

## Exploring Society

SOSC1859

3 Credits

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### Course Description

In his Invitation to Sociology (1963), Peter Berger describes a sociologist as one who is "concerned with understanding society in a disciplined way." This disciplined understanding leads us to see our everyday world in a new light, a light that C. Wright Mills calls "the sociological imagination"—the intersection of biography and history or the connection between personal troubles and public concerns. In this course you will take the first steps in developing your own sociological imaginations. With such imaginations you will better understand your fellow human beings in the social settings in which you find them and, just as importantly, learn to interact with them in more rational ways.

### Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

ILO 1. Demonstrate knowledge of the sociological perspective

ILO 2. Connect sociological theories to the social world and your experiences

ILO 3. Critically analyze "common sense" understandings of the social world

ILO 4. Write succinct papers where you effectively synthesize course materials and apply theory

Intended Learning Outcomes	Intended Learning Activities
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An appreciation of the importance of sociology for understanding modern societies</li> <li>• Basic understanding of sociological ideas and concepts</li> <li>• The ability to think sociologically</li> <li>• Develop the ability to propose and analyze sociological questions independently</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By discussing the relevance of sociological ideas in our lives</li> <li>• By reading the works of prominent sociologists</li> <li>• By undertaking several in-class experiments, exercises and discussions that will encourage you to see how your own behaviour is shaped by groups, culture and organizations</li> </ul>
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### Assessment and Grading

This course will be assessed using criterion-referencing and grades will not be assigned using a curve. Detailed rubrics for each assignment are provided below, outlining the criteria used for evaluation.

#### Assessments:

Assessment Task	Contribution to Overall Course grade (%)	Due date
Mid-Term	20%	09/10/2024
In-class Quiz	20%	Weekly
Reflection Paper	20%	10/11/2024
Final examination	25%	TBA
Discussion and Participation	15%	Weekly

\* Assessment marks for individual assessed tasks will be released within two weeks of the due date.

\* The proposed assessment structure is designed to encourage students to stay engaged and diligent throughout the semester. By balancing different types of assessments—quizzes, exams, participation, and a research paper—students are motivated to keep up with the course material regularly. The inclusion of frequent feedback, milestone assignments, and participation components further supports consistent effort and reduces the likelihood of procrastination.

#### Mapping of Course ILOs to Assessment Tasks

Assessed Task	Mapped ILOs	Explanation
Mid-term	ILO1, ILO2, ILO3.	The midterm exam will consist of multiple-choice questions designed to assess students'

		understanding of key concepts and theories in sociology, directly aligning with the intended learning outcomes (ILOs 1, 2, and 3).
In-class Quiz	ILO1, ILO2, ILO3.	Quizzes help reinforce the knowledge necessary to demonstrate a solid grasp of the sociological perspective ILO1, 2, and 3.
Reflection Paper	ILO1, ILO2, ILO3, ILO4	This task assesses students' ability to explain and apply sociological concepts presented in the documentary (ILO 1), evaluate their implications within the social context (ILO 2), critically analyze the role of the phenomenon in society (ILO 3), and synthesize a well-argued reflection that integrates course materials and sociological theory (ILO 4).
Final examination	ILO1, ILO2, ILO3, ILO4	The final examination, featuring multiple-choice questions and short essays, effectively assesses the intended learning goals. Multiple-choice questions evaluate students' understanding of key sociological concepts (ILO 1), while short essays require the application of sociological theories to real-world examples and personal experiences (ILO 2). The exam also challenges students to critically analyze common sense beliefs (ILO 3) and synthesize course materials into well-argued responses (ILO 4). This comprehensive approach ensures a thorough evaluation of students' mastery of sociological principles and critical thinking skills.

In-class Participation	ILO1, ILO2, ILO3	Weekly online forum discussions, plus in-class participation. The participation structure enhances the intended learning objectives ILO 1-3 by encouraging active engagement in class.
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## Grading Rubrics

### Participation

To facilitate a lively and interactive learning environment, you are expected to participate in in-class discussions and group activities. You can also make effective contribution to collective learning by engaging in discussions on class, participating in polling, and providing thoughtful feedback through Menti.com. At the same time, be mindful to maintain proper discipline and behave in a responsible manner in class.

