

Gender and Society

Summer 2026

Sosc2740 3 Credits.

Tues, Thurs, 2:00 - 4:50, Rm 4580, Lift 27-28

Professor J. M. Groves sosc2740@ust.hk

Office Hours: One hour after class on Thursdays.

Teaching Assistant: Jennifer HUNG (jenniferhsy@ust.hk)

Every aspect of social life is gendered. The purpose of this course is to develop a *sociological mindfulness* to help us to appreciate this. By sociologically mindful, I mean that we will view gender as the product of culture, groups, and organizations. I also mean that we will be paying attention to behaviours and ways of thinking that are so taken-for-granted that we often fail to question them, with an eye to examining gender inequalities. The course will be organized around six main topics: 1. sex, gender and biology, 2. gender and everyday Life, 3. gender at work and in the home, 4. gender and intimate relationships, 5. gender in the global economy, and 6. gender policies. The focus of our discussions will be on gender in Hong Kong and the region.

Intended learning outcomes (ILOs)

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

ILO 1: Identify and apply sociological perspectives to the study of gender

ILO 2: Articulate how gender organises our society

ILO 3: Identify and articulate gender inequalities

ILO 4: Evaluate and assess institutional and public gender policies

Required texts and materials

Attendance and participation in classes

The surest way to achieve a high grade on this course is to *attend all the classes* and, whilst doing so, *to disconnect yourself from the internet and participate*. The PowerPoint slides shown in the class and placed on the course webpage are intended only as outlines of the materials covered. They are not substitutes for class attendance. You are responsible for taking your own notes during the classes and for catching up and obtaining notes from others/watching the online video of the class if you miss a class.

Readings

Required Readings:

Any worthwhile university course in the social sciences requires that you do some reading outside of the class on your own. I have tried to keep these to a minimum. There will be one or two required short articles or book chapters assigned for most classes. These will be included in the course assessment.

Supplementary Readings

Students sometimes tell me that they want to read more about a particular topic. For these students, I have provided some supplementary readings. Supplementary readings will not be covered in the course assessment (except where I talk about them in the class), but they will enhance your understanding of the subject, and students tell me that they find them interesting.

The relevant reading assignments for the subsequent class will be announced at the beginning of each class. You must at least read the required articles before coming to class in to be able to understand the class and take part in it. I may call on you to answer questions about them in class. Do not worry if you don't understand everything in the readings. I will indicate to you in advance what I want you to find out from the readings. I shall make all the readings available on the Canvas webpage.

Assessments

In-class examinations

There will be two in-class **closed-book examinations**; a Midterm and a cumulative Final quiz (that covers the entire course). Questions will be a mixture of multiple choice and short answer questions. They will test your understanding of the required readings and the in-class lectures, exercises and discussions.

Research project and Short Presentation [time permitting]

The written assignment for this course will be a research project that you will conduct in small groups (3-5 people). It might involve one or more of the following: analyzing media artifacts for gender bias, interviewing men and women about gendered experiences, or collecting some kind of data about gender inequalities. If there is time at the end of the semester, I will ask you to give a very short (ten minutes) PowerPoint presentation to the class on what you found in the assignment. Students may form their own groups, and my teaching assistant will assist those who are having difficulty finding groupmates. More details and dates about the report will be announced after the drop-add period (Jun 20, 2026).

To encourage all group members to participate equally, a component of the grade for the assignment will be based on peer-review, in which group members will evaluate each other's contributions.

In-class participation

A small part of the final score (5%) will be awarded to the students who participate the most in the class throughout the entire semester. By participation, I refer to asking questions, answering questions, and responding to remarks made by other students in the classroom, as well as disconnecting from the internet.

Assessment weighting and dates

Assessment Task	Contribution to overall course grade (%)	Due date
Cumulative final Examination	40%	August 4, 2-5pm
Midterm examination	35%	July 7 (during regular class time)
Group research project	20%	July 16, 11.59pm
Participation	5%	Throughout the semester

Mapping of course ILOs to Assessment tasks

Assessed Task	Mapping ILOS	Explanation
Midterm Quiz	ILO1 ILO2 ILO3	This task will assess students' ability to identify sociological approaches to the study of gender in the topics covered in the first half of the course. Students will be examined on how socialization, education, and the body, and everyday life are shaped by gendered beliefs. Students will also be examined on their ability to describe the various waves of feminist thought.
Final Examination	ILO1 ILO2 ILO3 ILO4	In addition to the items above, this task will assess students' ability to identify sociological approaches to understanding men and women at work, in the home, in intimate relationships and in international relations and the global economy. Students will also be assessed on their ability to evaluate and assess the pros and cons of institutional and government gender policies.

