

Course Syllabus

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The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (Guangzhou)

UG Course Syllabus

[Course Title] *Understanding Yourself in University: A Sociological Perspective*

[Course Code] UCUG 1809

[No. of Credits] 3

[Any pre-/co-requisites] NO

Course Instructors:

Prof. XIE Ailei (xieailei@m.sncu.edu.cn), Professor, South China Normal University

Adjunct Professor, Pillar of General Education (PGE), College of Education Sciences (CES), HKUST(GZ)

Office Hours: Tuesday, 10:30-12:00 (BY APPOINTMENT ONLY)

Prof. MA Jinyuan (jinyuanma@hkust-gz.edu.cn), CES-PGE, HKUST(GZ)

Office Hours: Wednesday, 15:00-18:00 C1 227 (BY APPOINTMENT ONLY)

Co-instructor(s):

Prof. ZHU Junhua (junhuazhu@hkust-gz.edu.cn), CES-PGE, HKUST(GZ)

Office Hours: Thursday, 14:00-17:00 E3 309 (BY APPOINTMENT ONLY)

Teaching Assistant(s): Dr. ZHAO Ye

Guest Lecturer(s):

Prof. LIU Xu (liux9@sustech.edu.cn), Center for Higher Education Research, Southern University of Science and Technology (SUSTech)

Prof. YU Jingran, Institute of Education, Xiamen University

Prof. YANG Miaoyan, School of Sociology and Anthropology, Xiamen University

Course Administrative Assistant:

Ms. SONG Lin, CES-PGE, HKUST(GZ)

Time and Venue:

13:30-16:20, Tuesday, Spring 2026; W1-223

Class Size: 30 students

Course Description:

How does your background shape your university experience? How do social forces such as class, culture, gender, or institutional norms impact your academic journey—and those of your peers?

Understanding Yourself in University: A Sociological Perspective invites students to critically examine the relationship between education and society, with a special focus on higher education. Through exploring foundational theories and key concepts in the sociology of education, students will learn to analyze the complex interplay between individual identity, social structures, and institutional systems.

This course features a student-centered, project-based learning model. Working in groups, students will design and conduct sociological mini-research projects focused on university life—investigating issues such as cultural capital, peer networks, educational inequality, or institutional practices. These inquiries are supported by tutorials, multimedia resources, and reflective writing, encouraging students to connect academic theories to their lived experiences.

Assessments are thoughtfully designed to promote growth, collaboration, and real-world application. Students will engage in group discussions, prepare research proposals, write reflective essays, and present their final findings through a digital portfolio and presentation.

By the end of the course, students will not only gain analytical tools to understand higher education systems, but also develop a deeper sense of self-awareness, critical thinking, and sociological insight—essential for navigating and contributing meaningfully to university life and beyond.

Course Objectives:

- Introduce key concepts and theories in the sociology of education.
- Analyze the impact of social factors on educational systems and student outcomes, particularly in higher education.
- Develop critical thinking and analytical skills related to educational sociology.
- Foster an understanding of the role of education in social stratification and mobility within higher education.
- Encourage students to apply sociological perspectives to their own experiences and current issues in higher education.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

- **CILO#1:** Understand and articulate fundamental concepts and theories in the sociology of education.
- **CILO#2:** Analyze how social factors such as race, class, and gender affect educational opportunities and outcomes in higher education.
- **CILO#3:** Apply sociological theories to examine the role of family, community, and educational institutions in higher education settings.
- **CILO#4:** Critically evaluate contemporary issues and policies in higher education from a sociological perspective.
- **CILO#5:** Reflect on and analyze personal experiences in university settings using sociological concepts and theories.

Course Outline

Week	Topics	Briefly outline what this topic will cover <i>(Include reading assignments if available)</i>	Course ILOs
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive course overview and expectations; 	
1# 27 Jan. 2026	Introduction to Sociology of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define sociology of education; • Understand the significance of studying sociology of education in a university context; • Introduce key sociological concepts and theories. 	CILO#1
2# 3 Feb. 2026	Social Stratification and Education (Guest Lecture: Prof. LIU Xu — Curriculum, Knowledge & Power)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine how stratification operates through university curricula, classroom interactions, and textbook knowledge; • Connect ‘reproduction’ to concrete curriculum choices and hidden rules; • Discuss how knowledge is selected, legitimised, and experienced by students. 	CILO#2&4
3# 10 Feb. 2026	Socialization and Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the role of education in socialization and social control, particularly in university settings; 	CILO#3

ÿ Discuss how students internalize societal norms and values.

ÿ Introduction to research methods in sociology of education;

4#
24 Feb.
2026
Designing a Research Project in Sociology of Education

ÿ Understanding how to apply sociological perspectives to understand oneself and diverse social groups;

CILO#5

ÿ Identify research questions;

ÿ Conduct literature reviews;

Design and implement a research study.

ÿ Analyze how race, class, and gender intersect to shape educational experiences, opportunities, and outcomes in higher education.

