

**SOSC 1850 (LX)**  
**UNDERSTANDING SOCIETY**  
Fall 2022  
*Self-paced, Online*

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Office Hours: By appointment on Zoom.

The purpose of this course is to engage you in a conversation about how we can be more *sociologically mindful* in understanding ourselves and modern life. As participants in human societies, we all have ideas about the way our society works. The sociological perspectives that we shall examine in this course, however, are more well-thought out, based on systematic research and challenge our “common sense” understandings.

What do I mean by sociologically mindful? This is an age in which we often explain our behaviour in terms of our individual achievements, personalities, or even our genetic make-up. The sociologist, however, looks at human behaviour as the product of groups, organizations, and culture.

In order to master this sociological outlook, we shall examine a number of aspects of our everyday lives from the point of view of sociological perspectives and methods. These topics will include culture, deviance, religion, social change, mental health, poverty, economic inequalities, gender, intimate relationships and the family.

<b>Intended Learning Outcomes</b>	<b>Intended Learning Activities</b>
An appreciation of the importance of sociology for understanding modern societies.	By watching concise video lectures that demonstrate the relevance of sociological ideas in our lives.
A mastery of sociological ideas	By reading the works of prominent sociologists
The ability to think sociologically	By undertaking a number of online thought experiments, exercises and online discussions that will encourage you to see how your own behaviour and those around you are shaped by groups, culture and organizations.

## Requirements and procedures

### 1. Online lectures

The course is to be delivered entirely online and self-paced. The surest well to do well in the course is to *watch all the online lectures* and to take notes while doing so. These (along with PowerPoint slides, readings, activities and documentary movies) will be posted on the Canvas website at the beginning of each week (Monday) in the Modules folder. Most of the lectures are short (approximately 6-12 minutes long) in order to keep your attention. Some may be longer if they contain additional movie clips within them. Subtitles for the lectures can be auto-generated when watching in the chrome browser (instructions will be provided).

I will release three to six video lectures (with accompanying PowerPoints, readings and movies) each week. You should watch the lectures in the correct order, or they will not make sense to you. I have designed them to be watched on a larger screen, not a mobile phone. Aside from taking the three online Canvas quizzes on the dates scheduled below and attendance at the face-to-face Final Examination at HKUST (see below), *no further class attendance is required for this course*.

### 2. 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. For each week, there will be a chapter (or part thereof) from the electronically downloadable textbook: *Sociology: A Down to Earth Approach* by James M. Henslin, Pearson New International Eleventh Edition. I encourage you to purchase the download (HK\$310.00) from the University Bookstore here: [https://w5.ab.ust.hk/cgi-bin/std\\_cgi.sh/WService=broker\\_ba\\_p/prg/ba\\_stdtd\\_main.r](https://w5.ab.ust.hk/cgi-bin/std_cgi.sh/WService=broker_ba_p/prg/ba_stdtd_main.r).

I will also make downloadable and hard copies available at the Reserve Desk in the University Library. Look out also for used copies. But please do not use other editions since the assessments will be based on this edition only.

For some weeks, there will also be a additional readings. These will be original works of sociology. They will be available to you on Canvas in the module folders for each week. I have indicated the relevant readings for each class in the schedule below. Do not worry if you do not understand everything in the readings. I will indicate to you in advance what I want you to find out from them.

### 3. Three open-book online Canvas quizzes during the semester

There will be **THREE** short open-book quizzes during the semester which will be administered on Canvas on the dates specified below. They will be open book but under strict timed conditions and are to be taken without consulting other students. I will drop the lowest score of these quizzes, which allows you to miss one quiz, if you need to, without it affecting your final grade. This is a large class and it is impossible to schedule make-up quizzes for individual students.

Since the course has no designated meeting times, I have had to schedule the quizzes outside of regular class hours on Saturdays at 10am so as not to clash with your other classes.

4. Proctored closed-book face-to-face Final Examination at HKUST

There will be a proctored closed-book face-to-face Final Examination at HKUST, which will be scheduled by the University during the examination period at the end of the semester. The Final Examination is cumulative which means that it will cover the entire course content. Your attendance at HKUST is required for the Final Examination (Covid restrictions permitting). Again, since this is a very large class, it is impossible for us to offer a make-up Final Examination without medical documentation to say why you could not attend.

The quizzes and Final Exam will be mostly multiple choice and cover the content of the online lectures, and the readings (particularly the questions I ask you to answer for the readings in advance) as well as issues raised on the Discussion Forums. There may also be one or two short answer questions. Questions will examine the application of concepts of the course, rather than the memorization of names or specific dates.

*Quiz and Final Exam Dates*

	<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Venue</b>
Quiz 1	8th Oct (Sat)	10:00 – 11:00	CANVAS
Quiz 2	29th Oct (Sat)	10:00 – 11: 00	CANVAS
Quiz 3	26th Nov (Sat)	10:00 – 11: 00	CANVAS
Final Exam	Scheduled by HKUST during final exam period (7-19 Dec)	Scheduled by HKUST	HKUST (Covid restrictions permitting)

5. Short written exercise

There will be a short written exercise (approx. 500-1000 words) which will allow you to undertake your own sociological research/analysis. The assignment will be completed individually.

