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## UNDERSTANDING SOCIETY

*“Ours is a time of uneasiness and indifference ... Instead of troubles – defined in terms of values and threats – there is often the misery of vague uneasiness; instead of explicit issues, there is often merely the beat feeling that all is somehow not right. Neither the values threatened nor whatever threatens them has been stated; in short, they have not been carried to the point of decision. Much less have they been formulated as problems of social science.” (C. Wright Mills 1959, The Sociological Imagination)*

*“(T)he discovery of sociology can change your life. It can help you to understand better the social forces you confront, the forces that constrain and free. This understanding has a liberating potential: By examining these forces you can stand somewhat apart from at least some aspect of society, and thereby exert more creative control over your own life.” (James Henslin, adapting from Peter Berger 1963, Invitation to Sociology)*

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### I. COURSE AIMS

1. To introduce the basic sociological concepts and perspectives;
2. To address some critical social issues and problems from sociological perspectives;
3. To enable students to relate sociology to their life experiences and the social context.

### II. INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon completion of the course, students should be able:

- (1) To demonstrate basic knowledge of the key sociological concepts and perspectives;
- (2) To explain and analyze a wide range of social issues including deviance, gender inequality, family changes, class inequality, education, power, politics and so on; &
- (3) To apply some basic sociological concepts.

### III. MODES OF LEARNING/ASSESSMENT

Quizzes (4)	40%
Reading quizzes (3)	30%
Essay	30%

- ✘ There will be 4 quizzes in MC format. The questions are based on a video shown in class, supplemented with a small number of questions on the topic related to the video (see schedule). The goals of the quizzes are to consolidate your understanding of the concepts and guide you into applying them through some examples.
- ✘ The 3 reading quizzes, also in MC format, aim to help you recognize the key sociological issues and arguments discussed in the assigned readings (see V below).

✘ A free-topic essay of 600-1000 words is due on **15 May (Saturday), 11:59pm**. Write a sociological essay about yourself, your family or a social phenomenon (suggestions will be provided along the way). Late submissions will receive a penalty and submissions late for more than 3 days will not be accepted.\*

(\*File format: Word or PDF named as follows – “student name\_student ID”, such as “Chan Tai Tai\_12345678.” Such information should also be typed in the document.)

#### IV. CONTENTS AND SCHEDULE

Wk	Tuesday	Thursday
1	[02/02] Introduction	[04/02] Culture and Socialization
2	[09/02] Deviance	[11/02] Deviance
3	[16/02] Deviance	[18/02] Deviance
4	[23/02] Deviance {+ <b>Quiz: deviance</b> }	[25/02] Deviance /Sociological Theory
5	[02/03] Family	[04/03] Family
6	[09/03] Gender	[11/03] Gender {+ <b>Reading Quiz I</b> }
7	[16/03] Family/ Gender {+ <b>Quiz: family &amp; gender</b> }	[18/03] Economy & Class Inequalities
8	[23/03] Economy & Class Inequalities	[25/03] Economy & Class Inequalities
9	[30/03] Economy & Class Inequalities	[01/04] { <i>holiday</i> }
9	[06/04] { <i>holiday</i> }	[08/04] Economy & Class Inequalities
10	[13/04] Economy & Class Inequalities {+ <b>Quiz: economy &amp; class</b> }	[15/04] Education
11	[20/04] Education	[22/04] Education/ Power & Politics {+ <b>Reading Quiz II</b> }
12	[27/04] Power & Politics	[29/04] Power & Politics
13	[04/05] Power & Politics {+ <b>Quiz: power &amp; politics</b> }	[06/05] Special Topic: Covid-19 {+ <b>Reading Quiz III</b> }

#### V. READING QUIZZES

You should read the following short articles before the scheduled class meetings. Try to grasp the key sociological ideas, issues and arguments discussed in the readings.

