

[TENTATIVE]

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UNDERSTANDING SOCIETY

“Ours is a time of uneasiness and indifference ... Instead of troubles – defined in terms of values and threats – there is often the misery of vague uneasiness; instead of explicit issues, there is often merely the beat feeling that all is somehow not right. Neither the values threatened nor whatever threatens them has been stated; in short, they have not been carried to the point of decision. Much less have they been formulated as problems of social science.” (C. Wright Mills 1959, The Sociological Imagination)

“(T)he discovery of sociology can change your life. It can help you to understand better the social forces you confront, the forces that constrain and free. This understanding has a liberating potential: By examining these forces you can stand somewhat apart from at least some aspect of society, and thereby exert more creative control over your own life.” (James Henslin, adapting from Peter Berger 1963, Invitation to Sociology)

I. COURSE AIMS

1. To introduce the basic sociological concepts and perspectives;
2. To address some critical social issues and problems from sociological perspectives;
3. To enable students to relate sociology to their life experiences and the social context.

II. INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon completion of the course, students should be able:

- (1) To demonstrate basic knowledge of the key sociological concepts and perspectives;
- (2) To explain and analyze a wide range of social issues including deviance, gender inequality, family changes, class inequality, education, power, politics and so on; &
- (3) To apply some basic sociological concepts.

III. MODES OF LEARNING/ASSESSMENT

Topic-based learning tasks	60%
Essay	40%

※ There will be a few simple topic-based learning tasks, 10% each, three of them will be taken during class time (see section V for more details). These learning tasks give you an opportunity to apply the concepts and theories you have learned and stimulate you to think further about some critical social issues. (submission details below*)

※ A free-topic essay of 600-1000 words is due on **30 May (Saturday), 11:59pm**, via Canvass. You are supposed to write a sociological essay about yourself, your family

or a social phenomenon (suggestions will be provided along the way). For the sake of fairness to all, late submissions will receive a penalty and submissions late for more than 3 days will not be accepted. (See submission details below.*)

(*For both the essay and the topic-based learning tasks, please submit a Word or PDF file named in the following format – “task_student name_student ID”, such as “Task 1_Chan Tai Tai_12345678” or “Essay_Chan Tai Tai_12345678”. Such information should also be typed in the document.)

IV. CONTENTS AND SCHEDULE

Wk	Tuesday	Thursday
1		[20/02] Introduction
1	[25/02] Culture and Socialization	[27/02] Deviance
2	[03/03] Deviance	[05/03] Deviance
3	[10/03] Deviance	[12/03] Learning Task
4	[17/03] Deviance/ Sociological Theory	[19/03] Family
5	[24/03] Family	[26/03] Gender
6	[31/03] Gender	[02/04] Family/ Gender <i>{video show + discussion}</i>
7	[07/04] Economy & Class Inequalities	[09/04] Economy & Class Inequalities
8	[14/04] Economy & Class Inequalities	[16/04] Economy & Class Inequalities
9	[21/04] Economy & Class Inequalities	[23/04] Learning Task
10	[28/04] Education	[30/04] Education
11	[05/05] Education/ Power & Politics	[07/05] Power & Politics
12	[12/05] Power & Politics	[14/05] Power & Politics
13	[19/05] Learning Task	

V. TOPIC-BASED LEARNING TASKS

- Task 1 : (MAR 12) *Class activity* (video & short quiz)
- Task 2 : (MAR 22) Reading report: 100-200 words (details later)
- Task 3 : (APR 12) Social study: 100-250 words (details later)
- Task 4 : (APR 23) *Class activity* (video & short quiz)
- Task 5 : (MAY 09) Social study: 100-250 words (details later)
- Task 6 : (MAY 19) *Class activity* (video & short quiz)

VI. READINGS (available on Canvass)

1. Introduction: The “Sociological Imagination”

- J.C. Alexander and K. Thompson 2008. *A Contemporary Introduction to Sociology – Culture and Society in Transition*, London: Paradigm, pp. 7-13

Culture & Socialization

- Haralambos and Holborn 2004. *Sociology*, pp. vi-xi
- Henslin, *Down to Earth Sociology* (chapter by Henslin, “On Becoming Male: Reflections of a Sociologist on Childhood and Early Socialization)

2. Deviance

- Haralambos and Holborn. 2004. *Sociology*, pp. 330-351, 353-355

Supplementary

- Howard Becker.1953. "Becoming a Marihuana." *American Journal of Sociology*, 59 (3), pp.235-242.

3. Sociological Theory

- Haralambos and Holborn 2004. *Sociology*, p. xiv-xxi, pp. 934-950, 961-964

4. Family

- Haralambos and Holborn 2004. *Sociology*, 466-470, 478-488, 494-500

5. Gender

- Haralambos and Holborn 2004. *Sociology*, pp 98-115, 126-137
- Henslin, *Down to Earth Sociology* (chapter by Thorne and Luria, "Sexuality and Gender in Children's Daily Worlds")

6. Social and Class Inequalities

- Bilton et al. 2002, *Introductory Sociology*, chapters 4 & 5 (pp.70-94, 98-127)

7. Education

- Haralambos and Holborn 2004. *Sociology*, pp. xxvi-6, 692-694, 698-706, 731-756

8. Power and Politics

- Haralambos and Holborn 2004, pp. 538-559

Recommended Books for the Course

Haralambos, M., and M. Holborn. 2004. *Sociology - Themes and Perspectives*. London: Collins. (Note: The latest edition contains very minor changes.)

Bilton, T., K. Bonnett, P. Jones, D. Skinner, M. Stanworth and A. Webster. 2002. *Introductory Sociology*. London: Macmillan.

Henslin, J. 2007. *Down to Earth Sociology: Introductory Readings*. New York: Free Press.

John, J. Macionis. 2012. *Sociology*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Johnson, Allan G. 1997. *The Forest and the Trees - Sociology as Life, Practice, and Promise*. Temple University Press.

Worsley, P. 1991. *The New Modern Sociology Readings*. London: Penguin, chs. 1,3,4,6,27,29,58,59,64,65,66,74.

莫家豪 (1998) :《社會學與社會分析》。香港：香港人文科學出版社。章 1-2。

李明堃, 黃紹倫主編 (1992) :《社會學新論》。香港：商務印書館。章 6,9,11,12。

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Introductory Lecture

I. Nature vs Nurture (Culture)?

II. “Sociological Imagination” (C.Wright Mills 1959)

-An awareness of the relationship between personal experience and the wider society

- private troubles ↔ public issues (e.g. poverty; unemployment; “unsuccessful” students)

-*Do not take things for granted!* (i.e. Don’t ever believe that what you see at present is the natural or the only way of behaving or organizing social relationships. There always are alternatives.)

-Sociology encourages you to develop a *debunking* attitude toward social phenomenon (i.e. a critical attitude that exposures falseness and pretensions).

Sociological Focuses:

- the recurring patterns in people’s attitudes and action
- how such patterns are formed culturally, socially, economically and politically
- how such patterns vary across time, societies, & social groups (e.g. classes)
- how such patterns generate social inequalities (e.g. gender inequality) & social conflicts