

2022-2023 Term 1
SOCG001-G2-G3
UNDERSTANDING SOCIETIES

Instructor: Hiro SAITO
Office: SOSS 4-4
Web Site: holisticeducationlab.org
Email: hirosaito@smu.edu.sg
Telegram: @mindfulness4earth

G2: Mon 15:30–18:45 SOSS/CIS Classroom 1-2
G3: Tue 15:30–18:45 SOSS/CIS Classroom 1-2

THE NATURE OF THIS COURSE

This course is all about **your own learning as an individual and as a collective**. My role as an instructor is to **facilitate** this learning process to the best of my ability.

The process of learning sociology (or any subject) is **akin to that of learning how to play sports or how to perform arts**. So, what are the key elements of successfully learning a new sport or art? While there are many key elements, let me distil them into **the following three**.

The first and foremost key element is consistent **practice**. We need **discipline** and **commitment** to keep up our practice. But practice does **not** need to entail austerity. Rather, practice brings us **the joy of mastery experience**. Becoming able to do things that we could not do before is **intrinsically fulfilling**. Look at small children (that we all once were). Their faces light up with **excitement** when they master new skills for the first time – after so many failed attempts!

The second key element is **self-compassion**, our unconditional belief in our own self-worth. This is because “real” learning can happen **only when our first attempts with a new challenge fail**. When we fail, it is okay to feel frustrated and disappointed. We can always mentally nod to ourselves and say, “Don’t worry, I can do this better with more practice,” and go back to the challenge with fresh energy and perspectives. Self-compassion thus cultivates **resilience**, which is essential for **continuous growth**.

The third key element is a **community**. Even if we compete in individual sports or perform solos, **we always train with others**, be they our teachers or classmates. And whether we “win” or “lose” in those competitions, **if we give our best**, we can genuinely congratulate other competitors – our fellow athletes or artists – for their hard work and appreciate what they did well and how they did it. Paradoxically, though, this learning-in-a-community is ultimately about ourselves: we practice together only to fully realize **our unique potentials as individuals**.

With regard to these key elements of successful learning, my role in this course is **akin to that of a coach**. My first and foremost job is to provide **a training program** (e.g., readings, assignments, weekly lessons) for you to learn sociology. As your coach, I will also create **a safe and**

supportive environment, wherein you can learn new skills by failing as many times as necessary and learning from those failures, while working together with your fellow learners.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this course, “learning sociology” is defined in terms of increasing the level of mastery of the following two skills that are essential for becoming **social-science majors who can help the world become a “better” place**:

- (1) Critical-analytical skill: Essentially, social science is a human activity to construct representations of the world that are systematically informed by analytic frames (e.g., theories and concepts) and evidences. By constantly going back and forth between analytic frames and evidences, we generate new questions and explanations that will improve our understanding of why the world is the way it is and how it could be different.
- (2) Collaboration skill: The real world is full of problems for which there are no single right solutions. Problem-solving is thus fundamentally a collective endeavor wherein participants seek to construct liveable solutions through dialogue. In this regard, collaboration skill is crucial. Collaboration requires us to respect and appreciate different positions and synthesize multiple perspectives to produce a best possible outcome.

METHODS OF EVALUATION AND FEEDBACK

To help you increase your mastery of the aforesaid skills, the following assignments have been designed. These are meant to evaluate your performances and **provide feedback to facilitate your progress toward the learning objectives**.

Attendance & Participation	10%
Mid-Term Analytic Paper	25%
Group Project	30%
Final Paper	35%

Attendance & Participation

I believe in “deep learning,” i.e., intrinsically motivated learning, because it is the most effective form of learning. Ideally, you should attend and participate in class only if you are intrinsically motivated to learn about the world vis-à-vis yourself. At the same time, however, I as an instructor have **the responsibility to facilitate your individual and collective learning**. To integrate my belief in deep learning with my educational responsibility, I have adopted the following arrangement for your attendance and participation points.

- (1) *Weekly Photo Journaling*: From Week 1 onward, you will engage in **collective photo journaling as a section** via **Telegram**. Your individual photo journal entry is **due at noon on the day of your section meeting for the week, except for Week 1**.

For Week 1, you will practice this collective photo journaling **in class**. From Week 2 onward, your photo journal entries will be **your answers to my questions about the assigned readings**.

In principle, if you complete a photo journal entry in good faith and in time, you will get full marks for this component of your attendance and participation points. But if I see a lack of effort in your journal entry (e.g., your answer is too facile) or if your entry is late, I will deduct points accordingly.

