



**Theories of Community
FYC 6330, Sections O211 & O212
Distance Ed Program
Fall Semester, 2021**

Instructor Information

Mickie Swisher
3026 McCarty Hall
meswisher@ufl.edu
Office Hours: By appointment via Zoom

Consultation Policy

All correspondence regarding this course must occur through Canvas, Zoom or your UFL e-mail account. UF does not permit student-faculty correspondence regarding instructional matters through other venues. I will work with you to set up teleconferences or Zoom meetings at any time. Please request a meeting, preferably one day in advance, by telephone or e-mail. I will provide my personal number so that you can text or phone me at any time in an e-mail after class starts.

Venue

Section 330A will meet via zoom during periods 7-9 on Thursday from (1:55 to 4:55 PM). I will consult with students in Sections 211 and 212 to try to find a time when we can also meet via Zoom. This is not a requirement for the course, but my experience over several years has been that students who participate in a group setting gain more from my classes and typically have better grades. If it is impossible for you to meet at any of the times that emerge as possibilities, or if you do not want to attend, you will be able to submit all materials through Canvas and I will provide recordings of the portions of the class meeting that constitute my "lectures".

Course Description

We will experiment with theories in this class. My goal is not to convince you that one theoretical perspective is better than the others or to adopt a specific theoretical stance in your own work. I want you to be comfortable using theory to understand and analyze why social problems like prejudice and injustice, poverty, substance abuse, chronic exposure to environmental hazards, inadequate schools, hunger and many other problems persist in communities in the United States and around the world. We will look at the full range of social theories that are used to understand, explain and address these problems.

I want you to "think theoretically" rather than "think experientially" in this class. This requires you to put aside what you have always thought, your direct experiences, and what you have been taught about these problems and consider dissimilar ideas from diverse, including opposing, theoretical viewpoints. It requires that you question what you think as well as what others think about the problems and how to solve them. I want you to put aside the ideas that you hold long enough to give them serious consideration as "good and adequate" explanations of why so many problems are so persistent. I will also ask you to look for the weaknesses, for what they cannot or do not explain. Think of this like test-driving a car you might buy. You take it for a test drive to see if it meets your performance standards. That's what I want you to do with theory in this class – both the theories that you hold dear and perspectives that you do not hold.

The theoretical perspectives we will examine can be applied to most social problems and used to understand individual, group, and community level processes and systems. They can be applied to companies, governments, and organizations as well as individual people. Our emphasis is the community as a geographic place. We focus on community because all of us live *somewhere* and the nature of the community in which we live has enormous impacts on our lives. I will ask you therefore to focus your work this semester on one or more problems, issues or needs that arise from and can be addressed by processes and systems *in communities* rather than those that can be addressed at the individual level. For example, it is true that one's individual dietary choices play a critical role in whether one's diet is adequate for mental and physical health. However, our interest in this class is how traits and characteristics of the community in which one lives affect the dietary choices one can or does make. A focus on individual choices would probably lead us to decide that an educational program to change individual behavior is the best solution to the problem of obesity. A focus on community would lead us to focus on issues like availability of healthy foods and access to them at the community level. This community focus would probably lead us to decide that finding ways to get healthy food into the community is the best solution to the problem. In fact, most persistent solutions to persistent problems require changes at many levels – national, community, and individual. Our focus is that intermediate place where people live and carry out their daily lives. For example, the features of the food system in that community affect both individual choices and the efficacy of federal policies aimed at providing food assistance to those who need it most.

Course Goals & Objectives

The overarching goal of this class is for you to be able to use theory in your personal and professional life to:

1. Provide alternative explanations of the nature, cause and potential solutions to issues, needs and problems in communities
2. Analyze how these theoretical perspectives are applied in research, development of solutions to the persistent social problems in communities, and the public discourse about how to solve these problems
3. Use theory in your professional life to conduct research and implement proposed solutions in communities
4. Apply theory as a citizen to the conduct of your professional, personal and public roles in civil society

The Components in the Course

Preparing for Class. The Turner textbook (see below) provides you with an understanding of major social theories and theoretical perspectives. It is well organized. It gives a good overview of key theories and theoretical concepts. It is definitely a quick read – so much so that some would say it is superficial. We use it as the basis for *starting to think* about these theories, so I am not concerned about that. However, you need to understand the material in Turner thoroughly to make use of the other resources each week. Therefore, I expect you to be versed in the material in the textbook prior to class.