5#
3 Mar.
2026

Race, Class, and Gender in Higher Education

ÿ Apply key sociological theories and concepts (e.g., intersectionality) to understand systemic inequalities.

CILO#2&4

ÿ Evaluate policy implications and institutional practices aimed at promoting equity and inclusion in universities.

6#
10 Mar.
2026
The Family's Influence on Higher Education

ÿ Explore how family background affects educational attainment and aspirations in higher education;

CILO#3

ÿ Discuss cultural capital and parental involvement.

7# 17 Mar. 2026	Mid-term Project Proposal Presentation	<p>ÿ Students present their research proposals for feedback;</p> <p>ÿ Provide constructive criticism and suggestions for improvement.</p>	CILO#1-5
8# 24 Mar. 2026	Social Capital and Education	<p>ÿ Analyze the impact of social networks and relationships on educational success in universities;</p> <p>ÿ Explore the role of peer support and mentorship.</p>	CILO#3
9# 31 Mar. 2026	Cultural Capital, Space, and Educational Inequality (Guest Lecture: Dr. YU Jingran)	<p>ÿ Introduce 'space/place' as a sociological lens for higher education;</p> <p>ÿ Link cultural capital, (un)belonging, and differential access to campus/online spaces;</p> <p>ÿ Apply the lens to cross-border higher education contexts and students' 'global' development.</p>	CILO#2,4&5
10# 7 Apr. 2026	Universities as Social Organizations – Identity in Sino- Foreign Joint Universities	<p>ÿ Explain the role of universities as social institutions and how they shape social relationships, norms, and values.</p> <p>ÿ Analyze organizational culture and institutional behavior within different university models, with a focus on Sino-foreign joint institutions.</p> <p>ÿ Examine how structural, cultural, and policy factors influence students' identity formation and sense of belonging in transnational higher education contexts.</p>	CILO#3

11#	Peer Culture and Digital Intimacy in University Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ÿ Explore how peer norms, emotions, and digital platforms shape intimacy, belonging, and identity among university students; 	CILO#2,4&5
14 Apr. 2026	(Guest Lecture: Prof. YANG Miaoyan)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ÿ Compare human–human and human–technology intimacy as socially constructed practices; ÿ Reflect on what ‘authenticity’ and emotional labour mean in the digital age. 	
12#	Academic Profession in Higher Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ÿ Describe the roles and responsibilities of university faculty in different contexts. 	CILO#4&5
21 Apr. 2026		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ÿ Analyze how social, economic, and institutional factors shape faculty work. ÿ Identify common pressures and challenges faced by faculty, including workload, evaluation, and work–life balance. ÿ Reflect on how understanding faculty perspectives can improve teacher–student relationships. 	
13#	Final Project Presentation and Course Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ÿ Present final projects; ÿ Reflect on key concepts learned throughout the course; ÿ Discuss future directions for sociological research in education. 	CILO#1-5

Weekly Detailed Descriptions:

Week 1: Introduction to Sociology of Education

- **Understand the Course Structure and Expectations:** Get an overview of the course, assessment methods, and learning outcomes.
- **Define Sociology of Education:** Learn about the field, its scope, and relevance.
- **Explore the Significance of Studying Sociology of Education in University Context:** Discuss the importance of this field for understanding higher education.
- **Learn Key Sociological Concepts and Theories:** Get an overview of major theories and concepts that will be explored throughout the course.

Reading Assignment: Ballantine, J. H., & Hammack, F. M. (2015). *The Sociology of Education: A Systematic Analysis* (7th ed.). Prentice Hall, Chapters 1-2.

- **CILOs Achieved:** CILO#1

Week 2: Social Stratification and Education (Guest Lecture: Prof. LIU Xu — Curriculum Sociology)

- **Understand curriculum as a sociological object:** see how knowledge and power operate in classrooms, curricula, and textbooks.
- **Analyze how stratification is reproduced through ‘legitimate’ knowledge, hidden rules, and differential familiarity with academic codes (university context).**

Reading Assignment: Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J. C. (1990). *Reproduction in Education, Society, and Culture*. Sage, Chapters 1–2;

Young, M. F. D. (2008). *Bringing Knowledge Back In*. Routledge (selected excerpts); Apple, M. W. (2017). *Ideology and Curriculum* (4th ed.). Routledge (selected chapter).

- **CILOs Achieved:** CILO#2&4

Week 3: Socialization and Education

- **Understand the Role of Education in Socialization:** Learn how education serves as a socializing agent.
- **Discuss Internalization of Norms and Values:** Understand how students internalize societal norms and values through education.
- **Reading Assignment:** Relevant journal articles provided on the course platform.
- **CILOs Achieved:** CILO#3

Week 4: Designing a Research Project in Sociology of Education

- **Learn Research Methods in Sociology of Education:** Understand qualitative and quantitative methods.
- **Apply Sociological Perspectives:** Use sociological perspectives to understand yourself and diverse social groups.