My teaching assistant will keep a record of the frequency and quality of your participation.

Mark Range	Descriptors
5	Works collaboratively in a group setting in ways that are effective or productive. Address all the questions with reflective thoughts. Contributes to the understanding of the issues among your group.
3-4	Begins to work collaboratively in a group setting or does so only somewhat appropriately. Address some of the questions with reflective thoughts.
1-2	Does not work collaboratively in a group setting. Your participation is marginal.
0	No participation at all.

### Grading Rubric for Reflection Paper: Applying Sociological Theory to Marriage and Love in Contemporary China

Paper Length: 4-6 pages (approximately 1,000-1,500 words)

## Grading Criteria

Criteria	Excellent (A)	Good (B)	Satisfactory (C)	Needs Improvement (D)	Unsatisfactory (F)
Understanding of Theory	Demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of sociological theories relevant to marriage and love.	Shows a solid understanding of relevant theories with minor gaps.	Displays a basic understanding of theories but lacks depth.	Limited understanding of sociological theories; significant gaps.	Fails to demonstrate understanding of relevant theories.
Application of Theory	Effectively applies theories to analyze marriage and love in contemporary China, providing insightful connections.	Applies theories well with some relevant examples; connections are clear.	Basic application of theories; some relevant examples but limited analysis.	Minimal application of theories; examples are unclear or irrelevant.	Little to no application of sociological theories.
Critical Analysis	Offers a nuanced critique of societal norms surrounding marriage and love, demonstrating original thought.	Provides a good critique with some original insights; analysis is generally clear.	Basic critique; may rely on common perspectives without deeper analysis.	Limited critique; lacks originality and depth in analysis.	No critical analysis provided; simply summarizes without insight.
Organization and Clarity	Well-structured paper with a clear introduction, body, and conclusion; ideas flow logically.	Generally organized with a clear structure; minor issues in flow or clarity.	Some organization present, but ideas may be disjointed or unclear.	Poorly organized; lacks clear structure and coherence.	Disorganized and difficult to follow; lacks a clear structure.
Writing Quality	Exceptionally clear and engaging writing; free of grammatical and spelling errors.	Clear writing with minor grammatical or spelling errors.	Understandable writing, but several errors affect clarity.	Frequent grammatical or spelling errors that hinder	Writing is unclear and riddled with errors, making it

				understandi ng.	difficult to understand.
Citations and References	All sources are correctly cited in APA format; includes a variety of relevant academic resources.	Generally correct citations in APA format; uses some relevant sources.	Some errors in citations; may lack variety in sources.	Numerous citation errors; few sources used.	Fails to cite sources; no references provided.

**Final Grade Descriptors:**

<b>Grades</b>	<b>Short Description</b>	<b>Elaboration on subject grading description</b>
A	Excellent Performance	Demonstrates an exceptional grasp of sociological concepts and theories, showcasing a deep understanding of course material. Exhibits outstanding problem-solving skills and significant creativity in applying sociological perspectives to real-world issues. Collaborates effectively with peers, contributing insightful perspectives to discussions and group activities. Consistently goes beyond core requirements, demonstrating a high capacity for scholarship and a genuine engagement with the subject matter to achieve learning goals.
B	Good Performance	Shows a strong understanding of key sociological concepts and theories, with effective application to various contexts. Displays solid problem-solving abilities and creativity in thinking critically about sociological issues. Participates actively in collaboration with classmates, contributing meaningful insights. Meets core requirements with competence and demonstrates a commitment to achieving learning goals.
C	Satisfactory Performance	Demonstrates a satisfactory grasp of sociological concepts, with a basic ability to apply theories to real-world situations. Exhibits some problem-solving skills, though may lack creativity in analysis. Participates in group work and discussions but may not consistently contribute significant insights. Meets core requirements but may need to enhance engagement to fully achieve learning goals.

