

SOSC 1859 – Exploring Society

School:	School of Humanities and Social Science
Subject Area:	Social Science
Course Credit:	3
Instructor:	ZHENG Wenjuan
Pre-requisite/co-requisite:	Nil

Notes:

- The syllabi provided here is for reference only and may be subject to changes and adjustments as determined by the course instructors.

Exploring Society — Intensive Summer Course (Draft Syllabus)

SOSC 1859 | Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays — 2:00–5:20 PM, July 13–Aug 7
3 Credits

Instructor: Dr. Wenjuan Zheng

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Office Hours: By appointment (summer schedule)

Teaching Assistants:

- TBA

Course Description

In *Invitation to Sociology* (1963), Peter Berger describes a sociologist as one who seeks to understand society in a disciplined, critical way. This disciplined understanding allows us to see everyday life from a new perspective — what C. Wright Mills calls the **sociological imagination**, connecting personal experiences with larger social structures.

This **intensive summer course** introduces students to key sociological questions, theories, and methods. Through discussions, short reflections, case studies, and films, students will learn how to interpret the world sociologically and communicate their ideas clearly.

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate knowledge of the sociological perspective.
2. Connect sociological theories to real-world examples and personal experience.
3. Critically question “common sense” views of society.
4. Write clearly and analytically using sociological concepts.

Intended Learning Outcomes	Intended Learning Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An appreciation of the importance of sociology for understanding modern societies • Basic understanding of sociological ideas and concepts • The ability to think sociologically • Develop the ability to propose and analyze sociological questions independently 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By discussing the relevance of sociological ideas in our lives • By reading the works of prominent sociologists • By undertaking several in-class experiments, exercises and discussions that will encourage you to see how your own behaviour is shaped by groups, culture and organizations

Mapping of Course ILOs to Assessment Tasks

Assessed Task	Mapped ILOs	Explanation
Mid-term	ILO1, ILO2, ILO3.	The midterm exam will consist of multiple-choice questions designed to assess students' understanding of key concepts and theories in sociology, directly aligning with the intended learning outcomes (ILOs 1, 2, and 3).
In-class Quiz	ILO1, ILO2, ILO3.	Quizzes help reinforce the knowledge necessary to demonstrate a solid grasp of the sociological perspective ILO1, 2, and 3.
Reflection Paper	ILO1, ILO2, ILO3, ILO4	This task assesses students' ability to explain and apply sociological concepts presented in the documentary (ILO 1), evaluate their implications within the social context (ILO 2), critically analyze the role of the phenomenon in society (ILO 3), and synthesize a well-argued reflection that integrates course materials and sociological theory (ILO 4).
Final examination	ILO1, ILO2, ILO3, ILO4	The final examination, featuring multiple-choice questions and short essays, effectively assesses the intended learning goals. Multiple-choice questions evaluate students' understanding of key sociological concepts (ILO 1), while short essays require the application of sociological theories to real-world examples and personal experiences (ILO 2). The exam also challenges students to critically analyze common sense beliefs (ILO 3) and synthesize course materials into well-argued responses (ILO 4). This comprehensive approach ensures a thorough evaluation of students' mastery of sociological principles and critical thinking skills.
In-class Participation	ILO1, ILO2, ILO3	Weekly online forum discussions, plus in-class participation. The participation structure enhances the intended learning objectives ILO 1-3 by encouraging active engagement in class.

Teaching and Learning Approach

Because this is an **intensive summer course**, learning will be active and structured with frequent breaks. Each session will include a mix of:

- Short mini-lectures
- Group discussions
- Case exercises / simulations
- Guided writing and reflections
- Short quizzes or exit tickets

Students are expected to come prepared, participate thoughtfully, and support one another in discussion.

Required Texts

You do **not** need to purchase all materials; selected chapters will be assigned.

- Ritzer, George & Wendy Murphy (2019). *Introduction to Sociology*. SAGE.
- Ritzer, George & J. Michael Ryan (2023). *Introduction to Sociology, 6th ed.* SAGE.

A copy will be placed on short loan in the library. Additional readings may be posted on Canvas.

Assessment and Grading

Grades are criterion-referenced (no curve). Rubrics will be provided.

Assessment	Weight	Description
Participation & engagement	10%	Contributions in class, activities, and respectful discussion
Weekly online quizzes (4)	20%	Short comprehension quizzes after each week
Reflection papers (2)	25%	700–900 words each connecting theory to everyday life
Group mini-project & presentation	20%	Small groups analyze a social issue using course concepts

Assessment	Weight	Description
Final examination	25%	MC + concept application questions

Late submissions: 20% deduction per day late unless documented emergencies apply.

Course AI Policy

AI tools may be used only in **early brainstorming** stages.
If you use AI (including ChatGPT), you must clearly state:

“I used AI to help with _____.”

Failure to disclose constitutes academic misconduct.

Academic Integrity

This course follows HKUST’s Academic Honor Code. Plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, or cheating will result in penalties according to university regulations.

Communication

- Grades will be posted on Canvas.
- Email instructor for course content/grades.
- Email TAs for Canvas/technical/logistics.
- Subject line format: **SOSC1859 – Your Name – Topic**

Responses are typically within **48 hours on weekdays**.

Schedule (Intensive 4-Week Plan)

The schedule may be revised depending on class progress.

Week 1 — Seeing the Social World

Mon: Introduction & the sociological imagination

Reading: Ritzer Ch. 1

Wed: Thinking sociologically & questioning common sense

Reading: Ch. 2

Fri: How sociologists do research

Reading: Ch. 3

→ **Quiz 1 (online)**

Week 2 — Becoming Social Beings

Mon: Socialization — how we become human

Reading: Ch. 5

Wed: Gender and everyday life

Reading: Ch. 11

Fri: Documentary + guided discussion

→ **Reflection Paper #1 assigned**

→ **Quiz 2 (online)**

Week 3 — Power and Inequality

Mon: What is social inequality?

Reading: Ch. 8

Wed: Inequality continued — class, work, and life chances

Fri: Race / ethnicity & colorblindness

Reading: Ch. 10

→ Group project workshop

→ **Quiz 3 (online)**

Week 4 — Institutions, Futures, and Synthesis

Mon: Education — can it change fate?

Reading: Ch. 13

Wed: Family, love, and changing relationships

→ **Reflection Paper #2 due**

→ **Group presentations**

Fri: Review + **Final Exam**

→ **Quiz 4 (online, cumulative concept check)**

****The syllabus is subject to change.**

Participation Expectations

You are expected to:

- attend regularly and arrive on time
- engage respectfully in discussions
- complete readings before class
- contribute thoughtfully (not just frequently)

Participation quality matters more than speaking the most.

Make-up Work Policy

Make-ups are not guaranteed. Exceptions require documentation for emergencies such as hospitalization or quarantine. Make-ups will take the form of an oral exam.

Special Note for Students with Different Backgrounds

This course welcomes students with varying experience in social science. We will move carefully, summarize often, and ensure everyone can follow. Please speak to me early if you need support.