You must do more than read – you need to ***think critically about what you read***. Thinking critically about what you read in the assigned materials is probably the most important thing you can do in this class. Critical thinking does not mean *criticizing everything*. We will base our work on the thinking skills and especially the higher order cognitive skills as defined in Bloom's

Revised Taxonomy. See Vanderbilt University's description at <https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/blooms-taxonomy/>). This taxonomy defines six cognitive levels that human beings can reach. Our tasks in this course, like most graduate courses, focus on the higher skills, analyzing, evaluating, and creating. However, to reach the higher skills, you need to work through the lower skill levels. For example, you must be able to remember and understand key concepts in a theory before you can apply these concepts to solve a problem. I might ask you to prepare for class by identifying the theoretical assumptions that underlie some proposed public policy or being able to explain something *in your own words* instead of repeating what an author or speaker said. You should prepare for class by making sure that you have good command of theoretical ideas and I will give you some "thinking homework" most weeks to help you make sure you have the basic ideas well identified and can explain them.

Class Activities. We will devote most of our class time to presentations by you and to group discussions. I will provide you with guidance each week about how to prepare for the class session. These class activities will focus on the higher cognitive skills like analysis, evaluation, and creation of new ideas. The class activities will, for the most part, draw on the additional materials provided for the class (see below). We will rely mostly on the additional resources listed each week at the course website. These readings provide (some good, some not so good) examples of instances where the theoretical perspectives that we are discussing each week can be applied to understand problems, issues, needs (PINs), characteristics, or change in communities. The readings offer an opportunity to discuss, contrast, and compare how different theoretical perspectives play into the public discussion and perception of the role of communities in contemporary life, the needs of communities, how communities are changing, or how policies affect contemporary communities. Most weeks you will have an option to select a reading, but some weeks I will assign a reading to you. I will provide some tasks for you to use to make sure that you can use the theoretical ideas at the higher cognitive levels of application to creating your own ideas. We will use the readings for activities in class in which you will share your ideas and apply what we have learned about social theory to the discourse about the nature of communities today, the practice of community development, the practice of democracy in the community, and public discourse about appropriate policies for "doing something" to solve problems.

Assignments. The assignments are described in detail in separate documents. The assignments provide an opportunity for you to apply several theories to a *community-based* problem, issue or need (PIN) of importance to you. There are three assignments. The first is to provide an overview of the community-based factors that are believed to affect the prevalence, persistence, and severity of the PIN you have selected as the focus of your work for the semester. The second is to review the research base for at least two different theoretical perspectives on the PIN and assess the strength of each explanation of the origin, persistence, and prevalence of the PIN. The third is to make a video presentation (recorded via Zoom) in which you argue for a specific approach to solving the PIN you have selected in a town hall type setting, e.g., to a public audience. You will submit an annotated bibliography at the end of the course that consists of ***analytical annotations*** of the materials you have encountered in the course (other than Turner) that are of most interest to you and that you are likely to use in the future. This should include at least 15 references. You may use references that you consulted for the assignments.

Think Tanks. Good think tanks are an excellent source of high-quality discussion about critical issues, most with a focus on policy. I will provide some websites where you can learn about the different think tanks in the US and internationally. It is a course requirement that you join three think tanks, at least one of which must have its headquarters outside the United States and at

least one of which must be in the United States. The three think tanks must represent *distinct points of view, including points of view that are **NOT** viewpoints that you normally engage with. In short, I want you to purposefully expand your horizons to move beyond a focus on a subject matter area, sector of the society, or type of institution that you currently feel comfortable with.* For example, if you tend to share more “liberal” perspectives about policy, make sure you sign up with a think tank that adopts more “conservative” perspectives.

