

Major Sociological Theories

Sociology offers four major theoretical perspectives to understand social phenomena: **Functionalism, Conflict Theory, Symbolic Interactionism, and Utilitarianism.**

Functionalism views society as a complex system where each part works together to promote stability and **cohesion**. Inspired by the works of Emile Durkheim, this theory emphasizes social institutions—like family, education, and religion—as crucial components that fulfill societal needs.

Conflict Theory, rooted in Karl Marx's ideas, sees society as an arena of **inequality** where groups compete for scarce resources. It highlights the struggles between dominant and marginalized groups, focusing on power, class, and **social change**.

Symbolic Interactionism examines society through the lens of individual interactions. Influenced by George Herbert Mead, this perspective explores how people create and interpret symbols, language, and shared meanings in daily life.

Utilitarianism, or Rational Choice Theory, explains social behavior as the result of individuals making decisions to maximize their benefits and minimize costs. This perspective assumes that human actions are motivated by **self-interest** and calculated choices.

Together, these theories provide distinct yet complementary lenses to analyze and interpret social life.