More details about the assignments will be made after the add/drop period.

The assignment will be due for online submission by midnight on Nov 7th. I may share the best assignments with the class.

## **How to get in touch with us.**

### 1. Discussion Forums

Given that the lectures are virtual, the best way to talk to me, and for you to talk with your classmates, is on the Canvas Discussion Forums. Here you can post questions, comments, reactions, and feedback on the lectures, readings and assessments in the relevant forums. I will check them on most days. To be inclusive, all contributions to the forums must be in English, the language that everyone shares and please, no foul language or personal attacks.

### 2. Email/Zoom

If, however, you need to talk to us privately, you may email [sosc1850@ust.hk](mailto:sosc1850@ust.hk) and, if necessary schedule a Zoom meeting with me.

## **The Final Grade**

Canvas quizzes	30%
Final exam	50%
Written exercise	20%

## TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE<sup>1</sup>

### INTRODUCTIONS

Module	Online lectures, readings movies and activities	Assessments
Module 1 Sept 5 <sup>th</sup>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Introductions</b></p> <p><b>Activity:</b> How much do you know about society? Take the Common-sense Quiz <a href="https://www.tryinteract.com/share/quiz/62f3c6b5bb3d6200188de967">https://www.tryinteract.com/share/quiz/62f3c6b5bb3d6200188de967</a></p> <p><b>Watch lectures:</b> 1.1 About this course 1.2 About the requirements and procedures 1.3 About the professor 1.4 Thinking Sociologically 1.5 How sociology began 1.6 Themes in modern sociology</p>	

### PART ONE: CULTURE

We've all heard of the term *culture*, but what does it take to become competent in understanding unfamiliar groups of people? We begin by learning how to be more aware of our own culture, and to develop an appreciation of language and symbols in understanding human behaviour. Using classical sociological and psychological theories of socialization, we will understand how society shapes the way in which we think about ourselves, about others, and the world around us.

Module	Online lectures, readings movies and activities	Assessments
Module 2 Sept 12 <sup>th</sup>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Culture</b></p> <p><b>Watch lectures</b></p> <p>2.1 The Nacirema 2.2 Ethnography 2.3 Thinking sociologically about culture 2.4 Thinking Sociologically about Language 2.5 The Sapir-Worf Hypothesis 2.6 Language, Gender and Class</p> <p><b>Watch movie: "Darkest" Africa</b></p>	

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<sup>1</sup> The dates of topics and readings may change. Please listen for announcements.

	<p><b>Activity:</b> Take the twenty statements test</p> <p><b>Read:</b></p> <p>Henslin Textbook: Chapter 2 Additional Reading: Horace Miner: Body ritual among the Nacirima Additional Reading: Sherryl Kleinman: Why sexist language matters</p>	
Module 3 Sept 19 <sup>th</sup>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Socialization</b></p> <p><b>Watch lectures</b></p> <p>3.1 Who am I? 3.2 Thinking sociologically about the self 3.3 Heredity or environment? 3.4 Becoming a marijuana user</p> <p><b>Watch movies</b></p> <p><b>Read Article</b> Henslin Textbook pp. 74-84 Additional Reading: Howard Becker. Becoming A Marijuana User.</p>	

## PART II: DEVIANCE

The sociological focus is not so much on the individual who commits a deviant act, but the ways in which societies apply sanctions and labels to rule breakers. We shall examine the significance of labelling and its implications for education, criminal justice, and mental illness. We also examine a number of experimental studies that demonstrate the power of social situations and peer pressure that encourage acts of violence. We take a broad view of deviance to look at everyday acts of deviance that we frequently commit in our own lives.

Modules	Online lectures, readings movies and activities	Assessments
Module 4 Sept 26 <sup>th</sup>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Thinking sociologically about deviance</b></p> <p><b>Watch Lectures</b></p> <p>4.1 Non-sociological theories about deviance 4.2 Thinking sociologically about deviance 4.3 Labeling theory I Lessons in Discrimination 4.4 Labeling theory II The process of labelling</p>	

	<p><b>Read</b>  Henslin textbook: 217-231  Additional Reading: William Chambliss. The Saints and Roughnecks.  LD Rosenhan: Being Sane in Insane places</p>	
<p>Module 5  Oct 3<sup>rd</sup></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>The power of the situation</b></p> <p><b>Activities</b>  My most embarrassing moment exercise  Every day deviance exercise</p> <p><b>Watch lectures</b>  5.1 Conformity  5.2 Obedience  5.3 Critical review of Milgram</p> <p><b>Watch Movie:</b> Obedience</p> <p><b>Read:</b>  Henslin Textbook pp185-188  Stanley Milgram Chapter 1. The Dilemma of Obedience</p>	<p><b>Quiz One</b>  8<sup>th</sup> Oct (Sat)  1000-1100  on Canvas</p>
<p>Module 6  Oct 10<sup>th</sup></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Microsociology</b></p> <p><b>Watch Lectures</b></p> <p>6.1 Techniques of neutralization  6.2 Embarrassment  6.3 Goffman I. Roles, back and front Stages  6.4 Goffman II: communication, working consensus</p>	

### PART THREE: MODERNIZATION AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE

We now move to the larger historical and social forces that govern our everyday lives, the rise of industrialization, city life ,and the transformation of our work and belief systems, and we discuss some of the resulting problems including alienation, *anomie*, suicide, poverty ,and inequality among the rich and the poor, men and women.

