Texas A&M University  
Departmental Request for a New Course  
Undergraduate • Graduate • Professional  
Submit original form and attach a course syllabus.

1. This request is submitted by the Department of  
   Sociology

2. Course prefix, number and complete title of course: Sociology 676: Theory Construction

3. Course description (not to exceed 50 words): Examination of issues on the philosophy of science and their relationship to the development of social science theory, particularly in sociology. Students will develop and apply theory construction principles to their own research agendas.

4. Prerequisite(s): Graduate Classification

Cross-listed with:  

Cross-listed courses require the signature of both department heads.

5. Is this a variable credit course?  
   □ Yes  
   □ No  
   If yes, from _____ to _____

6. Is this a repeatable course?  
   □ Yes  
   □ No  
   If yes, this course may be taken _____ times.  
   Will this course be repeated within the same semester?  
   □ Yes  
   □ No

7. Has this course been taught as a 489/689?  
   □ Yes  
   □ No  
   If yes, how many times?  
   2  
   Indicate the number of students enrolled for each academic period it was taught. 07A-12; 08A-14

8. This course will be:  
   a. required for students enrolled in the following degree programs(s) (e.g., B.A. in history)
   b. an elective for students enrolled in the following degree program(s) (e.g., M.S., Ph.D. in geography)
   M.S., Ph.D. in Sociology

9. If other departments are teaching or are responsible for related subject matter, the course must be coordinated with these departments. Attach approval letters.

10. Prefix | Course # | Title (excluding punctuation) | Lect. | Lab | SCH | CIP and Fund Code | Admin. Unit | Acad. Year | FICE Code |
     Sociology 676 Theory Construction | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 0 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 6 | 3 | 2 | Level 6

Approval recommended by:  
Head of Department  
Date  
Chair, College Review Committee  
Date  
Head of Department (if cross-listed course)  
Date  
Dean of College  
Date  
Submitted to Coordinating Board by:  
Associate Director, Curricular Services  
Date  
Effective Date

Questions regarding this form should be directed to Sandra Williams at 845-8201.
Curricular Services – 11/07

1 of 6 C14
Texas A&M University
Departmental Request for a New Course
Undergraduate • Graduate • Professional
Submit original form and attach a course syllabus.

1. This request is submitted by the Department of Sociology

2. Course prefix, number and complete title of course: Sociology 676: Theory Construction

3. Course description (not to exceed 50 words):
The course examines issues in the philosophy of sciences and how these relate to theoretical development in the social sciences, in particular, sociology. Students will be developing their own theoretical agendas and applying theory construction principles to these agendas.

4. Prerequisite(s): Graduate classification

Cross-listed with:

Cross-listed courses require the signature of both department heads.

5. Is this a variable credit course? □ Yes □ No

6. Is this a repeatable course? □ Yes □ No

Will this course be repeated within the same semester? □ Yes □ No

If yes, this course may be taken _______ times.

7. Has this course been taught as a 489/689? □ Yes □ No

If yes, how many times? 2

Indicate the number of students enrolled for each academic period it was taught: 07A-12; 08A-14

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10. Prefix: SOC Course #: 676 Title (excluding punctuation): THEORY CONSTRUCTION

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<th>Lab</th>
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Approval recommended by:

Head of Department [Signature] 9/23/08

Head of Department (if cross-listed course) [Signature] Date

Submitted to Coordinating Board by:

Associate Director, Curricular Services [Signature] Date

Questions regarding this form should be directed to Sandra Williams at 845-8201.
Curricular Services – 11/07

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Sociology 676
Theory Construction

Jane Sell
305 Academic
845-6120
Office Hours: Wednesday 2-5 or by appointment.
j-sell@neo.tamu.edu
http://sociweb.tamu.edu/Faculty/SELL/home1.html

The course and course objectives: The course examines issues in the philosophy of science and how these relate to theoretical development in the social sciences and, in particular, sociology. Students will be developing their own theoretical agendas and applying theory construction principles to these agendas. Students will be able to discuss different approaches and controversies in theory development in the social sciences. Students will be able to discuss different approaches to the definition of concepts. Students will be able to apply deductive logic rules to different social science formulations. Students will gain experience in writing social science research proposals.