D	Marginal Pass	Shows limited understanding of sociological concepts and struggles to apply theories effectively. Problem-solving skills are underdeveloped, and creativity is minimal. Participation in class discussions is infrequent, and contributions may lack depth. Meets some core requirements but does not demonstrate full engagement with the course material or learning goals.
F	Fail	Demonstrates a lack of understanding of key sociological concepts and fails to apply theories to relevant contexts. Problem-solving skills are absent, and there is little to no evidence of creative thinking. Participation is minimal or non-existent, and there is a failure to meet basic course requirements, resulting in an inability to achieve learning goals.

### Course AI Policy

The use of artificial intelligence is not promoted in this class; however, I recognize that some students might find it beneficial during the initial stages of writing. If you utilize Chat GPT or other AI technologies for course assignments, you must indicate how you used them in a footnote within the assignment. Not doing so will be considered a violation of the HKUST Academic Honor.

### Communication and Feedback

Assessment marks for individual assessed tasks will be communicated via Canvas within two weeks of submission.

1. Please email the instructor for any issues related to the course content and grade.
2. Please email the teaching assistants (both) for questions regarding Canvas, Zoom, Library, and class attendance.
3. Please title your email SOSC1859-Your Name-Issues. You will NOT reach out to us via Canvas Inbox.
4. During the workdays (Monday-Friday), we will try to respond to your email within 24 hours. Please send us a reminder if you do not hear back from us in two days. Expect a delay in response until the next workday if you contact us during the weekend or holidays.

### Resubmission and Make-up Exam Policy

1. Late submission will be subject to a penalty of 20% deduction of grade per day.
2. In this course, no make-up exam will be granted. Only exceptions: officially documented surgical procedure, emergency room visit, or mandatory quarantine

requirement (in this case, a doctor's note stating you are ill do not suffice). All makeup sessions will consist of a 30-minute **oral examination** during which you will be expected to discuss and defend your understanding of the course concepts and content with the professor **and** teaching assistant.

### **Required Texts and Materials**

Ritzer, George, and Wendy W Murphy. Introduction to sociology. SAGE publications, 2019.

### **Academic Integrity**

Students are expected to adhere to the university's academic integrity policy. Students are expected to uphold HKUST's Academic Honor Code and to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. The University has zero tolerance of academic misconduct. Please refer to [Academic Integrity | HKUST – Academic Registry](#) for the University's definition of plagiarism and ways to avoid cheating and plagiarism.

### **Special Notes**

A special Note to **Final Year Students**. This is an introductory core course, and it is designed primarily for First Year Students outside of social science majors. Their English and study skills may not be as developed as yours and they may be taking a social science course for the first time. I care that every student performs well, so I will be making special efforts to go slowly and make frequent summaries of what we have covered so that they can follow. I do appreciate your patience while I do this. I encourage you to take more advanced classes if you feel that this course is too introductory for you.





## Content and Schedule

### INTRODUCTIONS

Week	Wed	Fri	Lecture, readings, Movies, and Activities	Reading
Week 1	4-Sep	6-Sep	Introduction to The Course	Syllabus & Chapter 1
Week 2	11-Sep	13-Sep	Thinking Sociologically	Chapter 1 & 2
Week 3		20-Sep	How sociologists do research	Chapter 3
Week 4	25-Sep	27-Sep	How we become human	Chapter 5
Week 5	2-Oct	4-Oct	What is social inequality?	Chapter 9
Week 6	9-Oct		Mid-term	
Week 7	16-Oct	18-Oct	A Movie time! + Tutorial on writing term paper	Documentary
Week 8	23-Oct	25-Oct	How does gender matter?	Chapter 11
Week 9	30-Oct	1-Nov	Is the family still relevant?	Chapter 12
Week 10	6-Nov	8-Nov	Can we ever be colorblind?	Chapter 10
Week 11	13-Nov	15-Nov	Can education truly alter fate?	Chapter 13
Week 12	20-Nov	22-Nov	Is hierarchy inevitable?	Chapter 6
Week 13	27-Nov	29-Nov	Preparing for final	

**\*\*The syllabus is subject to change.**