- **Identify Research Questions:** Formulate research questions relevant to sociology of education and personal experiences.
- **Conduct Literature Reviews:** Learn techniques for conducting effective literature reviews.
- **Design and Implement a Research Study:** Understand the steps for designing and executing a research study in sociology.

Reading Assignment: Davies, S., & Guppy, N. (2010). **The Schooled Society: An Introduction to the Sociology of Education.** Oxford University Press, Chapter 3.

- **CILOs Achieved:** CILO#5

Week 5: Race, Class, and Gender in Higher Education

- **Analyze** how race, class, and gender intersect to shape student experiences, opportunities, and outcomes in higher education.
- **Apply** the concept of *intersectionality* to understand systemic inequalities and patterns of privilege and disadvantage.
- **Evaluate** the implications of policies and institutional practices for promoting equity and inclusion.

Reading Assignment: Collins, R. (2009). **The Credential Society: An Historical Sociology of Education and Stratification.** Academic Press, Chapter 4.

- **CILOs Achieved:** CILO#2 & 4

Week 6: The Family's Influence on Higher Education

- **Explore Family Background's Effect:** Understand the impact of family background on educational attainment.
- **Discuss Cultural Capital and Parental Involvement:** Learn about the role of cultural capital and parental involvement in higher education.

Reading Assignment: Lareau, A. (2011). **Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life.** University of California Press, Introduction.

- **CILOs Achieved:** CILO#3

Week 7: Mid-term Project Proposal Presentation

- **Present Research Proposals:** Share your research proposals with the class.
- **Receive and Provide Feedback:** Engage in constructive feedback and suggestions for improvement.
- **No reading assignment.**
- **CILOs Achieved:** CILO#1-5

Week 8: Social Capital and Education

- **Analyze Impact of Social Networks:** Learn about the role of social networks in educational success.

- **Explore Peer Support and Mentorship:** Understand the importance of peer support and mentorship in higher education.

Reading Assignment: Coleman, J. S. (1988). "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital." *American Journal of Sociology*.

- **CILOs Achieved:** CILO#3

Week 9: Cultural Capital, Space, and Educational Inequality (Guest Lecture: Dr. YU Jingran)

- **Understand 'space/place' as a sociological lens:** recognise that educational spaces are not neutral 'containers', but actively shape participation, peer relations, and (un)belonging through socio-spatial arrangements (physical, social, symbolic).
- **Connect space to inequality and opportunity:** consider differential access to spaces, familiarity with 'unspoken rules', and resource distribution across campus/online platforms—and apply the lens to cross-border higher education contexts.

Reading Assignment: Leung, M. W. H., & Waters, J. L. (2013). British degrees made in Hong Kong: An enquiry into the role of space and place in transnational education. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 14(1), 43–53;

Yu, J. (2022). Mobile educational space and imaginative travellers in-situ: A case study of a UK international branch campus in China. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 24(8), 1–21. (Optional)

Bourdieu, P. (1986). *The Forms of Capital*.

- **CILOs Achieved:** CILO#2,4&5

Week 10: Universities as Social Organizations– Identity in Sino-Foreign Joint Universities

- **Explain** the role of universities as social institutions and how they shape social relationships, norms, and values.
- **Analyze** organizational culture and institutional behavior within different university models, with a focus on Sino-foreign joint institutions.
- **Examine** how structural, cultural, and policy factors influence students' identity formation and sense of belonging in transnational higher education contexts.

Reading Assignment: Yu, J. (2021). Consuming UK transnational higher education in China: A Bourdieusian approach to Chinese students' perceptions and experiences. *Sociological Research Online*, 26(1), 222-239.

- **CILOs Achieved:** CILO#3

Week 11: Peer Culture and Digital Intimacy in University Life (Guest Lecture: Prof. YANG Miaoyan)

- **Explore intimacy as socially constructed in the digital age:** how young people negotiate love, care, and connection via dating apps, virtual partners, and human–machine interaction.
- Analyze feeling rules and emotion work in digital intimacy, and compare human–human vs human–technology relationships to rethink authenticity, closeness, and emotional labour in contemporary youth life.
- **Reading Assignment:** Laestadius, L., Bishop, A., Gonzalez, M., Illenčik, D., & Campos-Castillo, C. (2024). Too human and not human enough: A grounded theory analysis of mental health harms from emotional dependence on the social chatbot Replika. *New Media & Society*, 26(10), 5923–5941;
- Chan, K. C. T., Li, X., Liu, Y., Chen, B., & Han, Z. (2025). ‘What is love?’: Exploring the feeling rules and emotion work of Chinese users in human-AI romance. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 108, 102241.
- **CILOs Achieved:** CILO#2,4&5

Week 12: Academic Profession in Higher Education: Understanding the Pressures Faced by Faculty

- **Describe** the roles and responsibilities of university faculty in different contexts.
- **Analyze** how social, economic, and institutional factors shape faculty work.
- **Identify** common pressures and challenges faced by faculty, including workload, evaluation, and work–life balance.
- **Reflect** on how understanding faculty perspectives can improve teacher–student relationships.

