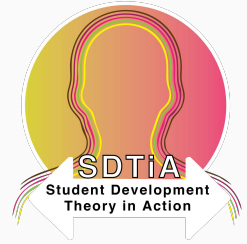


# Formal Theory Paper



## Assignment Rationale

The Formal Theory paper is a learning activity that supports students' engagement with *translating formal and informal theory* within the Student Development Theory in Action (SDTiA) framework by helping them develop the theory-to-practice connections that deepen their understanding of college student development. Applying formal theory to their own real-life experiences deepens students' understanding of how developmental processes unfold across classroom and practice settings in higher education, while also strengthening their theory-building and practice-assessment skills.

## Assignment Overview

This is an individual assignment, where students will use formal theory to build on the analysis they presented in the Informal Theory Paper.

## Assignment Requirements

Students must select one or more formal theories studied in this course to expand on the analysis they presented in the Informal Theory Paper. Specifically, the analysis presented in the Formal Theory Paper should:

1. **Connect** the assumptions and core concepts of the selected theory or theories to your lived experience.
2. **Explain** how specific elements of the theory or theories help account for your developmental growth during college.
3. **Evaluate** the theory/theories by identifying any limitations or gaps in how well they explain your personal experiences.

To support your expanded analysis, students are expected to conduct additional research beyond course readings. Students' papers must cite **a minimum of five (5) scholarly sources** not assigned in class. These sources will help students more effectively situate their personal insights within relevant academic literature.

The papers submitted for this assignment should be **10–12 double-spaced pages** in length, **excluding the cover and reference pages**. Students can write in the **first person**, consistent with APA style guidelines for reflective and analytical writing. Papers will be reviewed by the instructor and the teaching assistant (TAs).

## Grading Criteria

Students' papers will be evaluated based on:

- Alignment with all assignment guidelines
- Clarity and coherence in presenting your ideas
- Depth and insight in your analysis
- Quality and correctness of academic writing
- Integration and appropriate citation of scholarly sources