

The Chinese University of Hong Kong
SOCI 1002A: APPROACHING SOCIOLOGY
2021-22 Term 1, Tue 9:30-12:15, WMY 404

Professor Tony TAM

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Course Description

Approaching Sociology is designed for students newly majoring in the Sociology program. The first main goal of the course is to offer guidance and assistance to the students in their encounter with sociology. Taking advantage of its small size and interactive format, the course will be highly complementary to the lecture-format, textbook-based *Introduction to Sociology* (SOCI 1001A). The small class size also provides a unique opportunity to develop the academic aptitudes required for understanding and writing sociological essays, paving the way for a rewarding learning experience.

The second main goal of the course is to be a part of the Sociology Department's academic mentorship program that helps new students adjust to studying sociology and plan for future course taking. Thus the instructor of *Approaching Sociology* is assigned as the students' Level I Academic Advisor for the current academic year. This arrangement greatly facilitates the instructor and each student to nurture a mentor-mentee relationship that may continue informally beyond the current academic year. As a result, up to one-third of the course time would be devoted to academic advising.

Learning Outcomes/Objectives

- (1) Identify the defining characteristics of sociology
- (2) Understand and use the basic vocabulary of sociological inquiry
- (3) Acquire a basic understanding of some exemplary sociological approaches to analyze and explain a social phenomenon
- (4) Strengthen a variety of academic skills (reading, analysis, writing and presentation) under-developed in secondary education but essential to the sociology curriculum

Reference Texts

Giddens, Anthony & Philip Sutton. 2013. *Sociology (7th ed.)*. Cambridge: Polity.

(Hard copies of the text book are *on reserve* at CUHK library. You may get more recent editions of this book by purchasing it at the bookstore or ordering online.)

Elster, Jon. 1989. *Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences*. Cambridge. (E-book available from CUHK library E-resources.)

Performance Assessment

15% participation in class discussion (unapproved absence will result in 1 *percentage point* deduction)

30% participation through in-class writing assignments (absences will be graded as *zero*, the lowest score will not be counted)

35% group presentation on an assigned reading (to be announced three weeks in advance) with a written report

20% group discussant with written report

Group Presentation and Discussant

- Each group will serve as ***presenter*** once, up to 30 min. Each group presentation should be a fully collective effort, from interpreting a reading, to deciding how to present it, preparing the powerpoint, the essay-format written report, and delivering the presentation.
- The ppt, written report, and presentation should be a sharp summary of academic question addressed by the reading, the approach of the author(s) to the question, major points of the answer. Word limit for the written report is 2500 words in English. The ppt and written report should be sent to the CA and instructor by email and received acknowledgement of receipt by 21:00 on Saturday before your presentation.
- Each group will serve as ***discussant*** once, up to 15 min. Then the group will chair open discussion before instructor's comments and conclusion. The written report and in-class presentation of your report is also a collective effort. Its goal is to demonstrate that you can analytically and critically understand a reading.
- The ppt, written report, and discussant presentation should highlight what you would like your audience to pay attention to. Tell audience your own views and provide reasons to support them. Word limit for the written report is 1500 words in English. The ppt and written report should be sent to the CA and instructor by email and received acknowledgement of receipt by 21:00 on Saturday before your presentation.
- VeriGuide receipt and declaration form are required as part of each submission.

Other Requirements

- (1) Please state clearly the course code (SOCI 1002A), teacher's name, your full name, student ID, date and word counts on the first page of your submission.
- (2) Be sure to save e-copies of your written answers and keep backups for yourself.
- (3) You must acknowledge all printed/multi-media/online reference materials (books, TV programmes, magazines, other newspapers, online news, Internet websites and all other reference materials) in your answer to a writing assignment. Both in-text citation and bibliography/reference section at the end of your answer are required. Improper citation may lead to charges of plagiarisms, which will be severely penalized.
- (4) Late submissions will result in the reduction of a subgrade (e.g. A- to B+, or B+ to B).

Academic Honesty

*Plagiarism is a very serious offense! Ignorance is not an acceptable excuse by any student at CUHK—including all first year students. Your attention is therefore drawn to the 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 <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/>. Students are required to submit all written assignments (such as individual essays and group presentation reports) through plagiarism detection software program **VeriGuide** to get a receipt and sign the declaration on the receipt. Assignments without the receipt and signed declaration will not be graded.*

Grade Descriptors

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.

MEETING SCHEDULE

Week 1. Introduction (Sept 7)

- Understanding the design and learning objectives of the course
- Prepare for the transition from secondary education to university learning
- Know your peers
- Individualized meetings for half of class

Week 2. What is Sociology? (Sept 14)

- Multiple views: scope, theory, and method
- Essence of scientific research
- Individualized meetings for half of class
- **Readings:**
 - (1) Giddens & Sutton (2013) Chapter 1 “What is Sociology?” Pp. 1-9, 25-29.
 - (2) Bauman, Zygmunt. and Tim May (2001) “The Discipline of Sociology”, pp. 5-12 in *Thinking Sociologically*, 2nd ed. Oxford: Blackwell. (Available for download from CUHK Library)

Week 3. Basic Vocabulary of Sociological Inquiry (Sept 21)

- Sociology as an explanatory social science
- Reading sociological research
- **Readings:**
Giddens & Sutton (2013) Chapter 2 “Asking & Answering Sociological Questions”
Pp. 32-66.

Week 4. Appreciating the Sociological Heritage (Sept 28)

- Big questions addressed by Durkheim, Marx, and Weber
- **Readings:**
(1) Giddens & Sutton (2013) Chapter 1 “What is Sociology?” pp. 9-25 and Chapter 3
“Theories and Perspectives” pp. 69-96.
(2) Elster (1989) Chapter 1. "Mechanisms" in *Nuts and Bolts in the Social Sciences*,
Cambridge. (Available for download from CUHK Library)

Week 4. Beyond Commonsense (Oct 5)

- (1) Grounded hypotheses: The power of alternative explanations
- (2) Empirical inter-subjectivity: The power of scientific methodology and evidence
- **Readings:**
Gelman and Fung (2016) “The Power of the ‘Power Pose’: Amy Cuddy’s famous
finding is the latest example of scientific overreach”

Weeks 5 to 12. Examples of Going Beyond Commonsense

- Readings for group presentations and discussants to be announced three weeks in advance
- Ordering are as follows:--

Group 1 will present and Group 5 discuss

Group 2 will present and Group 4 discuss

Group 3 will present and Group 1 discuss

Group 4 will present and Group 2 discuss

Group 5 will present and Group 3 discuss