Reading Assignment: Skea, C. (2021). Emerging neoliberal academic identities: Looking beyond Homo economicus. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 40(4), 399-414.

- CILOs Achieved: CILO#4&5

Week 13: Final Project Presentation and Course Review

- **Present Final Projects:** Share and discuss final project findings with the class.
- **Reflect on Key Concepts:** Review and reflect on key concepts learned throughout the course.
- **Discuss Future Directions:** Explore future directions for sociological research in education.
- **No reading assignment.**
- **CILOs Achieved:** CILO#1-5

Recommended Readings:

1. Ballantine, J. H., & Hammack, F. M. (2015). **The Sociology of Education: A Systematic Analysis**(7th ed.). Prentice Hall.
2. Davies, S., & Guppy, N. (2010). **The Schooled Society: An Introduction to the Sociology of Education**. Oxford University Press.
3. Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J. C. (1990). **Reproduction in Education, Society, and Culture**. Sage.
4. Collins, R. (2009). **The Credential Society: An Historical Sociology of Education and Stratification**. Academic Press.
5. 《小镇做题家》

Any additional readings will be provided on the course platform.

Recommended Movies:

- **"The Class" (2008)**
- **Director:**Laurent Cantet
- **Synopsis:**This French film, based on the autobiographical novel by François Bégaudeau, follows a teacher and his racially mixed students in a Parisian middle school, highlighting the challenges and complexities of the educational system and cultural diversity.
- **Themes:**Cultural diversity, teacher-student relationships, education system.

- **"Dead Poets Society" (1989)**
- **Director:**Peter Weir
- **Synopsis:**Set in a conservative and aristocratic boys' preparatory school, this film explores the impact of an unorthodox English teacher who inspires his students through poetry.
- **Themes:**Socialization, institutional norms, individuality vs. conformity.

- **"Freedom Writers" (2007)**
- **Director:**Richard LaGravenese
- **Synopsis:**A true story of a young teacher who inspires her at-risk students to learn tolerance, apply themselves, and pursue education beyond high school.
- **Themes:**Race, class, educational inequality, teacher influence.
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- **"Good Will Hunting" (1997)**
- **Director:**Gus Van Sant
- **Synopsis:**A young janitor at MIT has a hidden talent in mathematics and receives help from a psychologist to find direction in his life.
- **Themes:**Social stratification, education, identity, mentorship.

- **"The Breakfast Club" (1985)**
- **Director:**John Hughes

- **Synopsis:**Five high school students from different social backgrounds spend a Saturday detention together, discovering they have more in common than they thought.
 - **Themes:**Social stratification, peer groups, identity formation.
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- **"Mona Lisa Smile" (2003)**
 - **Director:**Mike Newell
 - **Synopsis:**A progressive art history professor challenges the traditional roles of women at a conservative women's college in the 1950s.
 - **Themes:**Gender roles, education, social change.
-
- **"Lean on Me" (1989)**
 - **Director:**John G. Avildsen
 - **Synopsis:**The story of a controversial and unorthodox principal who turns around a failing inner-city school.
 - **Themes:**Educational reform, leadership, race, class.
-
- **"Half Nelson" (2006)**
 - **Director:**Ryan Fleck
 - **Synopsis:**A high school teacher with a drug habit forms an unlikely friendship with one of his students, exploring themes of mentorship and social challenges.
 - **Themes:**Teacher-student relationships, social issues, education.
-
- **"Dangerous Minds" (1995)**
 - **Director:**John N. Smith
 - **Synopsis:**Based on a true story, a former Marine takes a teaching job at a tough inner-city school and uses unconventional methods to reach her students.
 - **Themes:**Educational inequality, race, class, teacher influence.
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- **"The Pursuit of Happiness" (2006)**
 - **Director:**Gabriele Muccino
 - **Synopsis:**A struggling salesman takes custody of his son as he's poised to begin a life-changing professional endeavor.
 - **Themes:**Social mobility, class, perseverance, education.

Group Project-Based Learning Guidance

Overview

To apply the sociological theories and concepts introduced in this course, you will form **project groups of 4–5 students** and carry out an inquiry-based research project. This project serves as a core learning experience, helping you explore how **social forces—such as race, class, gender, culture, and institutional dynamics—shape the educational experiences of university students**, including your own.

By engaging directly with real-world contexts and diverse campus communities, you will develop a deeper sociological understanding of university life, and reflect on your own position within it.

Project Objectives

Your group project is designed to help you:

- Apply sociological theories and perspectives to understand yourself and your peers within the university setting.
- Analyze how social factors influence educational opportunities, identities, and outcomes in higher education.
- Develop practical research skills grounded in the sociology of education.
- Cultivate meaningful collaboration and peer learning through shared inquiry.

