force and gain financial independence, society would become more equitable, not only for women, but for the collective social good.

As previously mentioned, feminist theory emphasizes the need to understand and challenge gender inequality in both personal and institutional settings. Both Jane Addams and Charlotte Perkins Gilman embody this tradition through their advocacy and sociological ideas.

Addams brought feminist ideas to life through her work at Hull House, where she uplifted the voices and experiences of immigrant and working-class women. She also recognized the deep value in caregiving, education, and community work, roles often taken on by women and too often overlooked or dismissed by society. Her work can be seen in modern day conversations about the need for paid family leave and equitable childcare systems. This is an example of how Addams work illustrates this theoretical tradition as she was an advocate for women and bringing to light the often overlooked work and unpaid labor they bring to society. Charlotte Perkins Gilman also embodied feminist theory through her critique of traditional gender roles and her concept of the sexuo-economic relation. She highlighted how women's economic dependence on men reinforced their subordinate status, a theme she powerfully explored in *The Yellow Wallpaper*. Her work foreshadowed current debates on gender wage gaps, the undervaluing of women's work, and the psychological toll of restrictive gender expectations. These are examples of how Gilman's work illustrates this theoretical tradition because they highlight the gender inequality that women still face within their pay which is a vital part of feminist theory and achieving gender equality.

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