

# Lecture 1:

## Introduction to Sociology

Course: Introduction to Human Sciences

# What *is* Sociology?

- Study of societies.
- Study of individuals and groups.
- Understanding/theorising society. Role of social structures, institutions, cultures.
- Understanding the relationship between individuals and the larger society around them.

Do we all *do* sociology in our everyday conversations and interactions? Is sociology merely 'common sense'?

# What is Sociology?

Sociology is the study of how people live together and how their lives are structured by social institutions, culture, and history. How does sociology impact your life? It is the study of why your marriage is 50% likely to end in divorce, how protests erupt and destruct, why glass ceilings still exist, and why children are using school grounds as battlegrounds. Sociology is all around you and you are all sociology

**Alpha Kappa Delta/Sociology Society**  
**The University of Texas at Austin**

# Some Concerns/Issues...

## ➤ Social Institutions/Structures

- ☐ Caste

- ☐ Class

- ☐ Tribe/Ethnicity

- ☐ Gender

- ☐ Religion

- ☐ Family

## ➤ Social Processes

- ☐ Exercise of Power, Authority

- ☐ Urbanisation/Migration

- ☐ Development/Industrialization

- ☐ Society and Ecological change

## ➤ Change, Resistance and Mobility. Social Movements

# What is the '*Sociological Imagination*'?

How does a sociologist think?

Peter Berger first used the term "*sociological perspective*".

- Seeing "the general in the particular".
- Locating *general patterns* in the behavior of specific individuals. Ex. Hurricane Katrina and its response, caste in India, patriarchy.

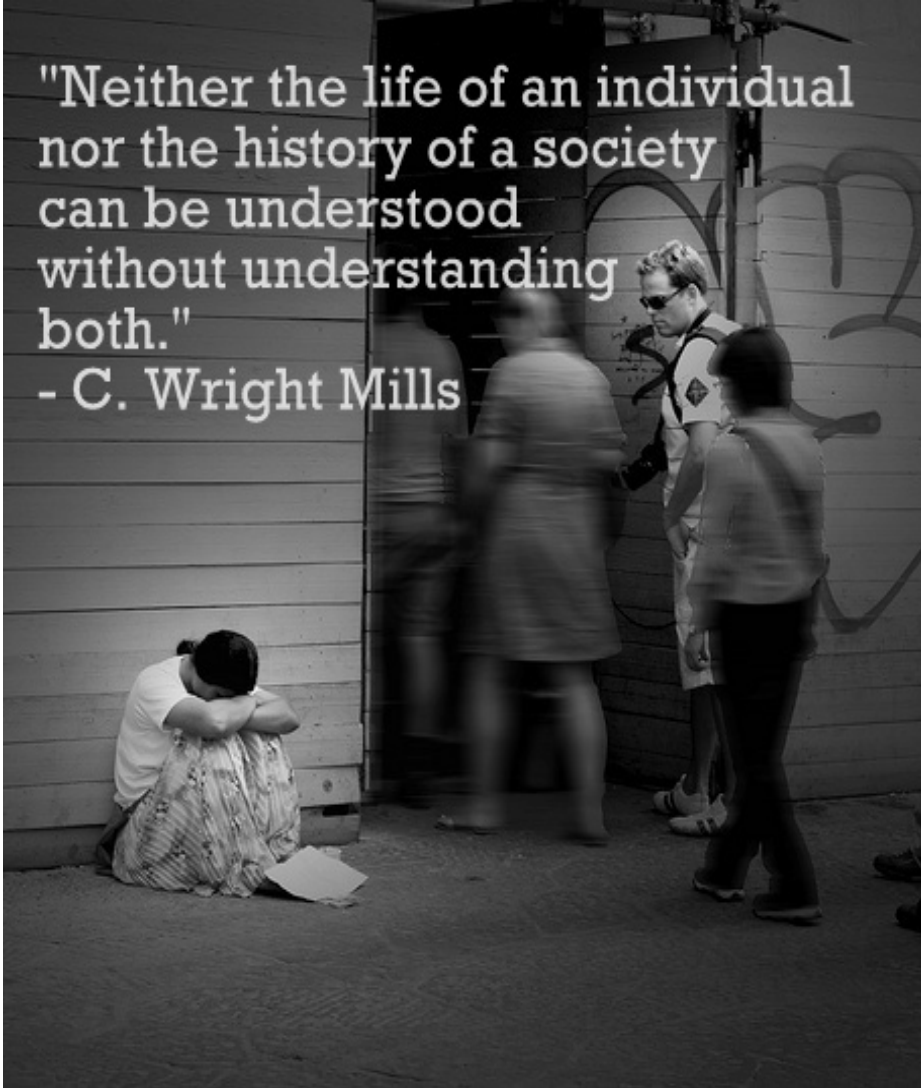
*We are always participating in something larger than ourselves, and if we want to understand social life and what happens to people in it, we have to understand what it is we're participating in and how we participate....*

- **Allan Johnson** in *The Forests and Trees: Sociology as Life Practice*

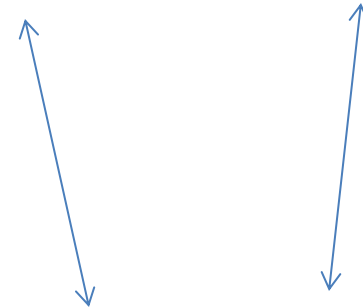
A sociological perspective helps us to understand how personal choice is shaped by society, social structures, institutions and social norms.

# ***‘Sociological Imagination’***

"Neither the life of an individual  
nor the history of a society  
can be understood  
without understanding  
both."  
- C. Wright Mills



**Social Systems**



**Individuals**

- *As we participate in systems, our lives are shaped by socialization, and paths of least resistance.*
- *We make social systems happen.*

The sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society.

(C. Wright Mills)



# Looking for 'sociological imagination'

## Drinking Coffee

- Coffee as refreshment, something to energize the self.
- Coffee as 'symbol': Social world of 'drinking' coffee.
- Coffee as routine: The *ritual* of coffee drinking.  
Coffee/marijuana.
- Coffee as product: The social/economic world of coffee.
- Coffee in societies. The process of 'naturalisation' of coffee.





# Looking for 'sociological imagination'

## Education in a college/University

- College as spaces to produce/disseminate knowledge.
- College as tool for social mobility.
- College as a meeting ground/melting pot of diverse cultures.
- College as symbols/spaces of dissent. Speaking truth to power.