Project Scope and Theme

Your project should explore a sociologically relevant theme within HKUST(GZ) or other university contexts. Suggested topics include (but are not limited to):

- The influence of cultural capital on student success.
- How class background or regional origin shapes university experiences.
- Experiences of marginalized or underrepresented student groups.
- The role of peer groups, student societies, or academic cultures in shaping student identity.
- Sociological perspectives on stress, well-being, competition, or support systems in university life.

You are encouraged to explore these issues by engaging with student clubs, residential colleges, or administrative departments, depending on your project question.

Research Methods

Your group will select appropriate research methods to investigate your chosen topic. These may include:

- Interviews or focus groups
- Surveys or questionnaires
- Participant observation or informal fieldwork
- Analysis of institutional data or cultural artifacts

Visual and multimedia materials—photos, videos, or infographics—can also support your analysis.

Project Documentation & Platform

- Each group will create and maintain a shared digital platform (e.g., a Miro board, Google Site, or PowerPoint deck) from Week 2 onward.
- This platform should include your:
 - Project proposal and research plan
 - Literature review or theoretical framing
 - Data and evidence gathered
 - Group reflections and critical insights
 - Final analysis and presentation materials

Regular updates are expected, and this platform will be reviewed as part of your Final Project Portfolio.

Group Dynamics and Responsibilities

- Every group must submit a **division of labor statement** clearly describing each member's role and contribution.
- All members are expected to participate actively, equitably, and respectfully throughout the project.
- If contribution discrepancies arise, group members may submit **individual reflection sheets**, and differentiated grades will be assigned accordingly.

Final Presentation

- During Week 13, your group will deliver a **20 minute presentation** of your research, followed by Q&A.
- Presentations must include:
 - Research question and rationale
 - Theoretical framework and key concepts
 - Description of methods and process
 - Summary of findings and analysis
 - Reflections on challenges, insights, and CILO alignment

Visuals should be clear and professional. All group members are expected to present.

Assessment Criteria

Your group project will be assessed based on:

Criteria

Focus

Alignment with CILOs	Application of course theories to real contexts; reflection on self/peers
Depth of Analysis	Quality of critical thinking and sociological insight
Research Methodology	Appropriateness and rigor of research design and data use
Collaboration & Contribution	Evidence of teamwork, shared leadership, and balanced roles
Presentation Quality	Organization, clarity, and visual engagement in the final presentation
Reflection and Learning	Depth of learning, self-awareness, and engagement with challenges

Support and Guidance

- You will receive guidance during designated project workshops and tutorials.
- The instructors and TA will provide feedback at key checkpoints.
- Supporting materials and optional reading lists will be made available via Canvas.
- If you have ethical or logistical concerns, consult your instructor early in the process.

Ethical Conduct & Mindset

- Respect the diversity of the student body and broader university community.
- Seek informed consent when conducting interviews or collecting identifiable data.
- Stay open-minded, empathetic, and reflective throughout the research journey.

Final Note

This project is not just an academic task—it is a **journey to sociologically understand yourself and your learning environment**. Embrace it with curiosity, care, and collaboration.

Weekly Project Milestones & Tutorials

Each weekly tutorial session supports your group project progress. Tutorials are structured to guide students step-by-step through topic development, research design, data collection, analysis, and presentation. The table below provides a week-by-week overview of key project milestones. Attendance and active engagement are expected.

Week	Project Milestone & Tutorial Focus
1	Course orientation and peer connection
2	Team formation; project theme brainstorming
3	Research question refinement; project platform setup
4	Theoretical framing; literature mapping
5	Interview guide drafting and design feedback
6	Project plan refinement and visual planning
7	Midterm proposal presentation and revision
8	Data collection begins
9	Data collection continues
10	Initial data sorting and analysis
11	Peer feedback and insight building
12	Final presentation preparation
13	Final presentation and reflection

Assessment

Assessment Tool	Weighting (%)	CILOs Assessed	Remarks
In-class Participation	10	CILO#1, CILO#2, CILO#3, CILO#4	Based on quality of engagement in discussions, responsiveness, and preparation.

Group Discussions	15	CILO#1, CILO#2, CILO#3, CILO#4	Evaluates depth of small-group analysis and collaboration during seminars.
Mid-term Project Proposal Presentation	20	CILO#1, CILO#2, CILO#3, CILO#4, CILO#5	Assesses clarity, relevance, feasibility, and theoretical grounding of project design.
Analytical/Reflective Essay	15	CILO#1, CILO#2, CILO#3, CILO#4, CILO#5	Individual submission analyzing higher education issues with self-reflection.
Final Project Portfolio and Presentation	40	CILO#1, CILO#2, CILO#3, CILO#4, CILO#5	Evaluates group research process, findings, presentation, and learning reflections.