(2) *In-Class Learning*: every week we will have small-group discussions, and **I expect everyone to actively participate in his or her own unique way**. This is because **the quality of learning in class depends on efforts from yourself, your classmates, and your instructor**. If you remain engaged in class, you can increase the quality of your own learning as well as that of collective learning.

Because I believe in deep learning – and assume that everyone will participate in good faith – you will automatically earn full marks for this component of your attendance and participation points by being present in class. I encourage you to **be fully present in class both physically and mentally**, so that you can make best of learning activities unfolding in front of you.

But I also understand that unexpected things happen in life. So, with proper documentation (regarding your medical conditions, family situations, etc.), I will make an arrangement for you to make up your absence.

Mid-Term Analytic Paper: “The COVID-19 Pandemic and Society” (1,000 words maximum, double spaced, Times New Roman 12, and 2.54 cm margin): due on 2 October 2022 (23:59)

This mid-term asks you to **analyze the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on society and/or how society has responded to the pandemic**. You may decide on the geographical scope of your paper (e.g., Singapore, another country, the entire world). **More detailed instructions will be provided in Weeks 4 to 6**.

For now, please note that your mid-term analytic paper must do the following: (1) **use evidences (either qualitative or quantitative) from news/magazine articles, statements and statistics on government web sites, and other publicly available online sources**; (2) analyze your evidences by **using both Marxist and Foucauldian analytic frames from the readings in Weeks 2 to 5**; and (3) and **either assess** which analytic frame (Marxist or Foucauldian) can offer a stronger explanation **or synthesize** the two.

By writing this analytic paper, you will develop the critical-analytical skill to examine the real world in light of relevant analytic frames and evidences, construct your argument coherently, and communicate it effectively in writing. This assignment is also designed to help you foster your mindfulness, for we will have class discussion to reflect on what social-scientific analysis entails and how it is done in writing.

This mid-term also aims to train your “**slow-twitch muscles,**” i.e., **to cultivate your “intellectual stamina” to keep your focus over several weeks in completing a single complex task.** This is because, in both work and life, you need to learn how to manage your intellectual energy and resources while constantly juggling multiple complex tasks.

Evaluation criteria will be posted on eLearn in due course. When you submit your paper to the designated folder on eLearn, **include your name in your file name.**

Group Project: “Sociology Video” (15-minute presentation videorecording via MS PowerPoint): due on 13 November 2022 (23:59)

This project asks you as a group to produce a presentation videorecording of your sociological analysis for **Junior College, Polytechnic, and high school students in Singapore.** Upon completion, your video presentation will be posted at the web site “[Holistic Education Lab: Blog](#).” **More detailed instructions will be provided in due course.**

For now, please note that **your video presentation must do the following:** (1) **raise a question** about a topic that interests your group (e.g., “Why is an economic inequality increasing?”, “Why has Instagram become so popular?”) and **clarify why your group’s question is important;** (2) **derive two analytic frames the assigned readings from Week 2 onward** and explain how each of them can help answer your group’s question; (3) in so doing, **use evidences** from publicly available online sources and **synthesize your two explanations.**

For your group project, **you may choose any topic other than the COVID-19 pandemic;** for example, you may choose a particular issue (e.g., inequality, climate change) or a particular industry (e.g. entertainment, healthcare). You may also decide on the geographical scope of your paper (e.g. Singapore, another country, the entire world). **However, you may bring in the COVID-19 pandemic if you want to explore how it has affected your chosen topic.**

In Week 5, **you will be divided into 10 preassigned groups.** (Each group will have 4 or 5 members.) Given this preassigned grouping, you will have an opportunity for improving your collaboration skill – to build a team and harness synergy among team members to synthesize different perspectives and produce an insightful and compelling presentation. By designing a video presentation for your intended audience (i.e., JC, Poly, and high school students) with words and images, you will also have a chance to practice your communication skill.

A videorecording of your group presentation will be evaluated in terms of (a) overall team performance (15%), (b) individual performance (10%), and (c) peer feedback (5%).

Evaluation criteria will be posted on eLearn in due course. The last component of evaluation is meant to give you a chance to improve an element of your collaboration skill, i.e. to fairly evaluate your teammates’ performances and offer constructive feedback.