Research project and presentation	ILO1 ILO2 ILO3 ILO4	In this task, students will use their sociological understanding to undertake a research project to identify how gender organises an aspect of their own lives as well as describing the inequalities they encounter. They will be required to make policy recommendations.
In-class participation	ILO1 ILO2 ILO3 ILO4	Students will be expected to articulate the sociological perspective in classroom, apply it to the various topics throughout the course, point out gender inequalities, and evaluate policy recommendations.

Grading Rubrics

Detailed rubrics for each quiz/examination will be provided before the exam. These rubrics clearly outline the criteria used for evaluation. Students can refer to these rubrics to understand how their work will be assessed.

Final Grade Descriptors:

Grades	Short Description	Elaboration on subject grading description
A	Excellent Performance	Demonstrates a comprehensive grasp of the subject matter, ability to identify and creatively apply sociological concepts and think critically consistently throughout the entire course.
B	Good Performance	Demonstrates a good working grasp of the main subject matter, ability to identify and apply sociological concepts and think critically throughout most of the course. Displays high motivation to learn and the ability to learn.
C	Satisfactory Performance	Possesses adequate knowledge of core subject matter, some capacity for applying sociological perspectives and critical thinking. Shows persistence and effort to achieve broadly defined learning goals.
D	Marginal Pass	Has a threshold knowledge of core subject matter, and demonstrates potential to achieve a sociological understanding of some of the material and engage in critical thought

F	Fail	Unable to demonstrate sufficient understanding of the subject matter and an understanding of sociological perspectives.
---	------	---

Course AI Policy

The midterm quiz and final examination will be closed book without the assistance of AI. The group project requires original research that requires considerable detail. I encourage students not to try to use AI since students who use AI for this project usually produce poorer reports.

Communication and Feedback

We will do our best to announce your quiz scores within a week after each quiz and offer you a checking session where you can see how your quiz was graded.

Resubmission Policy

If any review of grading is requested, students should be aware that their grade may move up or down, depending on the outcome of such review.

CLASS SCHEDULE¹

INTRODUCTIONS

Date	Topics	Reading
June 16	How much do you know about gender and society? Common-sense quiz	

PART I: BIOLOGY, SEX AND GENDER

We begin with a critical examination of various non-sociological explanations of gender differences. Early accounts of gender roles were shaped by religious beliefs. Nineteenth century biologists and psychologists advanced views about the inferiority of women based on evolutionary biology. We examine the current debates about nature and nurture in gender differences. To what extent are the biological differences between the sexes over-exaggerated? And what should we make of these differences? How does gender vary across cultures? Can there be more than two genders? How do we learn our gender roles?

Date	Topics	Reading
June 18	Non-sociological thinking about gender: Biology, Sex and Gender.	<i>Supplementary:</i> Michael Kimmel. The Gendered Society, Ch2. "Ordained by Nature: Biology Constructs the Sexes"
June 23	Thinking sociologically about gender Gender across cultures Socialization and gender roles	<i>Required:</i> Michael Kimmel. The Gendered Society, Ch3. "Spanning the World. Culture Constructs Gender Difference"
June 25	Gender and Education	<i>Required:</i> Michael Kimmel. The Gendered Society, Ch7. "The Gendered Classroom"

PART II: INEQUALITY IN EVERYDAY LIFE

It seems that everyone is a feminist now, with celebrities and politicians wearing T-shirts to proclaim it. But what does feminism mean and why does it matter? We examine the history

¹ Dates and readings may be subject to change. Please listen out for announcements in class.

of the women's movement and the different varieties of feminist thought, along with some of its critics and its counterpart, the men's movement. We also look at gender movements in Hong Kong. How can we become more aware of gender inequality in everyday life? How does language reinforce gender inequality? How is the media gendered?