Detailed Breakdown:

Rubric: In-Class Participation (10%) – Individual Evaluation (100 Points)

- **CILOs Assessed:** CILO#1, CILO#2, CILO#3, CILO#4
- **Remarks:**
 - Students are expected to actively participate in full-class discussions and in-class activities as individuals.
 - This assessment emphasizes independent preparation, initiative in contributing to dialogue, and responsiveness to classroom dynamics.
 - It differs from group discussions in that it assesses personal accountability and self-directed learning behaviors.
 - Participation will be assessed through a combination of instructor observation and in-group peer review to ensure fairness and encourage mutual accountability.
 - Evaluation is based on both the quality and consistency of engagement across the criteria below.
- **Preparation (20 Points)**
 - 20: Fully prepared with readings and assignments, and notes/questions.
 - 15: Mostly prepared, completed most readings/assignments.
 - 10: Somewhat prepared but incomplete.
 - 5: Unprepared.
- **Participation (20 Points)**
 - 20: Actively contributes valuable insights throughout.

- 15: Regularly participates, though less insightful.
- 10: Occasionally participates, not consistently engaged.
- 5: Rarely participates.
- **Communication Skills (20 Points)**
 - 20: Clear, concise communication with appropriate tone.
 - 15: Generally clear, minor clarity issues.
 - 10: Struggles with clarity or tone.
 - 5: Poor communication skills.
- **Collaboration (20 Points)**
 - 20: Actively listens, provides constructive feedback, facilitates discussion.
 - 15: Listens and provides feedback, but inconsistently.
 - 10: Limited engagement and feedback.
 - 5: Rarely listens or contributes positively.
- **Critical Thinking (10 Points)**
 - 10: Consistently analyzes and evaluates ideas deeply.
 - 7: Often demonstrates critical thinking.
 - 5: Basic critical thinking, lacks depth.
 - 3: Rarely analyzes or evaluates ideas.
- **Respect for Opinions (10 Points)**
 - 10: Always respectful, encourages diverse viewpoints.
 - 7: Usually respectful, occasional lapses.
 - 5: Sometimes dismissive of others.
 - 3: Frequently interrupts or dismisses others.

Rubric: Group Discussions (15%) – In-Group/By-Group Peer Review (100 Points)

- **CILOs Assessed:** CILO#1, CILO#2, CILO#3, CILO#4
- **Remarks:**
 - Students will collaborate in small groups to analyze, interpret, and discuss topics from course readings and lectures.
 - Assessment focuses on the depth of sociological engagement, clarity of communication, and effectiveness of group dynamics.
 - Unlike in-class participation, this task highlights peer-to-peer knowledge building, shared responsibility, and the application of sociological reasoning in cooperative settings.
 - Peer review will be used to reflect individual contributions within group discussions.

1) Preparation (20 Points)

- 20: Fully prepared with readings and assignments, and notes/questions.
- 15: Mostly prepared, completed most readings/assignments.
- 10: Somewhat prepared but incomplete.
- 5: Unprepared.

2) Participation (20 Points)

- 20: Actively contributes valuable insights throughout.

- 15: Regularly participates, though less insightful.
- 10: Occasionally participates, not consistently engaged.
- 5: Rarely participates.

3) Communication Skills (20 Points)

- 20: Clear, concise communication with appropriate tone.
- 15: Generally clear, minor clarity issues.
- 10: Struggles with clarity or tone.
- 5: Poor communication skills.

4) Collaboration (20 Points)

- 20: Actively listens, provides constructive feedback, facilitates discussion.
- 15: Listens and provides feedback, but inconsistently.
- 10: Limited engagement and feedback.
- 5: Rarely listens or contributes positively.

5) Critical Thinking (10 Points)

- 10: Consistently analyzes and evaluates ideas deeply.
- 7: Often demonstrates critical thinking.
- 5: Basic critical thinking, lacks depth.
- 3: Rarely analyzes or evaluates ideas.

6) Respect for Opinions (10 Points)

- 10: Always respectful, encourages diverse viewpoints.
- 7: Usually respectful, occasional lapses.
- 5: Sometimes dismissive of others.
- 3: Frequently interrupts or dismisses others.

Rubric: Midterm Project Proposal Presentation (20%) – Group Assessment (100 Points Total)

- **CILOs Assessed:** CILO#1, CILO#2, CILO#3, CILO#4, CILO#5

- **Remarks:**

- This presentation assesses your ability to collaboratively design and communicate a sociological research project related to university life.
- This presentation assesses your ability to collaboratively design and effectively communicate a sociological research project related to university life.
- You are expected to formulate a clear research question, connect it to relevant sociological theories and course concepts, and propose feasible, well-justified research methods.
- Each group (4–5 students) will present a 10–12 minute proposal, followed by a 3–5 minute Q&A session.
- The proposal should demonstrate equal contribution, effective teamwork, and a sound understanding of sociological inquiry.
- Assessment Weighting:

- 80% Group Component – Based on the overall quality of the proposal and group presentation (see rubric).
- 20% Individual Component – Based on observed contribution and communication during the presentation, as well as the division of work statement submitted by the group.
- In cases of significant contribution disparity, differentiated grades will be assigned to reflect individual performance.
- Assessment will be conducted jointly by at least two instructors to ensure fairness.
- Students must submit a group division of work statement (around 500 words) clearly describing each member's role and tasks.
- Peer input and reflective comments from audience members may be considered qualitatively.

