The Chinese University of Hong Kong
The Department of Sociology

SOCI 3239 Issues in Environment and Society
Term 1, 2024 - 2025

Date: On Wednesday
Time: 09:30 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.
Venue: Room 303, Esther Lee Building (ELB 303)
Mode of teaching: Face-to-face

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Course Overview

This course is designed to help students acquire fundamental knowledge and skills to examine and analyze the various environmental challenges in contemporary societies from a sociological perspective. Recognizing that environmental problems are often intricately connected with the conditions of societies that they are situated in, we will explore the processes underlying social and environmental changes as well as the consequences that those processes may entail at national, regional, and global levels. Substantive topics to be covered include limits of growth and development, sustainable production and consumption, climate change and global governance, and environmental movement. The course also aims to promote an awareness and understanding of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) framework put forward by the United Nations in 2015 so as to facilitate a broader discussion and reflection on how individuals and societies can work together and find solutions to those environmental challenges.

Course learning outcomes

1. Describe and explain the major sociological concepts, theories, and approaches that examine the relationship between environment and societal development

2. Identify and critically analyze the processes underlying social and environmental changes as well as the consequences that those processes may entail at national, regional, and global levels

3. Understand the United Nation's framework of Sustainable Development Goals

4. Reflect on their own potential and capability to act for sustainable development

Tutorial Registration

In addition to lecture, this course comprises interactive tutorial, which are managed by the Teaching Assistant(s) of the course. The purpose of the tutorial is to help and guide the students to engage with the readings and topics of discussion in a more interactive manner as well as to complete the related assessments. Please consult the teaching assistant(s) to facilitate registration and arrangement of tutorial.

Assessment

1.   Short essay (30%)

In the short writing exercise, students will be asked to analyze an environmental issue in a society as reported in academic or media journal. Students are expected to analyze the environmental issue by identifying and applying the relevant and significant concepts, theories, and perspectives learned in the course. Further instruction for the short writing exercise will be announced to all students toward the middle of the term.

Due date: **To be confirmed (Veriguide SOCI-3239 Assignment Number 1)**
Word limit (maximum):   English 1,600 words (excluding end-of-text reference list)
                                      中文 2,400 字 (不包括文末參考書目)
Format: Font size 12 and double-line spacing

2.   Final take-home essay (40%)

In the final take-home essay, students will be asked to demonstrate their critical understanding of the concepts, theories, and perspectives learned throughout the course. It is necessary to engage in dialogue with major sociological debates in the relationship between environment and society. Further instruction for the final take-home essay will be announced to all students toward the end of the term.

Due date: **To be confirmed (Veriguide SOCI-3239 Assignment Number 2)**
Word limit (maximum):   English 2,400 words (excluding end-of-text reference list)
                                      中文 3,600 字 (不包括文末參考書目)
Format: Font size 12 and double-line spacing

Important notes for the submission of written assignments are as follows:

1.   Please submit the soft copy of the assignment to **Veriguide** system on or before the due date.

2.   Please rename the assignment file in the following format before you make your submission to the system: Surname + first name + assignment number (e.g. Chan_Ho_Man_1)

3.   Late submission will be subject to penalty. The grade of the submission will be lowered by one subgrade for each day of late submission (e.g. late for one day, from B+ to B; submission late for less than a day will also be treated as a submission late for one day).

4.   Please submit the soft copy of the signed Veriguide receipt for the assignment to the submission portal on Blackboard on or before the due date.

5.   Please rename the Veriguide receipt file in the following format before you make your submission to the system: Surname + first name + assignment number + receipt (e.g. Chan_Ho_Man_1_receipt)

6.   Your assignment must include proper **in-text citation** and **end-of-text reference list**. The citation style for this course is the most updated version adopted by American Sociological Association (ASA), or American Psychological Association (APA). Your attention is drawn to the following documents:

   • Honesty in Academic Work: A Guide for Students and Teachers: https://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/Eng_htm_files_(2013-14)/p03.htm

   • Guideline for proper citation format by Department of Sociology, The Chinese University of Hong Kong: http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/soc/citation.pdf

7.   Please make sure that your essay has a **cover page** with the following information: **course code, course name, your full name, student identification number, and a word count (excluding end-of-text reference list and cover page)**

3.   Tutorial Group presentation and participation (30%)

Students will be invited to form smaller groups in your tutorial class for your group assessment. The number of students in each group will depend on the size of the tutorial class. Each group will select a topic of interest that discusses the relationships(s) between environment and society in local, national, regional, and/or global context(s). Each group will then give a presentation on the chosen topic and lead a discussion with fellow classmates, which aim to promote better understanding on the topic. Further instruction be announced to all students in the first tutorial session.

Guide to Grading System

Grade Descriptors
A   Outstanding performance on all learning outcomes
A-   Generally outstanding performance on all (or almost all) learning outcomes.
B   Substantial performance on all learning outcomes, OR high performance on some learning outcomes which compensates for less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance
C   Satisfactory performance on the majority of learning outcomes, possibly with a few weaknesses.
D   Barely satisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes
F   Unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes, OR failure to meet specified assessment requirements.

Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/.

With each assignment, students will be required to submit a signed declaration that they are aware of these policies, regulations, guidelines and procedures.

- In the case of group projects, all members of the group should be asked to sign the declaration, each of whom is responsible and liable to disciplinary actions, irrespective of whether he/she has signed the declaration and whether he/she has contributed, directly or indirectly, to the problematic contents.