Two Key Skills for Success

If you do not know how to use the library electronic journal search engines, you must learn to do so to succeed in this course. Finding, consulting, citing and referencing published research journal articles about the topics that we cover in this course is an absolute prerequisite for success. You have to use the electronic search engine to do so.

Textbook

Turner, Jonathan H. (2013) *Theoretical Sociology: A Concise Introduction to Twelve Sociological Theories*. First Edition. Sage Publications.

Other Required and Additional Materials

I will provide required readings from other sources. Some additional required readings for the course consist of research journal articles. Some are materials from my personal library. All required materials, other than the textbook, will be available through the UF library. My personal materials and some articles will be available through **e-reserve**. If you do not know how to get materials from e-reserve, consult the UF libraries website for instructions. If a journal article is **not** available through the course e-reserve, you can still get it, but you will have to retrieve it yourself. If you do not know how to use the UF library system to retrieve journal articles, you **must** learn to do so to succeed in this course. **Every article is available to you free of charge through the UF library system, but you must gain access through your UFL account. Set up VPN (Virtual Private Network, Cisco) if you have not yet done so. This is crucial.** I strongly encourage you to consult the materials listed under “Additional Materials.” While these are not required readings, you will find them very helpful and save yourself a lot of time looking for material to use in assignments by consulting them.

Schedule of Topics

Week	Date	Topic	Pages in Turner	Think Tank Discussions In Class Assignments Due Fri., 11:59 PM
1	Jan 14	Modernity, community, inclusion and exclusion		
2	Jan 21	Community as Citizenship – Using Theory, Thinking Critically, and Civil Interactions		Think Tank 1
3	Jan 28	Community as Life-Support: Functional & Ecological Theories	7-31 60-72	
4	Feb. 04	Community Conflict: Change and Resistance	32-59	

5	Feb. 11	Exchanges as the Social Glue that Holds Communities Together – or Drives them into Pieces	73-95	Assignment 1: The PIN
6	Feb 18	Identity: Community as the Stage for the Roles We Play	96-116 117-135	
7	Feb. 25	Recharge Day!		
8	Mar. 04	Back to Structure: How We Make Rules	136-163	Think Tank 2
9	Mar. 11	Community as Culture	164-196	Assignment 2: Explaining Conflict & Inequality
10	Mar. 18	Communities of the Future	197-221	
11	Mar. 25	Class, Race, Ethnicity, and Gender in Communities		Think Tank 3
12	Apr. 01	Class, Race, Ethnicity, Gender Do communities evolve?	222-244 Optional	
13	Apr. 08	Civil Discourse in an Age of Discord		Think Tank 4
14	Apr. 15	Closure presentations and discussion		Assignment 3: Your Contribution to the Civil Discourse
	Apr. 21	CLASSES END		

Grading Philosophy and Policy

I award grades not to punish poor performance, but rather to help you understand and master the material we are covering. My goal is for every student to earn an A in this course. I expect to see increased comprehension and dominance of the concepts and ideas that we discuss during the course. Therefore, my expectations grow as the semester progresses. For information on current UF policies for assigning grade points, see <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

Late Submission Policy

I reserve the right to refuse to accept work submitted after the due date. UF policy covers the student's responsibility for informing the professor of planned absences and illness and these policies are followed in this class. I will award zero (0) points for any assignment that is submitted after the due date that fails to meet UF policy for excused absences. All due dates are given at the class web site. Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments and other work are consistent with university policies that can be found at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>. If circumstances beyond your control prevent you from submitting material by a deadline and if you inform me in advance of the due date that you will not be able to submit on time, I may accept the late submission. I will reduce the points awarded by 5% per day late. I grade submissions as a group in a three-step process. Late submissions are out of phase in the review process. Therefore, I may not be able to grade a late submission quickly and you will not get the full benefit of my comments for your work on the subsequent submission.

