



Shanghai Jiao Tong University

SO900 Introduction to Sociology

Term: July 3 – August 3, 2017

Instructor: Rae L. Blumberg

Home Institution: University of Virginia

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Class Hours: Monday through Thursday, 120 minutes each day

Discussion session: 2 hours each week

Total Contact Hours: 66 contact hours (45 minutes each, 3000 minutes in total)

Credit: 4 units

Course Description

This course takes a mostly macrosociology approach. In the first week, we look at the “big picture” of human history (from hunting & gathering through pre-industrial agrarian societies). In the second week, we first look at the rise of capitalism and the Industrial Revolution and then begin to examine both advanced industrial and developing nations today. In the third week, we deepen our knowledge of slower vs. faster developing “Global South” nations and discuss how all this affects your life chances today. In the fourth week, we look inside modern societies, on topics ranging from racial-ethnic and gender equality to changes in family and education. In the fifth week, we look at globalization today, and the extent of progress in today’s societies vs. the past. We also look at our potential future and what you can do to maximize your chances of a successful career in a fast-changing world.

Course Goals

A student who satisfactorily completes this course should:

- ✧ Increase your understanding of the broad sweep and patterns of our human history
- ✧ Explore the emergence of the Industrial Revolution that led to modern societies
- ✧ Learn about advanced industrial (rich) nations, fast-advancing nations such as China, and less-developed nations, linking their present to what we learned about their past in the first week of the course
- ✧ Learn about the aspects of today’s societies that most affect your lives – now and in the years to come, such as their economies, the world of work and social class, and the growing size and scope of their states
- ✧ Learn about the more personal dimensions of modern life, e.g., from gender to marriage & the family and education, that are affected by – and affect – broad economic factors and global trends
- ✧ Look at globalization, as well as an assessment of the past and likely future trends



✧ Learn which factors and trends most importantly affect your life and how you can use this knowledge to best advantage in your personal life.

✧ **Required Text**

We'll start with a few brief chapters from Blumberg, *Stratification: Socioeconomic and Sexual Inequality*. They're short, easy reading. I'll post them to our course's online site or email them as attachments to you via our course listserv. Then we go on to our main text, *Modern Societies: A Comparative Perspective*, by Stephen K. Sanderson (Routledge Publishers [it was first published by Paradigm Publishers, which is now part of Routledge], 2015, ISBN 978-161205668-5). It should be available electronically and at Amazon's Kindle Bookstore. There will be several short readings (a chapter from Nolan & Lenski's *Human Societies* and a few pages from Toffler's *PowerShift*) and some possible extra credit (XC) reading. I'll post these, send them to the listserv and/or give them to you as photocopies. There will be PowerPoint handouts for most lectures as well.

Grading Policy

- 15% First week quiz
- 20% Second quiz: midterm exam
- 15% Third quiz
- 15% "What I Have Learned" exercise (serves as partial review for Final quiz)
- 25% Final quiz/second exam (post-midterm material)
- 10% Classroom engagement (attendance,* attention, participation in discussions)
- 3% A small amount of extra credit will be offered, as noted.

* Attendance is required, given the four-week schedule, and a doctor's excuse or equivalent will be needed for any absence. Any unexcused absence may impact a student's grade and two unexcused absences may be grounds for failing the course.

Number grade	Letter grade	GPA
90-100	A	4.0
85-89	A-	3.7
80-84	B+	3.3
75-79	B	3.0
70-74	B-	2.7
67-69	C+	2.3
65-66	C	2.0
62-64	C-	1.7
60-61	D	1.0
≤59	F (Failure)	0



Course Schedule:

In the 1st week, we explore our past. First, we study hunting and gathering societies. This was how we lived for 96+% of our Homo sapiens history, since big-brained, anatomically modern humans emerged in Africa ~200,000 years ago. We then examine the mystery surrounding the sudden rise of cultivation beginning around 10,000-12,000 years ago. This was probably the most important revolution in human history, since it enabled us to settle down and produce surpluses – putting us on the path to today’s world. But the invention of

the plow in the Middle East 5,000-6,000 years ago set the stage for agrarian societies. Many had both complex civilizations and possibly the greatest inequality in human history. We look at the fascinating differences between “dry” (non-irrigated) agrarian societies, such as northern China, and “wet” (irrigated rice) agrarian societies, such as southern China.

In the 2nd week, we look at the factors that led to the rise of capitalism and the Industrial Revolution. Then we examine modern societies – rich advanced industrial and developing nations. We begin by exploring the economy, work and social class in the advanced industrial nations. Then we consider their polity, especially the increasing size and scope of the state in today’s nations. We also see how their pasts affect nations’ GDP, wealth, well-being and prospects today. We look at regional variation in developing nations.