Date	Topics	Reading
Jun 30	Making sexism visible: The different "waves" of feminism and the men's movements Gendered Language and inequality	<i>Required:</i> Marilyn Frye. "Oppression." Kimberle Crenshaw: The urgency of intersectionality. Ted talk. <i>Required:</i> Sherryl Kleinman. "Why Sexist Language Matters" <i>Required:</i> Deborah Tannen. "The power of talk: Who gets heard and why" <i>Supplementary:</i> Julia Wood. "The Rhetorical Shaping of Gender: Women's and Men's movements in the United States." <i>Supplementary:</i> Michael Kimmel. "Angry White Men"
July 2	"Invisible women" Gender, city planning, science and technology Men and women in the media Men and women's bodies: What if men menstruated and had babies?	<i>Required:</i> Caroline Criado Perez, Invisible Women: Data Bias in a world for Men Introduction Ch1. "Can snow clearing be sexist." <i>Required:</i> Groves et al. <i>Dirty dancing: Gender, aging, and sexuality during Hong Kong's COVID-19 pandemic</i> <i>Required:</i> Gloria Steinem: "If men could menstruate"

--	--	--

PART III MEN AND WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE AND AT HOME

While men and women participate in almost equal numbers in the Hong Kong workforce, they remain highly segregated within it, both in terms of rank and occupation. There is also still a large wage gap between them. What prevents women from getting ahead in the workplace? Do men experience discrimination in the workplace too? What legislation protects equal opportunities in the workplace?

July 7	MIDTERM EXAMINATION: YOUR ATTENDANCE IS REQUIRED	
--------	---	--

Date	Topics	Reading
July 7	Men and women at work. Labour force participation Occupational segregation The glass ceiling The glass cliff. Do men face discrimination? Men's experiences in the workplace	<i>Required:</i> Christine Williams. "The Glass Escalator: Hidden Advantages for Men in the Female Professions" <i>Supplementary:</i> Lisa Wade and Myra Marx Ferree. Gender: Ideas, Interactions, Institutions. Ch12. "Work" Ryan and Alexander: The Glass Cliff
July 9	Men and women in the home	<i>Required:</i> Groves and Lui: "The "Gift" of help <i>Supplementary:</i> Arlie Hochschild with Ann Machung; "The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at home." Chapters 1-3

PART IV: MEN AND WOMEN IN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

We examine the changing nature of marriage, the family and intimacy and its implications for gender. Are men and women really from different planets when it comes to the world of dating and intimacy? To what extent did the sexual revolution of the 1960s, as well as the rise of “hook-up culture” liberate women? How do men and women consume pornography? We also look at new developments surrounding sexual orientation and the fight for gay rights. We look at the social context of sexual violence against women in the home, in education, the workplace and international relations.

Date	Topics	Reading
July 14	Men, women, intimacy and the changing family Gendered sexuality	Reading: <i>Required:</i> Paul England, Emily Fitzgibbons Shafer and Alison Fogarty. “Hooking up and Forming Romantic Relationships on Today’s College Campuses” Leta Hong Fincher: Leftover women. Chapter 1 and 2.
July 16	Gender, sexual orientation: the LGBT movement	<i>Required:</i> Travis Kong: “Oral histories of older gay men”
July 21	Sexual harassment in the workplace Are college campuses dangerous places for women? The controversy over “rape culture” on university campuses. Domestic violence	<i>Required:</i> Beth Quinn: “Sexual Harassment and Masculinity: The Power and Meaning of “Girl Watching” <i>Required:</i> Patricia Yancey Martin: Fraternities and Rape On Campus <i>Supplementary. Required:</i> Michael Kimmel. <i>The Gendered Society. Ch. 14. “The Gender of Violence”</i>

PART V: MEN AND WOMEN IN THE GLOBAL POLITICAL ECONOMY

Gender is not limited to the interpersonal level. In this part of the course, we look at how gender operates in the global politics and the global economy. Popular images of globalization focus on high technology, finance, communication and unlimited opportunities for social and personal advancement. In the final part of the course, we focus on the lives of female migrants to understand how globalization is still reliant upon low-wage, and highly gendered and racialized labour.

Dates	Topics	Reading
July 23	The gender of war and peace Gender in the global economy	<i>Required:</i> Leta Hong Fincher: China's Patriarchal Authoritarianism
July 28	Migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong	<i>Required:</i> Kimberly Chang and L.H. L. Ling: "Globalization and Its Intimate Other. Filipina Domestic Workers in Hong Kong"

CONCLUSIONS: WHAT'S TO BE DONE? GENDER POLICIES

Finally, we try to imagine different gender arrangements, as well as gender policies that have attempted to create more diversity, equity and inclusion.

