

SOSC 2740  
GENDER AND SOCIETY  
FALL 2023

Tuesday, Thursday, 12:00-13:20, Rm 6573

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Office Hours: One hour after each class, Room 3371

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Is it true that “men are from Mars and women are from Venus?” Why is it claimed that women earn 70% of what men earn? Why do women hold only 8% of Fortune 500 CEO positions? Why do women make up less than 20% of the Hong Kong Government? Why is housework and childcare still not shared equally among men and women? Why does Hong Kong have among the highest proportion of incarcerated women in the world? Why do so many migrant women come to Hong Kong? Why do boys perform so poorly compared with girls in school? Why are there more female than male undergraduates in Hong Kong’s universities? Do men also face gender discrimination?

The purpose of this course is to answer these questions and others by developing a *sociological mindfulness* about the importance of gender in society. 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 the nature of inequalities between men and women. The course will be organized around five 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, and 5. Gender in the Global Economy. The focus of our discussions will be on gender in Hong Kong.

**Intended Learning outcomes**

**Intended learning activities**

An appreciation of the ways in which gender is a social, as well as biological construct.	By critically examining accounts of gender that are based on biology and psychology.
Raising awareness of the significance of gender in society.	By collecting data and experiences of inequality between men and women.
An overview of the situation of men and women in education, the workplace, the media and everyday life in Hong Kong	By engaging with popular culture, movies, magazines as well as invited guest speakers from various organizations involved with gender in Hong Kong.
An appreciation of the gendered nature of the global economy.	By reading about the situation of migrant workers in Hong Kong and gender across cultures.

## REQUIREMENTS AND ASSESSMENT

### Attendance and participation

#### Attendance

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, 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 order 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 help you with the more difficult points in class.

I shall make all the readings available on the Canvas webpage.

#### **Quizzes**

There will be two in-class **closed-book quizzes**; 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..

### **Written Assignment 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 minute) 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 students who can't find groupmates. Full details of the assignment, groupings, and presentation dates will be announced after the drop-add period (mid-September).

In order 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 performance.

### **The Final Grade**

<b>Final Examination</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Midterm examination</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Assignment</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Participation</b>	<b>5</b>

# CLASS SCHEDULE<sup>1</sup>

## INTRODUCTIONS

Date	Topics	Reading
Sept 5	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? How do we learn our gender roles?

Sept 7	Non-sociological thinking about gender. To what extent does biology explain our gendered behaviours?	<i>Supplementary:</i> Michael Kimmel. The Gendered Society, Ch2. “Ordained by Nature: Biology Constructs the Sexes”
Sept 12	Thinking sociologically about gender	
Sept 14	Gender across cultures	<i>Required:</i> Michael Kimmel. The Gendered Society, Ch3. “Spanning the World. Culture Constructs Gender Difference”
Sept 19	More than two sexes? Transgender. Guest speaker. Rachel. (moved to Sept 21)	<i>Required:</i> The Guardian: Trans Kids are not new <i>Supplementary:</i> John Hood Williams Goodbye to Sex and Gender
Sept 21	Socialization and education	<i>Required:</i> Michael Kimmel. The Gendered Society, Ch7. “The Gendered Classroom”

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

## 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 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? To what extent is the media gender biased?

Sept 26	Making sexism visible: The different “waves” of feminism and the men’s movements	<i>Required:</i> Marilyn Frye. “Oppression.” <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”
Sept 28	Gendered Language and inequality	<i>Required:</i> Sherryl Kleinman. “Why Sexist Language Matters” <i>Required:</i> Deborah Tannen. “The power of talk: Who gets heard and why”
Oct 3	“Invisible women” Gender, city planning, science and technology .	<i>Required:</i> Caroline Criado Perez, Invisible Women: Data Bias in a world for Men Introduction Ch1. “Can snow clearing be sexist.”
Oct 5	Men and women in the media	
Oct 10	Men’s and women’s bodies: What if men menstruated and had babies?	<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?

Oct 12	Men and women at work.	<i>Required:</i> Lisa Wade and Myra Marx Ferree. <i>Gender: Ideas, Interactions, Institutions.</i> Ch12. “Work” <i>Supplementary:</i> Ryan and Alexander: <i>The Glass Cliff</i>
Oct 17	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”

<b>Oct 19</b>	<b>QUIZ 1: YOUR ATTENDANCE IS REQUIRED</b>
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#### 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.

Oct 24	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
Oct 26	Are men more romantic than women? Men, women, intimacy and the changing family	<i>Reading:</i> <i>Required:</i> Paul England, Emily Fitzgibbons Shafer and Alison Fogarty. “Hooking up and Forming Romantic Relationships on Today’s College Campuses”

Oct 31	Gender, sexual orientation: the LGBT movement	<i>Required:</i> Travis Kong: “Oral histories of older gay men”
Nov 2	Guest speakers from Rainbow Bird	
Nov 7	Sexual harassment in the workplace	<i>Required:</i> Beth Quinn: “Sexual Harassment and Masculinity: The Power and Meaning of “Girl Watching””
Nov 9	Are college campuses dangerous places for women? The controversy over “rape culture” on university campuses.	<i>Required:</i> Patricia Yancey Martin: Fraternities and Rape On Campus
Nov 14	Compromised dating in Hong Kong Guest from Teen’s Keys	
Nov 16	Domestic violence	<i>Required:</i> Michael Kimmel. <i>The Gendered Society. Ch. 14. “The Gender of Violence”</i> <i>Supplementary:</i> Dobash and Dobash. <i>The Myth of Male Symmetry and Marital Violence</i>
Nov 21	The gender of war and peace	

## PART V: MEN AND WOMEN IN 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.

Nov 23	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”
Nov 28	Women, politics and development	<i>Required:</i> Leta Hong Fincher: China’s Patriarchal Authoritarianism
Nov 30	What’s to be done? Imaging different gender arrangements	<i>Required:</i> Michael Kimmel. <i>Epilogue: A “degendered” society</i>

## 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 exams. To minimize disruption, however, 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. The classes will be highly interactive. 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, messaging 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. 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.

As instructed by the University, **international students** should not schedule their flights home before the end of the examination period, as no make-up examination can be scheduled for those who are not present at the Final Examination for this reason.

### 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.

### Policy on re-grading

I have noticed that increasing numbers of students are expecting higher grades for their work. Students sometimes contact me with a request that their work be re-graded with the hope of obtaining a higher score. You will, however, appreciate that the grading of 80 assignments and exams requires tremendous resources. We make every effort to grade your work accurately. If

you do, however, request that your work/grade is reviewed, please be prepared for the possibility that your grade may move up *or down* (if, in the latter case, we find your work more deficient than our original assessment). If you do ask us to look at your work again, please make sure that you have a very strong and clear justification for doing so.

### **Course content: Talking about gender**

In this course, we will talk openly in the classroom about topics that some students might consider sensitive, controversial or even inappropriate for open discussion. These topics include: sexuality (including homosexuality and transgender), pornography, the sex industry, sexual harassment and sexual violence. Moreover, we will talk about these topics from many different perspectives. Students who are not comfortable with engaging in frank and open discussions about these issues should consider taking other courses offered by the Social Science Division.

Please note that while issues surrounding LGBT and particularly transgender 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.