Group Component (80% of total score)

- **Research Design & Clarity (20 Points)**

20: Research question is clearly defined, focused, innovative, and addresses a relevant sociological issue. Proposal structure is logical and coherent.

- 15: Research question is clear and relevant; proposal is generally well-structured with some minor gaps.
- 10: Question is somewhat vague or too broad; proposal structure lacks clarity in parts.
- 5: Proposal lacks coherence or feasibility; unclear problem definition.

2) Sociological Framework & Concepts (20 Points)

- 20: Effectively integrates appropriate sociological theories/concepts from the course to justify the project's significance.
- 15: Demonstrates good understanding and partial integration of course theories/concepts.
- 10: Some use of sociological ideas but limited application or misunderstanding present.
- 5: Little to no use of relevant sociological theory or misapplied concepts.

3) Methodology & Feasibility (20 Points)

- 20: Chosen methods are clearly explained, appropriate, realistic, and well-aligned with research goals.
- 15: Methods are mostly appropriate and feasible, with minor mismatches or missing details.
- 10: Methodology is vague, weakly justified, or poorly aligned with the question.
- 5: Proposed methods are inappropriate or not described clearly.

4) Group Collaboration & Division of Work (15 Points)

- 15: Presentation reflects strong collaboration and shared ownership; roles and transitions are smooth and well-managed.
- 12: Mostly balanced collaboration, with minor unevenness or unclear transitions.
- 8: Uneven contributions apparent; some lack of coordination.
- 5: Collaboration appears minimal or poorly managed.

5) Presentation Skills & Communication (15 Points)

- 15: Clear, confident, well-paced delivery with effective visuals and cohesive storytelling.
- 12: Generally clear and organized; occasional issues with flow or visual aids.

- 8: Presentation lacks clarity, confidence, or engagement; visuals poorly integrated.
- 5: Disorganized or hard to follow; weak communication undermines understanding.

6) Response to Feedback / Q&A (10 Points)

- 10: Addresses questions thoughtfully, demonstrating insight, openness, and critical reflection.
- 7: Responds to most questions adequately, with occasional hesitation or surface-level responses.
- 5: Limited or unclear responses; underprepared for Q&A.
- 3: Avoids or deflects feedback; disengaged or dismissive.

Individual Component (20% of total score)

Criteria	Max Points	Description
Contribution & Role Clarity	5	Demonstrates clear and substantial contribution; matches division of labor.
Communication in Presentation	5	Speaks clearly, confidently, and with appropriate pacing during presentation.
Theoretical Understanding	5	Shows command of sociological concepts during explanation or Q&A.
Engagement & Professionalism	5	Supports team; attentive to peers; responds thoughtfully during discussions.
Total	/20	Weighted as 20% of Midterm grade.

Rubric: Analytical/Reflective Essay (15%) – Individual Assessment (100 Points Total)

- **CILOs Assessed:** CILO#1, CILO#2, CILO#3, CILO#4, CILO#5
- **Remarks:**
 - This essay allows students to demonstrate their ability to apply sociological theories and critically reflect on their own educational experiences or a sociologically relevant issue in higher education.
 - The essay should clearly connect personal insights with course concepts, demonstrating thoughtful analysis and the ability to synthesize theory and lived experience.
 - The topic can be chosen by the student (subject to instructor approval), and may focus on identity, cultural capital, peer groups, stratification, family background, or institutional structures.

- Essays should be 1,200–1,500 words in length and must be submitted through Canvas by the assigned deadline.
- Assessment will be conducted by at least two instructors based on the rubric below.
- Students are encouraged to begin planning their essay early and may seek feedback during office hours or tutorial sessions.

- **Connection to Course Concepts (20 Points)**

20: Integrates multiple relevant sociological theories or concepts seamlessly and insightfully.

- 15: Uses at least one relevant theory or concept appropriately; connections generally clear.
- 10: Limited application of course concepts; some connections vague or superficial.
- 5: Little to no connection to course material; theory misapplied or absent.

- **Depth of Reflection (20 Points)**

20: Demonstrates deep personal reflection; connects experience with broader social structures and dynamics.

- 15: Reflection is meaningful and relevant, with some sociological insight.
- 10: Basic personal reflection, but lacks analytical depth.

5: Minimal or shallow reflection; lacks relevance to course themes.

- **Analytical Rigor (20 Points)**

20: Clear argument supported by evidence, logical reasoning, and critical questioning.

- 15: Generally coherent argument; some reasoning and evidence present.
- 10: Argument is vague or underdeveloped; lacks depth or supporting analysis.
- 5: Lacks clear argument or analysis; mostly descriptive or anecdotal.