Final Paper (1,000 words maximum, doubled spaced, Times New Roman 12, and 2.54 cm margin) due on 20 November 2022 (23:59)

This is an **open-book essay assignment**, asking you to **mobilize all the things you have learned in this course**. “Open-book” means that you have access to everything, including the assigned readings, your own notes, and the Internet. You will write your answer on your own laptop and submit it to the designated folder on eLearn. **The essay question and evaluation criteria will be released on 14 November 2022 (06:00).**

To prepare for this final exam, I invite you to do the following: (1) review what you learned each week by focusing how the readings and discussions challenged/changed your understanding of society; (2) reflect on how the weekly readings and discussions build on each other by mapping relations (e.g., complementary, contradictory, nesting) between different authors, theories, concepts, and social issues; and (3) study with classmates, so that exam preparation can become yet another opportunity for using diverse perspectives as a vehicle of clarifying and deepening **your own understanding of society**.

To complement the mid-term analytic paper that trains your “slow-twitch muscles,” **the final exam trains your “fast-twitch muscles,” to mobilize your intellectual capabilities and resources to complete a task in a week.** This is because, in both work and life, you need to learn how to quickly generate powerful bursts of intellectual energy to rise to the challenge.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Please do the weekly readings in the order in which they are listed.

Week 1: What Is Sociology?

Bain, Ken. 2021. “How We Learn.” Pp. 17–27 in *Super Courses: The Future of Teaching and Learning*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Mills, C. Wright. 1959. “The Promise.” Pp. 1–24 in *The Sociological Imagination*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Small, Andrea and Kelly Schmutte. 2022. “Understand Ambiguity.” Pp. 16–49 in *Navigating Ambiguity: Creating Opportunity in a World of Unknowns*. New York: Ten Speed Press.

Week 2: Marx: Capitalism I

Marx, Karl. 2012. “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844.” Pp. 146–155 in *Classical Sociological Theory Third Edition*, edited by Craig Calhoun et al. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Davies, James. 2021. “An Economic Prelude.” Pp. 15–20 in *Sedated: How Modern Capitalism Created Our Mental Health Crisis*. London: Atlantic Books.

Kelley, David and Tom Kelley. 2013. “The Heart of Innovation.” Pp. 1–11 in *Creative Confidence: Unleashing the Creative Potential Within Us All*. New York: Currency.

Week 3: Marx: Capitalism II

Marx, Karl. 2012. "The German Ideology." Pp. 142–145 in *Classical Sociological Theory Third Edition*, edited by Craig Calhoun et al. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Abramson, John. 2008. "The Commercial Takeover of Medical Knowledge." Pp. 93–110 in *Overdo\$ed America: The Broken Promise of American Medicine*. New York: Harper Perennial.

Kelley, Tom and David Kelley. 2020. "Reclaim Your Creative Confidence." *HBR's 10 Must Reads on Design Thinking*. Boston: Harvard Business Review Press.

Week 4: Foucault: Power I

Foucault, Michel. 2012. "Truth and Power." Pp. 305–313 in *Contemporary Sociological Theory Third Edition*, edited by Craig Calhoun et al. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Frances, Allen. 2013. "Afterword." Pp. 285–293 in *Saving Normal: An Insider's Revolt Against Out-of-Control Psychiatric Diagnosis, DSM-5, Big Pharma, and the Medicalization of Ordinary Life*. New York: William Morrow.

Goel, Ashish. 2022. "Fear." Pp. 13–38 in *Drawing on Courage: Risks Worth Taking and Stands Worth Making*. New York: Ten Speed Press.

Week 5: Foucault: Power II

In-class exercise: How to derive an analytic frame and use it to construct an explanation

Foucault, Michel. 2012. "Discipline and Punish." Pp. 314–321 in *Contemporary Sociological Theory Third Edition*, edited by Craig Calhoun et al. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Ragin, Charles and Lisa M. Amoroso. 2019. "The Process of Social Research: Ideas and Evidence." *Constructing Social Research: The Unity and Diversity of Method*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Mastrogiacomo, Stefano and Alexander Osterwalder. 2021. "Essentials: What Makes Teams Underperform and How to Get Better Results." *High-Impact Tools for Teams : 5 Tools to Align Team Members, Build Trust, and Get Results Fast*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons.