- **[Reading Quiz I]** Henslin, J. 2007. “On Becoming Male: Reflections of a Sociologist on Childhood and Early Socialization.” *Down to Earth Sociology: Introductory Readings*. New York: Free Press.
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- **[Reading Quiz II]** J. L. Waters. 2006. “Geographies of Cultural Capital: Education, International Migration and Family Strategies between Hong Kong and Canada.” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 31 (2), pp.179-192. (extracts)
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- **[Reading Quiz III]** S. Matthewman and K. Huppertz. 2020. “A Sociology of Covid-19.” *Journal of Sociology*, 56 (4), pp.675-683.

## VI. READINGS (available on Canvass)

1. Introduction: The “Sociological Imagination”
  - J.C. Alexander and K. Thompson 2008. *A Contemporary Introduction to Sociology – Culture and Society in Transition*, London: Paradigm, pp. 7-13.
- Culture & Socialization
  - Haralambos and Holborn 2004. *Sociology*, pp. vi-xi
  - Henslin, *Down to Earth Sociology* (chapter by Henslin, “On Becoming Male”) (Also for Reading Quiz I)
2. Deviance
  - Haralambos and Holborn. 2004. *Sociology*, pp. 330-351, 353-355

*Supplementary*

  - Howard Becker.1953. “Becoming a Marihuana.” *American Journal of Sociology*, 59 (3), pp.235-242.
3. Sociological Theory
  - Haralambos and Holborn 2004. *Sociology*, p. xiv-xxi, pp. 934-950, 961-964
4. Family
  - Haralambos and Holborn 2004. *Sociology*, 466-470, 478-488, 494-500
5. Gender
  - Haralambos and Holborn 2004. *Sociology*, pp 98-115, 126-137
  - Henslin, *Down to Earth Sociology* (chapter by Thorne and Luria, “Sexuality and Gender in Children’s Daily Worlds”)
6. Social and Class Inequalities
  - Bilton et al. 2002, *Introductory Sociology*, chapters 4 & 5 (pp.70-94, 98-127)
7. Education
  - Haralambos and Holborn 2004. *Sociology*, pp. xxvi-6, 692-694, 698-706, 731-756
8. Power and Politics
  - Haralambos and Holborn 2004, pp. 538-559

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### Recommended Books for the Course

- Haralambos, M., and M. Holborn. 2004. *Sociology - Themes and Perspectives*. London: Collins. (Note: The latest edition contains very minor changes.)
- Bilton, T., K. Bonnett, P. Jones, D. Skinner, M. Stanworth and A. Webster. 2002. *Introductory Sociology*. London: Macmillan.
- Henslin, J. 2007. *Down to Earth Sociology: Introductory Readings*. New York: Free Press.
- Johnson, Allan G. 1997. *The Forest and the Trees - Sociology as Life, Practice, and Promise*. Temple University Press.
- Worsley, P. 1991. *The New Modern Sociology Readings*. London: Penguin, chs. 1,3,4,6,27,29,58,59,64,65,66,74.
- 莫家豪 (1998) :《社會學與社會分析》。香港：香港人文科學出版社。章 1-2。
- 李明堃, 黃紹倫主編 (1992) :《社會學新論》。香港：商務印書館。章 6,9,11,12。

## Introductory Lecture

### I. Nature vs Nurture (Culture)?

### II. “Sociological Imagination” (C.Wright Mills 1959)

-An awareness of the relationship between personal experience and the wider society

- private troubles ↔ public issues (e.g. poverty; unemployment; “unsuccessful” students)

-*Do not take things for granted!* (i.e. Don’t ever believe that what you see at present is the natural or the only way of behaving or organizing social relationships. There always are alternatives.)

-Sociology encourages you to develop a *debunking* attitude toward social phenomenon (i.e. a critical attitude that exposures falseness and pretensions).

#### Sociological Focuses:

- the recurring patterns in people’s attitudes and action
- how such patterns are formed culturally, socially, economically and politically
- how such patterns vary across time, societies, & social groups (e.g. classes)
- how such patterns generate social inequalities (e.g. gender inequality) & social conflicts