



# Foundations of Social Understanding: A Theory and Institutions Based Introduction to Sociology

*Thomas Burns, Edward Kick, Dallos Paz*

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The goal of *Foundations of Social Understanding: A Theory and Institutions Based Introduction to Sociology*, is to convey the essential aspects of Sociology, keeping the focus on the theoretical ideas that form the backbone of the discipline. This book fills a niche for instructors and students who wish to have a rigorously presented, yet low-cost text that covers essential aspects of the field.

The Burns, Kick and Paz text is distinctive in the density of material it covers. The authors move beyond the tiresome debates about which theoretical position is “really” correct and which is wrong. The guiding philosophy is that the discipline of sociology has a strong and integrated core. While no theory explains everything, each of those presented does well at shedding light on something. Part of what needs to be considered in conjunction with the study of theory is the question of what domain of social reality it is most useful at explaining.

The very core of a discipline is the theories it has developed. For better or worse, the discipline of Sociology has spawned a sometimes dizzying array of studies, empirical and otherwise. These are necessary, but not sufficient, to have a rich and worthwhile discipline, and one that offers insight into the human condition. Theories—the worthwhile ones—come about more slowly. Theory is not about what happened in the latest studies. It is born of hard-won insight, sometimes over the course of years or decades, or even lifetimes.

Rather than treating theory as if it were a sub-discipline of Sociology, the authors see the theories of Sociology as the backbone of the discipline itself. Thus, they focus on theoretical development throughout the text, so that students, from the very first day they begin to study Sociology, have access to this powerful set of tools in their foundational understanding of society.

The authors have produced a book that appeals to the intelligence and sociological imagination of serious students and their teachers. Our approach is to offer students a “cognitive map” of the field in a scholarly, yet straightforward, way. The guiding philosophy is that Sociology, particularly when considering it through the framework of the theory that underpins it, is not only a worthwhile avenue of inquiry; it is endlessly fascinating in its own right.

Read what prior students have had to say:

“The book encourages critical thinking. It goes into depth in the theories. The theories are valid for explaining current events. I’ve learned so much from this course it’s astonishing.”

“I really REALLY liked this class, and I’d definitely recommend it to anyone... I’d like to take more SOC classes now. The material assigned was not only relevant, but it was actually interesting.”

“The book in this course was very helpful in understanding the society that we live in. It taught a wide range of material in a short time. It gave a lot of complexity, while at the same time being able to follow.”

“Great book...It was very interesting, well organized, and applied to real life! The wide range of theories gave us a lot of leeway to study topics that specifically interested us. This course really made me enjoy studying... I'm seriously looking into Sociology as a major or minor now.”

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