- **Structure and Organization (15 Points)**

15: Excellent structure; clear introduction, thesis, coherent paragraphs, and strong conclusion.

- 12: Well-structured with minor organizational flaws.
- 8: Organization is unclear or inconsistent in parts.
- 5: Disorganized; hard to follow.

- **Language and Clarity (15 Points)**

15: Well-written with excellent grammar, spelling, and word choice; academic tone.

- 12: Generally clear writing; minor grammar or clarity issues.
- 8: Writing is sometimes unclear or informal; noticeable grammar issues.
- 5: Poorly written; hard to understand; multiple grammatical errors.

- **Use of Evidence and Referencing (10 Points)**

10: Strong use of relevant examples, readings, or data; proper citation style throughout.

- 7: Uses evidence appropriately; some citation or formatting errors.
- 5: Limited evidence; inconsistent or incorrect referencing.
- 3: Little to no evidence; citations largely missing or incorrect.

Rubric: Final Project Portfolio & Presentation (40%) – Group Assessment (100 Points Total)

- **CILOs Assessed:**

CILO#1, CILO#2, CILO#3, CILO#4, CILO#5

- **Remarks:**

- This final project is the culmination of your group-based sociological inquiry into higher education. You will design and conduct a mini-study to examine an issue, practice, or experience relevant to student life through a sociological lens.
- Deliverables include a digital project portfolio and a final group presentation during Week 14.
- Your portfolio must document your full research journey: project proposal, literature review, data collection, analysis, reflections, and final insights.
- Presentations should clearly communicate your research question, sociological significance, methodology, findings, and implications.
- Group members must submit a division of labor statement. In cases of unequal contribution, instructors may assign differentiated grades.
- Assessment will be conducted by all instructors, based on both the portfolio and the live presentation.
- Peer feedback may be qualitatively considered where appropriate.

Group Component (80% of total score)

1) Sociological Depth & Relevance (20 Points)

- **20:** Demonstrates exceptional understanding and application of sociological theories and concepts; addresses highly relevant issue.
- **15:** Uses relevant concepts/theories effectively; topic is well-chosen and sociologically meaningful.
- **10:** Basic understanding of concepts; relevance to sociology of education is evident but not well-developed.
- **5:** Minimal or incorrect application of sociology; unclear issue relevance.

2) Research Process & Documentation (20 Points)

- **20:** Portfolio clearly documents all project phases (planning, methods, data, reflection); highly organized and thorough.
- **15:** Most phases documented; some elements could be more detailed or organized.
- **10:** Some gaps in process documentation; lacks depth or clarity.
- **5:** Process is poorly documented or disorganized.

3) Analysis & Critical Thinking (20 Points)

- **20:** Rich, nuanced analysis that connects data to theory and broader sociological implications.
- **15:** Clear analysis with some depth and theory linkage.
- **10:** Surface-level analysis; limited engagement with theory.
- **5:** Largely descriptive or disconnected from course ideas.

4) Team Collaboration & Contribution (15 Points)

- **15:** Equal and visible contributions from all members; strong teamwork and coordination.
- **12:** Generally good collaboration; minor imbalances or coordination issues.

- **8:** Uneven contributions; coordination issues apparent.
- **5:** Major problems in collaboration or lack of individual accountability.

5) Presentation Quality & Communication (15 Points)

- **15:** Clear, engaging, professional delivery; slides/visuals are well-designed and support communication.
- **12:** Generally clear and effective; minor delivery or visual issues.
- **8:** Presentation lacks cohesion or clarity.
- **5:** Unclear or unengaging; visuals poorly used.

6) Reflection & Insight (10 Points)





- **10:** Demonstrates strong self-awareness and reflection on both the learning process and findings.
- **7:** Offers some reflective insights on challenges, learning, or relevance.
- **5:** Limited reflection; mostly descriptive.
- **3:** Minimal or no reflection included.

Individual Component (20% of total score)

Criteria	Max Points	Description
Contribution & Role Clarity	5	Demonstrates clear and substantial contribution; matches division of labor.
Writing Quality	5	Writes clearly and academically
Theoretical Understanding	5	Shows command of sociological concepts during explanation or Q&A.
Argumentation & Evidence	5	Constructs a coherent argument supported by appropriate evidence and logical reasoning.
Total	/20	Weighted as 20% of Final Project grade.

Course Summary:

Date	Details	Due
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Date	Details	Due
Mon Mar 16, 2026	 Mid-term proposal (https://hkust-gz.instructure.com/courses/2875/assignments/21992)	due by 11:59pm
	 Mid-term proposal PowerPoint slide (https://hkust-gz.instructure.com/courses/2875/assignments/22042)	due by 11:59pm
	 Mid-term contribution statement (https://hkust-gz.instructure.com/courses/2875/assignments/22043)	due by 11:59pm
Mon Apr 27, 2026	 Final Project Presentation slide (https://hkust-gz.instructure.com/courses/2875/assignments/23265)	due by 11:59pm