

INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY

(SOC1001B, Wednesday 2:30PM - 4:15PM, Zoom link 212 082 6490)

Department of Sociology

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Zoom meeting link: <https://cuhk.zoom.us/j/2120826490>

Zoom meeting ID: 212 082 6490

Overview:

‘Sociology teaches us that what we regard as natural, inevitable, good, or true may not be such. And that the “givens” of our lives – genetic or biological – are strongly influenced by historical and social forces. Understanding the subtle and yet complex and profound ways in which our individual lives reflect the contexts of our social experience is basic to the sociological outlook’ (Giddens et al., 2003:4).

‘Every individual life, from one generation to the next, in some society; that he lives out a biography, and that he lives it out within some historical sequence. By the fact of his living he contributes, however minutely, to the shaping of this society and to the course of his history, even as he is made by society and by its historical push and shove. The sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society. That is its task and its promise’ (Mills, 1959:6).

‘Sociology...is bound to sap the foundations on which rest the popular beliefs in ‘necessity’ and the ‘naturalness’ of things, actions, trends and processes. It unmasks the irrationalities that have contributed to their composition and continuation. It reveals the contingencies behind the ostensible rules and norms, and the alternatives crowded around the allegedly sole possibility’ (Bauman, 2014:29)

What is Sociology as an academic discipline? What does it teach us as human beings, social actors, and citizens? What is the calling and vocation of a sociologist? In what ways are sociological

training relevant to how we think, perceive, and take up different roles in society? These are big questions, and this course tries to answer them.

The course has four major objectives. It introduces students to:

1. the history of the discipline, its major questions, theoretical perspectives, concepts and research methods;
2. the major components of social structures and how they interact with each other;
3. the major dimensions of social inequalities that sociologists have examined; and,
4. the theories and dynamics of social changes sociologists have proposed.

Expected Learning Outcome (what students should have learned after taking this course):

1. Overview of sociology as a discipline;
2. Basic understanding of important sociological concepts and theories;
3. Basic understanding of sociological research method;
4. Thinking critically;
5. Reflection on one's values and ways of life (biography), and how these are linked with broader social contexts (history).
6. Reflection on individuals' responsibilities and their roles in constructing a more just world.

Grade Descriptor

A

Outstanding performance on all learning outcomes.

A-

Generally outstanding performance on all (or almost all) learning outcomes.

B

Substantial performance on all learning outcomes, OR high performance on some learning outcomes which compensates for less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance.

C

Satisfactory performance on the majority of learning outcomes, possibly with a few weaknesses.

D

Barely satisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes.

F

Unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes, OR failure to meet specified assessment requirement.

Text Book:

Giddens, Anthony & Philip W Sutton (7th edition). 2013. *Sociology. Cambridge: Polity.*
(A hard copy of the text book is being reserved at CUHK library. You may also order more advance editions of the book online.)

Supplementary Readings (all reserved at the CUHK library):

Berger, Peter. 1963. *Invitation to Sociology: A Humanistic Perspective.* Garden City: Doubleday.
(A hard copy of this book is being reserved at the CUHK Library. You could also find E-copies of the book at CUHK library. This text book is also available at CUHK book store, or you could order it online).

Mills, C. Wright. 1959. *The Sociological Imagination.* NY: Oxford University Press, 1959.
Chapter 1.and Chapter 6.

Choi, Susanne YP., & Peng, Yinni. 2016. *Masculine Compromise: Migration, Family and Gender in China.* Oakland: University of California Press. Chapters 3 and 4.

Research suggests that reading printed rather than digital versions of books facilitates more deep-reading, reflection, and critical analysis (for more details see <https://newrepublic.com/article/135326/digital-reading-no-substitute-print>), if personal finance allows, I recommend students to read print rather than digital versions of the reading materials.

Teaching via Zoom

As a result of the pandemic, all lectures would likely be conducted via zoom, subjected to the University's guidance and notifications. During zoom lectures, student attendance would be taken. 15% of the grades would be given to students' participation in the lectures. Participation would be assessed by students' willingness to ask and answer questions either verbally or via chat, and the quality of such questions/answers.

Lecture Schedule

1. Overview (13/1)
Giddens etc. Chapter 1 (pp.3-10);

Mills: Chapter 1 (pp. 3-11);
Berger: Chapter 1

2. Founders of Sociology and Debunking (20/1)
Giddens etc. Chapter. 1 (pp.10-29);
3. Culture and Society (27/1)
Giddens etc. Chapter 4.
4. *Sociological Theories: Social Structure and Social Control (3/2)
Giddens etc. Chapter 3.
5. *Sociological Theories: Social Role, Socialization, and Identity (10/2)
Giddens etc. Chapter 3 (pp. 86-91) and chapter 9 (pp. 334-344).
6. *Sociological Theories: Self and Agency, Conflict and Power (24/2)
Giddens etc. Chapter 3;
7. Sociological Methods (3/3)
Giddens etc. Chapter 2;

Social Institutions

8. Family, Marriage and Intimate Relationships (10/3)
Giddens etc. Chapter 10
Choi and Peng: Chapters 3 and 4.
9. Polity and Economy (17/3)
Giddens etc. Chapter 7.