Dates	Topics	Reading
July 30	What's to be done? Imaging different gender arrangements Diversity, equity and inclusion.	<i>Required: Michael Kimmel. Epilogue: A "degendered" society</i> Frank Dobbin and Alexandra Kalev. Why diversity programs fail: And what works. <i>Harvard Business Review</i>

August 4 1400- 1650	FINAL EXAMINATION YOUR ATTENDANCE IS REQUIRED	
---------------------------	--	--

RULES AND PROCEDURES

This is a large class with a diversity of students from many backgrounds. Most of you will be studying in a second language (English) because this is the only language that we all share. Some of you may not have taken social science classes before. Others may be accustomed to different learning environments in which there are different expectations. This means that we need to have some common rules and understandings about how the class is to proceed so that everyone has an opportunity to learn and perform well.

In the classroom

The default mode of teaching is face-to-face (unless the University decides otherwise). This may be new experience for many of you and will require some adjustment.

Coming late/leaving early

The class will not begin until all students are seated and quiet. When students come late to the class, they disrupt class by walking around the classroom to look for their friends while the class is in progress. They also miss important information that will be covered in the examinations. To minimize disruption, I will reserve some seats nearest to the doors on one side of the classroom to assist late students. On the occasion that you have to come late to the class, please sit at these seats, rather than walk around the lecture theatre while the class is in progress.

As with late students, students who leave the class early disrupt the class and miss important information too. Each class will have a ten-minute break in the middle. Please wait until the break or the end of the class before leaving (except, of course, in the case of a medical emergency or fire). If you know, in advance, that you do have to leave early, please contact me or the teaching assistant before the class so that we can seat you close to an exit to prevent disruption of the class.

Laptop computers

Mastering the course content will require your full attention during the class. We require that you disconnect from the internet during the classes. I would prefer it if you took notes on iPads/Tablets/Mobile phones rather than bury your faces in laptop/notebook computers. If, however, you have to take notes on a laptop computer, please be aware that my teaching assistant will be monitoring you and if you are performing tasks not related to the class (watching movies, games, texting, social media etc) you will be asked to close your computer.

Eating and Drinking in the Classroom

Bringing food into the classroom leaves a mess and smell for your classmates. This is not a conducive atmosphere for learning. Would you like it if your classes were held in a McDonald's restaurant? I wouldn't think so! For this reason, the University prohibits eating in the

classroom. There are many places where you can eat on campus. Please observe the “No Eating” signs in the classroom and have your meals before or after the class.

Quizzes

Quizzes will be closed book and must be taken without communicating with other students. This is a large class, and it is impossible to schedule make-up exams for individual students who miss quizzes, except where medical documentation is provided. Original certificates from registered Western medical practitioners are required. If you have to miss a quiz due to medical circumstances, you must contact us within a week after the missed exam to arrange a make-up, otherwise, your entitlement to a make-up will be forfeited. The quiz dates will be announced early in the semester, which will give you plenty of time to plan. Do not schedule job interviews or other activities on these dates.

PowerPoints

I’m happy to share my PowerPoints with you after each class, but under the following conditions:

1. PowerPoints are intended only as outlines for each class and not substitutes for class attendance. Some students ask me to put more detailed lecture notes on the Canvas webpage. My experience, however, has been that if you don’t have the time or inclination to attend the class, it is unlikely that you will have the time or inclination to study the materials outside of class.
2. It is impossible for me to release PowerPoints *before the class*. This is because the PowerPoints may give away answers to my questions as well as information that will compromise my in-class exercises and activities. Also, providing PowerPoints in advance does not allow me the flexibility to change the content of the class and PowerPoints in accordance with student’s interests.
3. Please do not share my PowerPoints or any other materials on course-sharing websites, social media, or anywhere else on the internet. If we find you have done this – and we look around the internet quite often for our materials, we will ask you to take them down and may have to report you to the website and to the University for violating our copyright.

Course content: Talking about gender

In this course, we will talk openly about sexuality (including homosexuality and transgender), pornography, the sex industry, sexual harassment and sexual violence. Moreover, we will talk about these topics from an analytical rather than a judgmental perspective. Students who are uncomfortable with engaging in frank and open discussions about these topics should consider taking other courses offered by the Social Science Division.

Please also note that, while issues surrounding LGBT, and particularly transgendered people have received a lot of media attention, this will be only one of the many topics considered in the broad field of gender studies on the course.