

**SOSC1850**  
**UNDERSTANDING SOCIETY**  
**Spring 2022**

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Class Hour: Tuesday & Thursday 16:30- 17:50 @LTF

I. Course Aims

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.

II. Intended Learning Outcome

<b>Intended Learning Outcomes</b>	<b>Intended Learning Activities</b>
<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 a number of 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>

III. Required Textbook

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

E-Book can be purchased at HKUST bookstore at 18% discount.  
Library access: E-copy reserved for 2 hours at library

#### IV. Evaluation

Final Grade Breakdown	
Midterm Exam	25%
Final Exam	30%
Research Experience	20%
Class participation (Quiz & Discussion)	15%
Attendance	10%

#### Grading Scale

A+	100% to 95%
A	<95% to 90%
A-	<90% to 87%
B+	<87% to 83%
B	<83% to 80%
B-	<80% to 77%
C+	<77% to 73%
C	<73% to 70%
C-	<70% to 67%
D	<67% to 60%

#### *Attendance (10%)*

##### Online Mode:

I value your class attendance and participation. Canvas will record the time that you log in and out of the Zoom meeting. My teaching assistant will also make a note of who participates in each class. Of course, in order to be counted as present, your camera must be turned on so that we know that you are there and you must attend the entire class. To take into account technical problems and other unforeseen circumstances, I will ignore up to three absences/no-camera shows without penalty. I will begin recording attendance and participation after the add/drop period. No recording will be provided unless critical medical conditions.

We will have best Zoom background competition and students will vote for the top three winners.

##### Mixed Mode:

Students are expected to attend all lectures, except for those granted NIHK status by the university. You will still be subjected to this grade deduction if you attend the lecture on Zoom without NIHK status. The NIHK students are required to attend the lecture live on zoom. No recording will be provided unless critical medical conditions.

Your attendance will be essential to participate in-class quiz which counts towards your participation grade. Quiz will be administrated during the class to record attendance. Please bring your laptop or cellphone to participate the in-class quiz.

Honesty is important. Please do not fake attendance or assist others to do so. You are also subjected to grade penalty (5 points off final grade) if you are caught in both scenarios.

### ***Participation (15%)***

#### ***Discussion (5%)***

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 feedbacks through zoom chat box. At the same time, be mindful to maintain proper discipline and behave in a responsible manner in class.

It is difficult for me to monitor and address the chat sessions in such a large class in virtual setting. Your participation will be more likely to be counted if you raise your hand electronically and unmute yourself. My teaching assistant will keep a record of the frequency of your participation. Be prepared that I will call on you.

#### ***Quizzes(10%)***

We will have 6 unannounced quizzes spread randomly over the semester. They will worth 10 points each and best 5 scores will count toward your final grade. Those quizzes assess your learning from the lectures, focusing on your basic conceptual understanding of the course material. Those quizzes consisting of multiple choices and short answers will be administrated on Canvas and take no longer than 10mins. No need to stress out and over prepare it if you attend the lecture attentively.

### ***Research Experience (20%)***

The two tasks for research experience aim to equip you with basic quantitative and qualitative research skills. They will be graded on pass/fail basis. If you fail the task, you will be given some feedback and you can have ONE chance to rewrite with a one-point deduction.

The Research Study (10%) requires you to download data and make a graph to explain a social trend from World Value Survey website (<https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org>). You will then write a thought piece (100-300 words) on data interpretation and your reflection.

The Research Exercise (10%) requires you to conduct one or more interviews and video or voice recording the process (15mins minimum conversation). You will then transcribe the interviews using AI-empowered online tools, summarize the key points, and write a thought piece about the experience (100-300 words).

Further guidelines for research experience will be disseminated in due course.

### ***Exams (25% +30%)***

Students will be evaluated by two open-book exams in this course via Canvas. The mid-term exam covers materials from Chapter 1-11, and the final exam covers materials from Chapter 12-22. Exams will be comprised by short essay questions. You can be assured that the questions will involve social situations in different institutional settings, and you will need to apply sociological concepts representing the three major theoretical perspectives, find common threads, and discuss the personal and social significance of your analysis. All paper will be required to submit to Turnitin via Canvas.

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 made-ups consist of **long answers** and **an oral session**.

Further guidelines for exams will be disseminated in due course.