Social Inequalities

10. Class Inequalities (24/3)
Giddens etc.,: Chapters 12
11. Race and Gender Inequalities (14/4)
Giddens etc.,: Chapters 15 and Chapters 16
12. Social Movement I (21/4)
Giddens etc.,: Chapter 22 (pp. 994-1006)

Snow, D.A., Soule, Sarah A., Kriesi, Hanspeter. 2008. Mapping the Terrain. In David A Snow, Sarah A Soule, and Hanspeter Kriesi (eds.). The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements. Oxford: Blackwell. Pp. 3-16.

Due to the pandemic, we would upload all assigned readings to the Blackboard by 11th January 2020.

Requirements

Language requirements: all lectures and tutorials will be conducted in Cantonese but students can write their assignments and answer their exam papers in either English or Chinese.

Writing assignments - All students are required to write two papers, each carries a weight of 35%.

Topic for First Paper – Students could choose ONE from the following two options:

1. The first paper (35%) requires students to discuss how social structure and social institution have shaped individuals' lives. Sociologist such as Durkheim argue that social facts are 'external, coercive, and collective' and they shape our expectations and pattern our actions. What does this mean? Use your own experiences of living in Hong Kong society or your observations of what happens in Hong Kong to discuss how social institutions and social norms in this particular society have patterned, shaped and controlled the ways people expect and act. You may substantiate your arguments by using evidence from past relevant research, statistics, or interview people of interest to your discussion area. You also need to reflect on the strengths and pitfalls of such a sociological perspective.
2. Sociologists have explicated how social roles and socialization shape the self – who we are, in other words, our identity. Using your own experiences, what you have learned from this class about socialization, and/or the observations you have of Hong Kong or other societies to explain how socialization helps individuals to learn and accept certain social roles and discuss the limitations of socialization with respect to role taking and role learning.

Topic for Second Paper – Students could choose ONE from the following two options:

3. The second paper (35%) requires students to reflect how individuals, while shaped by social structure, could still shape/change such structures both collectively and individually. Sociologists such as Erving Goffman propose theoretical perspectives that emphasize the agency and the possibility of resistance, non-conformity, strategic avoidance etc. of social actors. Use your own experiences, concepts and theories that you have learned in this class, and your observations etc. to discuss the merits of these theoretical perspectives and how they resonate with the statement that 'society defines us, but is in turn defined by us' (Berger 1963: insert page number here).
4. Scholars of social movements have studied how individuals have organized collectively to change society. Please use the concepts that Snow, D.A., Soule, Sarah A., Kriesi, Hanspeter. [2008. Mapping the Terrain. In David A Snow, Sarah A Soule, and Hanspeter Kriesi (eds.).

The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements. Oxford: Blackwell. Pp. 3-16.] propose to give such an example of social movements changing society. The example could be in any historical, social, cultural and geographical context.

Students can write their papers in either English (1000-1500 words) or Chinese (1500-3000 words). The first paper is due by 5th March 2021. The second paper is due by 25th April 2021.

All assignments are required to be **submitted to VeriGuide**, the plagiarism detection software of our university. **Students have to hand in their assignments online with the VeriGuide receipt to the tutors before 5pm on the due date.**

* Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/. With each assignment, students will be required to submit a statement that they are aware of these policies, regulations, guidelines and procedures.

Tutorials (15%) - All students are required to attend tutorials. They are set up to help students to deepen their understanding of Sociology through presentations and discussions, and to consult their tutors about their assignments. Students of each tutorial class are divided into four groups, each group consisting of 3-4 people. Each group is required to present an assigned reading, which are listed below:

Mills, C. Wright. 1959. *The Sociological Imagination*. NY: Oxford University Press, 1959. Chapter 1. (The Promise)

Mills, C. Wright. 1959. *The Sociological Imagination*. NY: Oxford University Press, 1959. Chapter 7. (The Human Variety)

Mills, C. Wright. 1959. *The Sociological Imagination*. NY: Oxford University Press, 1959. Chapter 8. (Uses of History)

Mills, C. Wright. 1959. *The Sociological Imagination*. NY: Oxford University Press, 1959. Chapter 9. (On Reason and Freedom)

Class participation (15%) - 15% of the grades would be given to students' participation in the lectures. Participation would be assessed by students' willingness to ask and answer questions either verbally or via chat, and the quality of such questions/answers.