Grading Scale

	%		%		%		%		%
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A	95-100	B+	87-89	C+	77-79	D+	67-69	E	<60
A-	90-94	B	83-86	C	73-76	D	63-66		
		B-	80-82	C-	70-72	D-	60-62		

Components in the Grade

Component	Possible Points
Think Tank Discussions (4, 50 points each)	200
Assignments (3, 200 each)	600
Class Presentations of Additional Readings (50 points each)	100
Class Participation	100
Total	1000

Give-A-Gator Points – up to 25

Most of us learn more effectively when we can discuss our ideas with others. I encourage you to engage in collaborative learning, work together, and help each other. Share your ideas with classmates. Discuss the assignments. Share materials that you find for the course. Borrow ideas from each other. You may award someone who plays an important role in your learning process this semester up to 25 **Give-A-Gator Points** at the end of the semester. Award the points **only** if someone was important to your learning experience. You have **a total of 25 points to award**. You can award points to up to three people – for example 7 for person 1, 10 for person 2, and 8 for person 3 – **no partial points like 12.5**.

University of Florida Policies

Attendance and Make-Attendance and Make-up Work

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments and other work are consistent with university policies that can be found at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>.

Online Course Evaluation Process

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. [Click here for guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner](#). Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via ufl.bluera.com/ufl/. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students [here](#).

Student Privacy

There are federal laws protecting your privacy with regards to grades earned in courses and on individual assignments. For more information, please see the [Notification to Students of FERPA Rights](#).

Academic Honesty

As a student at the University of Florida, you have committed yourself to uphold the Honor Code, which includes the following pledge: *"We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity."* You are expected to exhibit behavior consistent with this commitment to the UF academic community, and on all work submitted for credit at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: *"On my honor, I have neither given nor received*

unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." It is assumed that you will complete all work independently in each course unless the instructor provides explicit permission for you to collaborate on course tasks (e.g. assignments, papers, quizzes, exams). Furthermore, as part of your obligation to uphold the Honor Code, you should report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. It is your individual responsibility to know and comply with all university policies and procedures regarding academic integrity and the Student Honor Code. Violations of the Honor Code at the University of Florida will not be tolerated. Violations will be reported to the Dean of Students Office for consideration of disciplinary action. For more information regarding the Student Honor Code, see: <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>

Software Use

All faculty, staff and students of the university are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against university policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate.

Services for Students with Disabilities

The Disability Resource Center coordinates the needed accommodations of students with disabilities. This includes registering disabilities, recommending academic accommodations within the classroom, accessing special adaptive computer equipment, providing interpretation services and mediating faculty- student disability related issues. Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation 0001 Reid Hall, 352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/

Campus Helping Resources

Students experiencing crises or personal problems that interfere with their general wellbeing are encouraged to utilize the university's counseling resources. The Counseling & Wellness Center provides confidential counseling services at no cost for currently enrolled students. Resources are available on campus for students having personal problems or lacking clear career or academic goals, which interfere with their academic performance.

Health and Wellness

U Matter, We Care:

If you or a friend is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu or 352 392-1575 so that a team member can reach out to the student.

Counseling and Wellness Center: counseling.ufl.edu/cwc, and 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS)

Student Health Care Center, 392-1161.

University Police Department at 392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies), or police.ufl.edu.

Academic Resources

E-learning technical support, 352-392-4357 (select option 2) or e-mail to Learning-support@ufl.edu.

Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, 392-1601. Career assistance and counseling.

Library Support, Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

Teaching Center, Broward Hall, 392-2010 or 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.

Writing Studio, 302 Tigert Hall, 846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.

On-Line Students Complaints

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Wellness Coaching

U Matter We Care, www.umatter.ufl.edu/

Career Resource Center, First Floor JWRU, 392-1601, www.crc.ufl.edu/ **Student Complaints**

Residential Course: https://www.dso.ufl.edu/documents/UF_Complaints_policy.pdf

Online Course: <http://www.distance.ufl.edu/student-complaint-process>

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