## V. Content and Schedule

### INTRODUCTIONS

Week 1: Introduction to The Course: Requirements, Objectives, And Scope

February 8<sup>th</sup>, Tue & February 10<sup>th</sup>, Thu

- Chapter 1

Week 2: Thinking Sociologically

February 15<sup>th</sup>, Tue & February 17<sup>th</sup>, Thu

- Chapter 2

Week 3: How sociologists do research

February 22<sup>nd</sup>, Tue & February 24<sup>th</sup>, Thu

- Chapter 3

Week 4: Social structure and social interaction

March 1<sup>st</sup>, Tue & March 3<sup>rd</sup>, Thu

- Chapter 5

\*\*\*March 1<sup>st</sup>, Assignment #1 Due

Week 5: Organizations, Societies, and Global Relationship

March 8<sup>th</sup>, Tue & March 10<sup>th</sup>, Thu

- Chapter 6
- Guest lecture

Week 6: Social Stratification

March 15<sup>th</sup>, Tue & March 17<sup>th</sup>, Thu

- Chapter 9

Week 7: Global Stratification

March 22<sup>nd</sup>, Tue & March 24<sup>th</sup>, Thu

- Chapter 10

Week 8: Sex and gender

March 29<sup>th</sup>, Tue & March 31<sup>st</sup>, Thu

- Chapter 11
- Viewing: [The People's Republic of Love](#)

Recommended:

- Sweet, Paige L. 2019. "The Sociology of Gaslighting." *American Sociological Review* 84(5):851–75.

\*\*\*March 31<sup>st</sup>, Assignment #2 Due

Week 9: Mid-term

April 5<sup>th</sup>, Tue & April 7<sup>th</sup>, Thu

- **April 7<sup>th</sup>, Midterm: Open book short essays**

\*\*April 5<sup>th</sup>, Tue\*\* Ching Ming Festival, No class

Week 10: Race and Ethnicity

April 12<sup>th</sup>, Tue & April 14<sup>th</sup>

- Chapter 10

\*\*April 14<sup>th</sup>, Thu\*\* Mid-term Break, No class

Week 11: Family

April 19<sup>th</sup>, Tue & April 21<sup>st</sup>, Thu

- Chapter 12

Week 12: Education

April 26<sup>th</sup>, Tue & April 28<sup>th</sup>, Thu

- Chapter 13
- Suggest viewing: Varsity Blues: The College Admissions Scandal

Week 13: Social change and the environment

May 3<sup>rd</sup>, Tues & May 5<sup>th</sup>, Thu

- Chapter 22

Week 14: Final week

May 10<sup>th</sup>, Tues

- **Final: Open book short essays**

\*\*The syllabus is subject to change.

## RULES AND PROCEDURES

### Course Policy

1. Cheating and plagiarism are strictly forbidden. These violations of academic integrity will result in serious consequence besides failing the class, like a note on your official transcript about cheating, which will significantly impact your future career. You can find the university's regulations on academic integrity from the following website: <http://ugadmin.ust.hk/integrity/student-1.html>.
2. Attendance and participation requirements and exam arrangements are subjected to change if the university switches to mixed mode teaching in the middle of the semester.
3. Late submission will be subject to a penalty of 20% deduction of grade per day.
4. Assignments and exams will be graded by TA. If you have disputes about the grade, you can ask for a blind re-evaluation by the instructor in a four-day time window after the grade is released (refer to future class announcements for further details). After the re-evaluation, your grade may increase, decrease, or remain the same. So, think carefully before you file for a grade dispute on exams.

### Email Policy:

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 SOSC1850-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.

### Special Notes

1. A special note to **students are considering taking another course by Prof. Zheng**: As Understanding Globalization classes, it is unavoidable that there will be some overlap between these two classes. I do not encourage you to take both classes. It is better that you get a broader perspective in the social sciences by taking classes from other professors. If, however, you do decide to take both classes, please allow other students in class to answer questions that you may already know the answer to from Sosc2290. I do appreciate your cooperation with this.
2. A special Note to **Final Year Students**. This is an introductory core course and it is designed primarily for First Year Students. 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.

### Special Needs

We are still in the midst of pandemic. If you think you need extra help, please reach out to special education needs at <https://sen.hkust.edu.hk/>.

## Attendance and cameras

The University policy on cameras is as follows:

**“Students should turn on the camera in class for class participation and interaction. For courses with participation scores, students with video turned off should expect lower participation scores.”**

The surest way to achieve a high grade on this course is to *attend all the classes*, turn on your cameras 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 a substitute for class attendance.

Your attendance will be recorded on Canvas. To count as attendance, you must:

1. Attend the whole class (absence of more than 30 minutes will count as a full absence)
2. Turn on your camera during the entire lecture (but not necessary in the Break) so that we know you are there (still photos or emojis do not count).
3. Log in with no more than one device. That other device may not have a camera and your attendance may not be recorded.

For the purpose of assessment, we will start recording attendance after the Drop add period (September 19<sup>th</sup>). To allow for technological problems and other unforeseen circumstances, I will allow for up to THREE absences/no-camera shows without penalty.