Prerequisites: The course is designed for graduate students who have been in graduate school at least one year and have background in quantitative and qualitative methods and theory. If you are in doubt about whether your background is sufficient, please talk with me.

Assignments, Tests and Grading: There will be five short (3-5 pages) papers worth 65% of the grade and a final paper worth 35% of the grade. More details about the paper will be handed out well before the papers are due. The final paper will be a presentation and justification of a specific theoretical framework you have developed. Each of the papers are graded on a scale of 0-100. An average of 90 and above is an A; an average of 80 and above is a B; an average of 70 and above is a C; 60 and above is a D and below 60 is a F.

Communications: I will often post notices or send notes. To do this, I will ordinarily send emails over neo. Please use your neo account and check it regularly.

Readings: There are three books and a reading packet. The books are: Peter Godfrey-Smith, Theory and Reality: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Science, University of Chicago Press, 2003; Karl Popper, The Logic of Scientific Discovery, 1959; Daniel Solow, How to Read and Do Proofs, John Wiley and Sons, 1982. The reading packet is in the reserved section of the library:ereserves.tamu.edu. This is accessed through the library website.

Note on handouts and plagiarism: The handouts used in this course are copyrighted. By that is meant all materials generated for this class, which include but are not limited to syllabi, exams and assignments, in-class materials, review sheets, etc. Because these materials are copyrighted, you do not have the right to copy the handouts unless permission is expressly granted.

As commonly defined, plagiarism consists of passing off as one's own the ideas, words, writings, etc., which belong to another. In accordance with this definition, you are committing plagiarism if you copy the work of another person and turn it in as your own, even if you have the permission of that person. You are also committing plagiarism if you present another's work as your own (for example by close paraphrasing) if you do not give clear attribution (for example by using quotation marks or otherwise indicating that the idea came from someone else, even if you include the person in your bibliography. If in doubt, give attribution. Failure to do so may result in serious sanctions. If you have questions about
plagiarism, consult the latest issue of Texas A&M University Student Rules. You will find it under “Scholastic Dishonesty.”

**Aggie Honor Code:** “An Aggie does not lie, cheat or steal, or tolerate those who do” For further information on academic integrity see: http://www.tamu.edu/aggiehonor

**ADA:** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Department of Student Life, Services for Students with Disabilities in B118 Cain Hall, MS 1224 (845-1637).

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**What is Theory Construction and Why Is It Important? (Class periods 1 and 2)**

Readings:
Godfrey-Smith, Introduction, pages 1-18


*First paper*

**The Issue of Induction (class periods 2 and 3)**

Readings:
Godfrey-Smith, Chapters 2 and 3


Jay Stephen Gould, excerpt from *The Panda’s Thumb* (reserves)

Analyses of research methods books on induction and its use (in class)

*Second Paper*

**The Issue of Deduction (class period 4)**

Godfrey-Smith, Chapters 4

Kuhn and Normal Science- (class period 5)

Godfrey-Smith, chapter 5 and 6
Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, 1962, excerpts (ereserves)
Kuhn, The Road since Structure, 2000, excerpts (ereserves)

Lakatos, Laudan, Feyerabend, (class period 6)

Godfrey-Smith, Chapter 7

Challenges from Sociology of Science (class period 7)
Godfrey-Smith, chapter 8
Latour and Woolgar, Laboratory Life, 1979, excerpts (ereserves)

Feminism and Science Studies (class period 8)
Godfrey-Smith, Chapter 9
“the science wars”— (readings including the Sokal’s 1996, “Transgressing the Boundaries: Toward a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity. Social Text12:217-52. (ereserves)

Donna Haraway, Primate Visions, 1989, pp. 115-185. (ereserves)

Third paper

Scope conditions, propositions, logical statements (class period 9 and 10)


Fourth Paper

Definitions and their role in Deductive Arguments (class periods 11 & 12)


Solow, Developing deductive arguments: Solow, pp. 1-44.

Fifth paper

Putting concepts, assumptions, definitions together (class period 13 and 14)

Solow, pp. 45-91.

Historical Theories and Theory Construction (class period 14)


Final Paper: Due on the May 11th at 10am.