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## **SOSC1859: EXPLORING SOCIETY**

**(13 July – 7 August, 2026)**

### **I. COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This intensive summer course introduces students to the sociological imagination - a powerful lens for understanding how social forces shape both societal structures and individual experiences. Students will learn to recognize how seemingly private concerns are inextricably linked to broader public issues. By examining key social institutions - including family, education, the economy, and politics - the course explores how social structures create both constraints and opportunities in everyday life. While grounded in classical foundations, we will also investigate how digital environments and emerging technologies, such as algorithms and online platforms, intersect with traditional institutions to shape new forms of inequality and social organization. Ultimately, this course equips students with the analytical tools to critically interpret their own experiences in an increasingly digital world.

### **II. COURSE AIMS**

- To introduce foundational sociological concepts and theoretical perspectives, applying them to analyze both traditional institutions and modern sociotechnical systems.
- To critically examine systemic social issues and unarticulated structural problems, with a specific focus on how historical inequalities intersect with contemporary challenges like algorithmic bias and digital stratification.
- To cultivate the sociological imagination, enabling students to connect personal lived experiences to broader macro-level forces, thereby empowering them to navigate and exercise agency within a rapidly evolving digital age.

### **III. INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Upon completion of the course, students should be able:

1. Demonstrate a foundational understanding of key sociological theories, concepts, and perspectives, recognizing their relevance to both historical institutions and contemporary sociotechnical systems.
2. Explain and analyze a broad spectrum of social issues - such as class and gender

inequality, deviance, education, and power - while critically assessing how digital technologies and artificial intelligence intersect with and often amplify these systemic structures.

3. Apply the sociological concepts and theories to critically evaluate personal experiences, identifying how both traditional macro-level social forces and modern algorithmic environments shape individual constraints, opportunities, and agency.

#### IV. MODES OF ASSESSMENT & ILOs

Class Participation	10%	ILO1: assess students' understanding of course materials in class
Quiz 1, 2 & 3 (20 points each)	60%	ILO1 & ILO2: assess students' understanding of sociological concepts and theories
Reading Quiz 1 & 2 (15 points each)	30%	ILO1, ILO2 & ILO3: in-class reading exercises that help students to have a solid grasp of the sociological perspectives

#### V. CONTENTS AND SCHEDULE (Intensive 4-Week Plan)

**Week 1 - Foundations of Sociological Inquiry: Understanding Society and Culture**

**Week 2 - Social Difference and Inequality**

**Week 3 - Social Institutions and Social Order**

**Week 4 - Power, Technology, and Global Challenges**

Week	Mon	Wed	Fri
<b>1</b>	[13/7] Introduction	[15/7] Culture	[17/7] Socialization & Interaction
<b>2</b>	[20/7] Social Class & Economic Inequality  Quiz 1	[22/7] Gender & Sexuality	[24/7] Race & Ethnicity  Reading Quiz 1
<b>3</b>	[27/7] Families & Intimate Relationships  Quiz 2	[29/7] Education & Social Reproduction	[31/7] Deviance & Crime
<b>4</b>	[3/8] Power, Politics & the State  Quiz 3	[5/8] Society in the Digital Age  Reading Quiz 2	[7/8] Future Challenges and course round up

## **VI. COMMUNICATION & FEEDBACK**

- Grades will be released on Canvas.
- Students can check the results by making an appointment with the instructor after the results have been released.

## **VII. COURSE AI POLICY**

If a situation arises where you have to use Generative AI, it must be properly acknowledged. Please note that any AI-generated content will not be considered as part of your own work.

## **VIII. 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.