







# Master of Arts Interdisciplinary Studies (MAIS) 601

## Making Sense of Theory in the Humanities and Social Sciences

(Revision 5)

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>Status:</b>        | Replaced with new revision, see the <a href="#">course listing</a>  for the current revision  |
| <b>Delivery mode:</b> | Grouped study    |
| <b>Credits:</b>       | 3   |
| <b>Area of study:</b> | Arts  |
| <b>Prerequisites:</b> | None  |
| <b>Precluded:</b>     | None  |
| <b>Faculty:</b>       | Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences    |

**Notes:**

Students in Group Study courses are advised that this syllabus may vary in key details in each instance of the course. Always refer to the Moodle site for the most up-to-date details on texts, assignment structure, and grading.

## Overview

As a core entry course in the MA-IS Program, MAIS 601: Making Sense of Theory in the Humanities and Social Sciences prepares learners for further graduate work in interdisciplinary studies, laying the groundwork for their own application and development of theoretical perspectives in their various itineraries through the Program while promoting dialogue, thinking, and writing in an interdisciplinary way. The course not only provides students with an opportunity to explore the origins and meanings of the various theories that inform the contemporary humanities and social sciences, but it initiates learners into the role of the theoretician who frames the world in a certain way in order to render particular phenomena more salient for study and analysis. Thus, it is about doing theory above and beyond just learning about various theories, revealing “theory” to be, at its best, not the application of abstract mental constructs to an external world but a way of seeing that makes certain aspects of that world visible. In this way, the course challenges the classical opposition between theory and practice, revealing theory to be itself a kind of practice that no pragmatism can afford to do without.

The course calls for three modes of student participation:

1. participation in general online discussion,
2. group work, in which students collaborate with a few of their fellow learners to produce a jointly agreed upon response to selected readings, and
3. individual moderation of class discussions of readings based on short response papers that include the questions for discussion.

## Outline

- Introduction: How to Read Theory Texts
- Unit 1: What Is Theory?
- Unit 2: What Is Interdisciplinarity?
- Unit 3: Exploring the MA-IS Focus Areas
- Unit 4: Diving Into Theory
- Unit 5: Bringing It All Together

## Learning outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- define what it means to “theorize,” explain its relevance to individual and social life, as well as identify relevant theories and apply them to contemporary issues/problems (MA-IS program outcome: social relevance),
- critically discuss and describe what an “interdisciplinary theory” might look like (MA-IS program outcome: integrated learning),
- gain familiarity with the MA-IS focus areas and determine where one’s scholarly interests might lie with respect to them,
- demonstrate a critical understanding of some of the more influential theoretical models and schools across the disciplines of the humanities and social sciences, as well as discuss and critically evaluate the meaning of “decolonization” with respect to various theoretical approaches (MA-IS program outcomes: paradigm challenge, social relevance, and self-critical thinking), and
- construct and populate a personal eportfolio that will remain with each student throughout the MA-IS Program and beyond (MA-IS program outcome: integrated learning).

## Evaluation

In this foundation course, students will be assessed on a pass/fail basis. To help students plan their individual study schedules, each activity is weighted proportionately. Your work in this course will be evaluated according to style, thesis/argument, research, background/context, conclusion and grammar/mechanics.

To receive credit for MAIS 601: Making Sense of Theory in the Humanities and Social Sciences, students will be required to successfully complete each of the following activities.





| Activity      | Weight |
|---------------|--------|
| Participation | 20%    |

| Activity  | Weight      |
|---|-------------|
| Reflective Analysis                               | 10%         |
| Eportfolio  | 15%         |
| Two Short Reflections                             | 10%         |
| Critical Reflection Essay and Questions           | 15%         |
| Final Essay/Reflective Narrative Outline/Proposal | 5%          |
| Final Essay or Reflective Narrative               | 25%         |
| <b>Total</b>                                      | <b>100%</b> |

## Materials

All course materials for MAIS 601 are available online through the course site, including a Course Information manual, a Study Guide, and online readings and audiovisual materials.

## Important links

- › [Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies](#) 
- › [Focus Areas](#) 
- › [Courses](#) 
- › [Fees and Funding](#) 

Athabasca University reserves the right to amend course outlines occasionally and without notice. Courses offered by other delivery methods may vary from their

individualized study counterparts.

*Opened in Revision 5, September 7, 2021*

*Updated September 10, 2024*

View **previous revision** [↗](#)

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