Week 6: How to Think and Write Sociologically

In-class exercise: How to make a sociological argument

Bain, Ken. 2012. "What Makes an Expert?" Pp. 32–63 in *What the Best College Students Do*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, Joseph M. Williams, Joseph Bizup, and William T. Fitzgerald. 2016. "Part III: Making an Argument." Pp. 105–172 in *The Craft of Research*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Week 7: Independent Study for the Mid-Term [No Class]

Mid-term analytic paper due on 2 October 2022 (23:59)

Week 8: Recess [No Class]

Week 9: Rethinking Health I

In-class exercise: Brainstorming for group project

Lustig, Robert H. 2021. "'Treatment' is Not 'Cure' – It's Not Even Treatment." Pp. 15–26 in *Metabological: The Lure and the Lies of Processed Food, Nutrition, and Modern Medicine*. New York: Harper Wave.

Jonas, Wayne B. and Edward Calabrese. 2018. "Learning from the History of Integrative Preventative Medicine to Address Our Current Healthcare Challenges." Pp. 1–18 in *Integrative Preventative Medicine*, edited by Richard H. Carmona and Mark Liponis. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

IDEOU. 2022. "Brainstorming." <https://www.ideou.com/pages/brainstorming>

Week 10: Rethinking Health II

In-class exercise: Making progress with group project

Montgomery, David R. and Anne Biklé. 2016. "Cultivating Health." Pp. 247–257 in *The Hidden Half of Nature: The Microbial Roots of Life and Health*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

Saito, Hiro. 2023. "'The Great Reset? Reset Modernity!': Toward the Cosmopolitics of Syndemic Preparedness and Response." In *Reimagining the Cosmopolis*, edited by Vincenzo Cicchelli and Sylvie Mesure. Leiden: Brill

Schwabish, Jonathan. 2016. "Theory, Planning, and Design." Pp. 11–28 in *Better Presentations: A Guide for Scholars, Researchers, and Wonks*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Week 11: Reflections on Higher Learning

***According to the University-wide policy regarding public holidays, the Week 11 session for G2 is rescheduled to 15:30–18:45 on 22 October (Saturday).**

In-class exercise: Testing group projects

Bain, Ken. 2021. "Grades." Pp. 204–218 in *Super Courses: The Future of Teaching and Learning*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Schwabish, Jonathan. 2016. "The Text Slide." Pp. 65–82 in *Better Presentations: A Guide for Scholars, Researchers, and Wonks*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Week 12: Reflections on Sociology and Social Change

In-class exercise: Testing group projects

Steidle, Gretchen K. 2017. "Overview of Conscious Social Change." Pp. 37–44 in *Leading from Within: Conscious Social Change and Mindfulness for Social Innovation*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Boyatzis, Richard, Melvin L. Smith, and Ellen Van Oosten. 2019. "Awakening the Desire to Change: Questions That Spark Joy, Gratitude, and Curiosity." Pp. 53–76 in *Helping People Change: Coaching with Compassion for Lifelong Learning and Growth*. Boston: Harvard Business Review Press.

Week 13: Presentation Videorecording [No Class]

Presentation video due on 13 November 2022 (23:59)

Week 14: Revision Week [No Class]

Final paper question to be released on 14 November 2022 (06:00)

Final paper due on 20 November 2022 (23:59)

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

All acts of academic dishonesty (including, but not limited to, plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, facilitation of acts of academic dishonesty by others, unauthorized possession of exam questions, or tampering with the academic work of other students) are serious offences.

All work (whether oral or written) submitted for purposes of assessment must be the student's own work. Penalties for violation of the policy range from zero marks for the component assessment to expulsion, depending on the nature of the offense.

When in doubt, students should consult the instructors of the course. Details on the SMU Code of Academic Integrity may be accessed at <https://oasis.smu.edu.sg/Pages/DOS-WKLSWC/UCSC.aspx>

ACCESSIBILITY AND ACCOMMODATIONS

SMU strives to make learning experiences accessible for all. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers due to disability, please let me know immediately. You are also welcome to contact the university's disability support team if you have questions or concerns about academic accommodations: dss@smu.edu.sg. Please be aware that the accessible tables in our seminar room should remain available for students who require them.

COPYRIGHT NOTICE

Please note that all course materials are meant for personal use only, namely, for the purposes of teaching, studying and research. You are strictly not permitted to make copies of or print additional copies or distribute such copies of the course materials or any parts thereof, for commercial gain or exchange. For the full copyright notice, please visit: <https://smu.sg/Copyright-notice> or OASIS -> CAMPUS LIFE & EXCHANGE -> CONDUCT & DISCIPLINE -> UNIVERSITY COUNCIL OF STUDENT DISCIPLINE.