In the 3rd week, we start by learning about the big gap between two main types of developing societies and then study development in three regions of Asia, including East Asia. We end the week by considering C. Wright Mills’ famous quote that we live our lives “at the intersection of history and social structure.” We’ll discuss what this means to your own futures and life strategies in our fast-changing, globalized world.

In the 4th week, we take a look inside modern societies, focusing on **diversity** and **inequality**. We study broad topics that affect both the level of equality in a society and people’s lives, such as race-ethnicity and gender. Then we look at topics that affect our personal lives and also are affected by all the changes involved in modern life. These include marriage & families (including lesbians and gays) and education. We’ll look at present and possible future societal trends that may affect your lives now and in the future.

In the 5th week, we look at globalization now, as well as the extent of progress in today’s societies vs. the past. We also look at our potential future, including Toffler on information societies and the likely emergence of Base V, the 5th major way in history that humans have made a living on Earth. We end with a What I Have Learned (WIHL) exercise that helps you see the major factors affecting societies now vs. in the past, as well as those affecting individuals such as yourselves in our fast-changing modern world. And you’ll learn things you can do to maximize your chances of a successful career in a rapidly transforming world.



Weekly, there will be a multiple choice quiz and a small group discussion by students; each group then shares their main conclusions with the class. PowerPoint will be provided and study questions will be provided before all quizzes.

Weekly Schedule:

WEEK ONE (July 3-6):

Mon: Introductions; Course overview	Mon night read Blumberg Ch. 1, 2
Tue: Hunting & Gathering & Rise of Cultivation	Tue night=Blumberg Ch. 4 through p.43
Wed: Horticultural Societies then & now; discussion review Ch. 1, 2 & 4	Wed night read rest of Ch. 4 (to p.53) &
Thu: Agrarian Societies; discussion; review; 1 st quiz	For Mon, read Blumberg Ch. 5

WEEK TWO (July 10-13)

Mon: Rise of capitalism & Industrial Revolution	Mon night read Sanderson Ch. 1
Tue: Discussion; Sanderson, Ch. 1, rich democracies: economy, work & class	Tue night read Sanderson Ch. 2
Wed: Sanderson, Ch. 2, rich democracies: polity	Wed night read Sanderson Ch. 4
Thu: Sanderson, Ch. 4, developing nations; discussion	For Mon read Nolan & Lenski; start review for midterm

WEEK THREE (July 17-20)

Mon: Nolan & Lenski; rich/poor discussion	Mon night read "Extending Lenski..."
Tue: Three regions of Asia; review	Tue night study for midterm
Wed: Review; 2 nd quiz (midterm)	Wed night start "What I Have Learned"
Thu: C. Wright Mills & you; discussion	For Mon, read Sanderson Ch. 5

WEEK FOUR (July 24 – July 27): DIVERSITY AND INEQUALITY

Mon: Sanderson, Ch. 5, race & ethnicity	Mon night read Sanderson Ch. 6
Tue: Sanderson, Ch. 6, gender	Tue night read Sanderson Ch. 7, & Green
Wed: Sanderson, Ch. 7, family, incl. same-sex	Wed night read Sanderson Ch. 8
Thu: Sanderson, Ch. 8, education; 3 rd quiz	For Mon, TV/newspaper or Blumberg article as XC; read Sanderson Ch. 10

WEEK FIVE (July 31 – August 3):

Mon: Sanderson, Ch. 10, globalization;	Mon night read Sanderson Ch. 11
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SUMMER SCHOOL

XC article & Ch. 10 discussion
Tue: Sanderson, Ch. 11, past & future
Wed: “What I Have Learned” summaries;
review
Thu: Final test (post-midterm materials)

Tue night read Toffler; work on “WIHL”
Wed night study for final test

A Note about the Professor

Prof. Blumberg holds the endowed “William R. Kenan, Jr. Professorship (chair) in Sociology” at the University of Virginia. She was a Peace Corps Volunteer in Venezuela and has worked in 47 countries since then, focusing on most aspects of international development and globalization. She has worked in China six times since 1995, carrying out research, giving keynote addresses at conferences and teaching summer school at Sun Yat Sen University in Guangzhou and Beijing Normal University. She is the author of over 100 publications. Her classes draw on her international experience; she gives students a “big picture” overview, linking course material on the U.S. with China and other regions and nations. She is the past president of the Sociology of Development Section of the American Sociological Association.

Academic Honesty

Cheating and plagiarism will result in loss of academic credit for the course.

Students are expected to maintain high standards of academic honesty. Failure to abide by this may result in a zero on an exam or even failure in the course.