Module	Online lectures, readings movies and activities	Assessments
Module 7 Oct 17 <sup>th</sup>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Emile Durkheim</b></p> <p><b>Watch lectures</b>            7.1 The Division of Labour            7.2 Thinking sociologically about religion            7.3 Religion in Modern Societies</p> <p><b>Read</b>            Henslin textbook: pp. 21-23            Additional Reading: Randall Collins: the Sociology of God pp 30-53</p>	
Module 8 Oct 24 <sup>th</sup>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Suicide</b></p> <p><b>Watch lectures</b>            8.1 Suicide: myths and facts            8.2 Durkheim’s theory of suicide            8.3 the four types of suicide</p>	<b>Quiz 2</b> <b>Oct 29<sup>th</sup> (Sat)</b> <b>1000-1100</b> <b>On Canvas</b>
Module 9 Oct 31 <sup>st</sup>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Economic inequalities I. Poverty and Inequality</b></p> <p><b>Watch lectures</b>            9.1 Defining poverty            9.2 Measuring inequality            9.3 Non-sociological accounts of poverty            9.4 The culture of poverty and situational constraints            9.5 The government’s response to poverty</p>	
Module 10 Nov 7 <sup>th</sup>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Economic inequalities II. Social Class and Social Mobility</b></p> <p><b>Watch lectures</b>            10.1 Social class and social mobility: definitions            10.2 Class analysis in Hong Kong            10.3 The power elite</p> <p><b>Read</b>            Henslin textbook: pp. 260-267, 285-315</p>	<b>Short Written Assignment</b> <b>due: Nov 7<sup>th</sup></b>

	<p>Additional Reading: Time Out Magazine. The Men Who Rule Hong Kong</p> <p><b>Watch movie</b>  <i>Tell me things will be better tomorrow</i>  <a href="http://stream.ust.hk/service/watch.php?stream=tv/r/hong-kong-connection.2007-0208.mp4">http://stream.ust.hk/service/watch.php?stream=tv/r/hong-kong-connection.2007-0208.mp4</a></p>	
<p>Module 11 Nov 14<sup>th</sup></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Gender inequalities I</b></p> <p><b>Watch lectures</b>  11.1 Non-sociological perspectives on gender.  11.2 Thinking sociologically about gender  11.3 Gender across cultures  11.4 Learning gender roles  11.5 Gender and Education</p> <p><b>Read:</b>  Henslin textbook Pp 87-91, 320-334</p>	
<p>Module 12 Nov 21<sup>st</sup></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Gender inequalities II</b></p> <p><b>Watch lectures</b>  12.6 Labour Force participation  12.7 The Gender wage gap  12.8 Men  12.9 Gender in the home</p> <p><b>Watch movie</b>  <i>House husbands</i>  <a href="http://stream.ust.hk/service/watch.php?stream=tv/r/hong-kong-connection.2013-1031.mp4">http://stream.ust.hk/service/watch.php?stream=tv/r/hong-kong-connection.2013-1031.mp4</a></p>	<p>Quiz 3  26<sup>th</sup> Nov  (Sat) 1000-1100</p>

## PART FOUR: FAMILY AND INTIMACY

Despite our enormous technological and economic achievements over the last few hundred years, men and women today express a great deal of dissatisfaction with their family lives and intimate relationships. In the final part of the course, we examine changing trends in intimate life, the search for satisfying intimate relationships, the changing nature of the family and youth, and problems associated with modern family life.

Module	Online lectures, readings movies and activities	Assessments
Module 13 Nov 28 <sup>th</sup>	<p><b>Watch lectures</b></p> <p>13.1 Thinking sociologically about love and intimacy 13.2 Trends in the Hong Kong family 13.3 The transformation of childhood and youth.</p> <p><b>Watch Movie</b></p> <p>Hopeless in Hong Kong <a href="http://stream.ust.hk/service/watch.php?stream=tv/r/in-side-story.2006-0110.mp4">http://stream.ust.hk/service/watch.php?stream=tv/r/in-side-story.2006-0110.mp4</a></p> <p><b>Read</b></p> <p>Henslin: pp. , 507-514, 519-526</p>	

**FINAL EXAMINATION TO BE HELD AT HKUST (COVID RESTRICTIONS PERMITTING) AND SCHEDULED BY THE UNIVERSITY DURING SPRING SEMESTER EXAMINATION PERIOD**