- For assignments in the form of a computer-generated document that is principally text-based and submitted via VeriGuide, the statement, in the form of a receipt, will be issued by the system upon students' uploading of the soft copy of the assignment.

- Students are fully aware that their work may be investigated by AI content detection software to determine originality.

- Students are fully aware of the AI approach(es) adopted in the course. In the case where some AI tools are allowed, students have made proper acknowledgment and citations as suggested by the course teacher.

Assignments without a properly signed declaration will not be graded by teachers.

Only the final version of the assignment should be submitted via VeriGuide.

The submission of a piece of work, or a part of a piece of work, for more than one purpose (e.g. to satisfy the requirements in two different courses) without declaration to this effect shall be regarded as having committed undeclared multiple submissions. It is common and acceptable to reuse a turn of phrase or a sentence or two from one's own work; but wholesale reuse is problematic. In any case, agreement from the course teacher(s) concerned should be obtained prior to the submission of the piece of work.

The copyright of the teaching materials, including lecture notes, assignments and examination questions, etc., produced by staff members/ teachers of The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) belongs to CUHK. Students may download the teaching materials produced by the staff members/ teachers from the Learning Management Systems, e.g. Blackboard, adopted by CUHK for their own educational use, but shall not distribute/ share/ copy the materials to a third-party without seeking prior permission from the staff members/ teachers concerned.

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools in Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Use of AI tools is allowed with explicit acknowledgement and proper citation

Students may use some AI tools in some class activities and assignments on the condition that they make explicit acknowledgement and proper citations of the input from AI tools.

Acknowledging support from AI tools
Students are required to acknowledge all functional uses of a generative AI tool and cite it when they paraphrase, quote, or incorporate into their own work any content (whether it is text, image, data, or other format) that was created by it.

    i.   An example of acknowledgement

'I acknowledge the use of (name of AI tool – e.g. ChatGPT (https://chat.openai.com/) to (specify the support, e.g. plan my essay, generate some ideas for the content, ask for examples of data collection instruments, get the dates of historical events, etc.).

    ii.   An example of citation

OpenAI. (2023). *ChatGPT* (Mar 20 version). https://chat.openai.com/chat

(Students are reminded that due to the rapid developments of generative AI tools, some citation formats may be updated regularly.)

    iii.   An example of including texts generated by an AI tool in their work

"The following text was generated by an AI tool / language model (ChatGPT):"
[Insert the text generated by ChatGPT here.]

    iv.   An example of including texts generated by an AI tool and the prompts that were used to elicit the text from the AI tool

"[The prompt], as generated by an AI language model (ChatGPT):"
[Insert the text generated by ChatGPT in response to the prompt.]

Students are reminded to learn and use the AI tools responsibly and ethically and be aware of the limitations.

Students are reminded to clarify with the course teacher and obtain permission if necessary when in doubt.

Additional points to note on the use of artificial intelligence tools in teaching, learning and assessments

Collaborating with AI chatbots (like ChatGPT) on assignment(s) for this course is generally permitted with explicit acknowledgement. Students should refer to the following **APA Citation Style for how to ChatGPT** (https://apastyle.apa.org/blog/how-to-cite-chatgpt). However, students must exercise caution when using AI tools and be aware of their limitations. It is the responsibility of students, not the AI tools, to ensure the accuracy of the content submitted. Any errors or inaccuracies in the submitted work will be the sole responsibility of the students. According to the 'Guidelines on the Use of Artificial Intelligence Tools in Teaching, Learning and Assessments', **use of AI tools in coursework without acknowledgement are treated as academic dishonesty case and will be handled by the disciplinary committee accordingly**.

Two **APA** examples are given below:

When prompted with "Is the left brain right brain divide real or a metaphor?" the ChatGPT-generated text indicated that although the two brain hemispheres are somewhat specialized, "the notation that people can be characterized as 'left-brained' or 'right-brained' is considered to be an oversimplification and a popular myth" (OpenAI, 2023).

Reference
OpenAI. (2023). *ChatGPT* (Mar 14 version) [Large language model]. https://chat.openai.com/chat

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When given a follow-up prompt of "What is a more accurate representation?" the ChatGPT-generated text indicated that "different brain regions work together to support various cognitive processes" and "the functional specialization of different regions can change in response to experience and environmental factors" (OpenAI, 2023; see Appendix A for the full transcript).

Reference
OpenAI. (2023). *ChatGPT* (Mar 14 version) [Large language model]. https://chat.openai.com/chat

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Schedule of Lecture

Date	Topic	Description
Sep 04	01	Introduction
Sep 11	02	Understanding environment and society
Sep 18		The day following Mid-Autumn Festival
Sep 25	03	Charting environmental concern
Oct 02	04	Mind the gap between knowledge, attitudes, and action
Oct 09	05	Is there a limit to growth?
Oct 16	06	Greening consumption
Oct 23	07	Sustainable production and development
Oct 30	08	Climate change and global governance
Nov 06	09	Environmental Justice
Nov 13	10	Environment movement
Nov 20	11	Water as a valuable resource for life
Nov 27	12	Hunger around the world

Note: If there are any further amendments due to changes in the circumstance, they will be announced to the students as soon as possible. Please pay attention to any future announcements from the university, the department, and the course instructor.