



## Shanghai Jiao Tong University

### SO900 Introduction to Sociology

**Term: May 29 – June 23, 2017**

**Instructor: Rae L. Blumberg**

**Home Institution: University of Virginia**

**Email: rblumberg@virginia.edu**

**Class Hours: Monday through Friday, 120 minutes each day**

**Discussion session: 2.5 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 to the rise of capitalism and Industrial Societies). In the second week, we look at both advanced industrial and developing nations today. In the third week, we look inside those societies, at topics ranging from equality to changes in marriage & the family. In the fourth 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:

1. Increase your understanding of the broad sweep and patterns of our human history
2. Explore the emergence of the Industrial Revolution that led to modern societies
3. 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
4. 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
5. 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
6. Look at globalization, as well as an assessment of the past and likely future trends
7. 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 (Boulder, CO: 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*). 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 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 study the fascinating



differences between “dry” (non-irrigated) agrarian societies, such as northern China, and “wet” (irrigated rice) agrarian societies, such as southern China. We conclude with the factors that led to the Industrial Revolution.

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> week, we turn to 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 will see how their pasts play a part in nations’ GDP, wealth, well-being and prospects today and the big gap between two main types of developing societies. We’ll then get a glimpse of new factors, such as globalization. We’ll also study development in three regions of Asia, including East Asia.

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> week, we look inside modern societies. 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 and education. We’ll get to look at present and potential future societal trends that could affect your lives now and some years from now. And you’ll gain insight into them 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 4<sup>th</sup> 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 5<sup>th</sup> major way in history that humans have made a living on Earth. We end with a What I Have Learned 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 (May 29 – June 2):**

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	Wed night read rest of Ch. 4 (to p.53)
Thu: Agrarian Societies; discussion	Thu night read Blumberg Ch. 5
Fri: Rise of capitalism & Industrial Revolution	For Mon, review Blumberg Ch. 1-5
Review; preparation for 1 <sup>st</sup> quiz	



**WEEK TWO (June 5 – June 9):**

Mon: Discussion; 1 <sup>st</sup> quiz	Mon night read Sanderson, Ch. 1
Tue: 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	Thu night read Nolan & Lenski
Fri: Nolan & Lenski; discussion; review	For Mon “Extending Lenski”; review

**WEEK THREE (June 12 – June 16):**

Mon: 2 <sup>nd</sup> quiz (midterm); regions in Asia	Mon night read Sanderson, Ch. 5
Tue: Sanderson, Ch. 5, race & ethnicity	Tue night read Sanderson, Ch. 6
Wed: Sanderson, Ch. 6, gender	Wed night read Sanderson, Ch. 7
Thu: Sanderson, Ch. 7, family	Thu night read Sanderson, Ch. 8
Fri: Sanderson, Ch. 8, education; discussion Review	For Mon read Sanderson, Ch. 9 <u>or</u> Blumberg article=extra credit; review

**WEEK FOUR (June 19 – June 23):**

Mon: 3 <sup>rd</sup> quiz; C. Wright Mills & you;	Mon night read Sanderson, Ch. 10
Tue: Sanderson, Ch. 10, Globalization	Tue night read Sanderson, Ch. 11
Wed: Sanderson, Ch. 11, Past & future	Wed night read Toffler, work on “What I Have Learned” exercise
Thu: “What I Have Learned;” Review	Thu night=study
Fri: Final quiz/2 <sup>nd</sup> exam=post-midterm only	

**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 48 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.