

Comparative Sociology

Section 1

Instructor/Title	Dr. Ralph I. Hosoki
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【Course Outline / Description】

Sociology is an academic discipline, but it is also a “tool box” of ideas and concepts that help us understand the world around us and our own experiences within that world. Drawing from the social realities of Japan and other parts of the world, we will discuss foundational sociological topics such as culture, socialization, deviance, stratification, inequality, gender, race and ethnicity, family, education, etc. that shape the social worlds we live in in ways that seemingly should be but are not always obvious.

Section 2

【Course Objectives/Goals/Learning Outcomes】

This course aims to encourage students to use their “sociological imaginations” to think critically about various sociological concepts and theories, apply that knowledge to make sense of the past and present, and think comparatively about their own unique experiences in Japan and the broader social contexts of the world. Interactive discussions will help facilitate communicative skills, the ability to organize one’s thoughts and express them cogently, and the ability to think about a single issue from multiple vantage points.

Section 3

【Class Schedule/Class Environment, Literature and Materials】

- 1 (9/4 T) Course Introduction – What is sociology?
Logistics: go over syllabus, attend to registration concerns, etc.
- 2 (9/6 Th) The Sociological Imagination
Discuss the Sociological Imagination; understand that sociology studies social rather than individual behavior.
- 3 (9/11 T) Classical Sociological Theories
Discuss Conflict Theory (Marx), Functionalism (Durkheim), and Symbolic Interactionism (Mead and Blumer)
- 4 (9/13 Th) Contemporary Sociological Theories and Theoretical Dilemmas
Discuss Structural Functionalism, Critical Theory, World Systems Theory, etc.
- 5 (9/18 T) Sociological Theories in Practice
Discuss social issues that reflect/resonate with sociological theories.
- 6 (9/20 Th) Sociological Research Methods

Discuss the different methods used in social research and their strengths and limitations
- 7 (9/25 T) Socialization
Think about what it means and takes to become a member of society through socialization

- 8 (9/27 Th) Socialization in Japan and throughout the World
Discuss how individuals are socialized in similar and different ways throughout the world
- 9 (10/02 T) Culture
Discuss what is culture
- 10 (10/04 Th) Culture in Japan and throughout the world
Discuss how values and norms are similar and different throughout the world
- 11 (10/9 T) Deviance
Think about what makes someone, something, or an action “normal” or “deviant,” and how that affects individuals on a societal level
- 12 (10/11 Th) Deviance in Japan and throughout the world
Discuss how different societies define what is “deviant” or “normal”
- 13 (10/16 T) Class, Stratification, and Inequality
Think about the foundations of social inequality
- 14 (10/18 Th) Poverty, Welfare, and Social Exclusion
Think about the manifestations of inequality within society
- 15 (10/23 T) Social Privilege, Inequality, and Exclusion in Comparative Perspective
Tie together inequality, social privilege, and exclusion to think about the experiences of different people in different social contexts within and across countries, and reflect on one’s privilege within different social contexts
- 16 (10/25 Th) Midterm Exam Review Session
- 17 (10/30 T) **Midterm Exam**
- 18 (11/1 Th) Education
Reflect on the relationship between education and social mobility
- 19 (11/6 T) Work
Comparatively examine economic life, and its relationship to education and gender
- 20 (11/8 Th) Race and Ethnicity
Think about the social construction of race, and discuss race, ethnicity, social privilege, prejudice, and discrimination
- 21 (11/13 T) Race and Ethnicity in Japan
Discuss racial dynamics in Japan
- 22 (11/15 Th) International Migration
Think about the various reasons why and how international migration occurs
- 23 (11/20 T) Migration in Japan
Discuss the situation of migration in Japan, its history, realities, and challenges
- 24 (11/22 Th) Gender and Sexuality

Understand the differences between sex, sexuality, and gender

25 (11/27 T) Gender in Comparative Perspective; Choose presentation topic and groups in class

Think about how gender is performed

26 (11/29 Th) Family and Marriage

Explore the global revolution in family and personal life

27 (12/4 T) Family in Comparative Perspective

Think about how the institutions of the family and marriage are similar and different across societies, and how they are both evolving across time

28 (12/6 Th) In-class video: *Guns, Germs, and Steel*

29 (12/11 T) Group presentations

30 (12/13 Th)

Final Exam Review Session

Final Exam

【Textbooks/Reading Materials】

Giddens, Anthony, and Philip W. Sutton. 2009. *Sociology* (6th ed). Cambridge: Polity Press.

And other journal articles.

Section 4

【Learning Assessments/Grading Rubric】

Grade breakdown:

Attendance and participation: 30 points (30%)

Midterm exam: 25 points (25 %)

Group presentation: 15 points (15 %)

Final exam: 30 points (30 %)

Total: 100% (100 points)