

SOCI 2203
SOCIAL PROBLEMS AND SOCIAL POLICY
社會問題 與社會政策

Second Term, 2024-25
Thursday, 12:30pm – 2:15pm

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COURSE OUTLINE

This course introduces students to the sociological approach to understanding social problems. It is divided into two components: theoretical perspectives on social problems and corresponding sociological research that informs social policy. The theoretical component presents a variety of perspectives, the purpose of which is to show that social problems are complex and multi-causal in nature. The social policy component explores the extent to which sociological research provides empirical evidence to the formulation of policies addressing social problems.* By the end of the course, students will be able to investigate a social problem sociologically and draft a policy paper recommending interventions that is theoretically grounded and empirically supported.

Textbook: Social Problems : Continuity and Change

(recommended open textbook, University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing edition, 2015). You can download the e book here: <https://open.lib.umn.edu/socialproblems/>

Alcock, P., M. May, and S. Wright (edited). 2012. *The Student's Companion to Social Policy. (4th Edition)*. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell. (recommended, access via CUHK ProQuest Ebook Central online)

Rubington, E., & M.S. Weinberg. 2010. *The Study of Social Problems: Seven Perspectives (7th edition)*. NY: Oxford University Press. (recommended **supplementary** textbook)

The course will highlight selected *United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)* and explore how the study of social problems and social policy might help to achieve them. *Design thinking* will also be experimentally introduced to help finding creative solution to social problems. Please see the following websites for further information:

UN Sustainable Development Goals – The 17 Goals and Targets- <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

Stanford University: Tools for taking action – <https://dschool.stanford.edu/resources>

* Required text / # Supplementary text

Course Schedule

Week 1	Topic : Introduction
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9 Jan	<i>In class: Tutorial arrangement</i>
<u>Perspectives for understanding social problems</u>	
Week 2 16 Jan	Topic : Functionalism: examining urban crime and delinquency
Week 3 23 Jan	Topic : Symbolic interactionism and conflict perspective: NEET and social censure
	Fieldtrip (5%): Option 1 – Aging in Place on Lamma Island (Confirmed: 25 January, Saturday, meeting: 9:00am, MTR Lei Tung Station)
Week 4 30 Jan	Public holiday – Lunar New Year Vacation
<u>Addiction - beyond deviant behavior?</u>	
Week 5 6 Feb	Topic: Drug addiction and drug policy in the risk society
(1 st tutorial)	<u>First tutorial – Exploring College Binge Drinking</u>
Week 6 13 Feb	Topic: The medicalization of deviance: gambling and the casino state Class activity 1 (1.25 points)
<u>Contemporary social issues and inequalities</u>	
Week 7 20 Feb	Topic: The housing problem – homeownership and subjective well-being
(2 nd tutorial)	<u>Second tutorial – Homelessness: the social implication of sleeping rough</u>
Week 8 27 Feb	Topic: Poverty and social exclusion – working poor in Hong Kong Class activity 2 (1.25 points)
Week 9 6 Mar	Reading week (no class)
Week 10 13 Mar	Topic: Welfare and social policy – an introduction Submission of Group Project Proposal (10%, 14 Mar 11:59pm)
Week 11 20 Mar	Topic: Gender and sex work – occupational identity and risk mitigation
(3 rd tutorial)	<u>Third tutorial: Sex work – oppression, liberation, and tax filing?</u> Fieldtrip (5%) Option 2 – Transition Housing in Hong Kong (a Saturday in March, date TBC)

Week 12 27 Mar	Topic : Healthy aging and ageism Class activity 3 (1.25 points)
(4 th tutorial & project progress report)	<u>Fourth tutorial : Design thinking for smart aging?</u>
Week 13 3 Apr	Topic : Racial inequality in the global city
Week 14 10 Apr	Topic: Problematizing the ‘nature’ as a social problem Class activity 4 - Special guest: TBC (1.25 points)
Week 15 17 Apr	Topic: Conclusion
(5 th tutorial & project presentation)	<u>Fifth tutorial : Presentation of project findings</u> Take Home Essay topics will be released through Blackboard at 6pm, 18 Apr
22 Apr 11:59pm	<u>Deadline for submitting Take Home Essay Exam</u>
27 Apr 11:59pm	<u>Deadline for submitting Group Project Report (25%)</u>

Course Assessment

Individual tutorial participation (10%): There will be five tutorials, each lasts for two sessions. Each tutorial aims to help students evaluate and deepen their classroom learning through applying their knowledge to analyze a selected social problem. For details please refer to “Tutorial Guideline”.

Class participation (5%) There will be four in-class activities (13 Feb, 27 Feb, 27 Mar, 10 Apr), each contributing to a maximum of 1.25 points. Activities are designed to reveal the commonsense or public perception of a social issue. Please refer to the course schedule for the activity dates.

Group project (45%)

- Students will form groups of three to four people to study a social problem and to formulate policy responses (based on literature and analysis of data collected). Students will first submit a group project proposal in March. The final report will then be presented by the group in the last tutorial before being submitted in mid-Apr.
- **Project proposal** (around 750-1000 words in English or 850-1500 in Chinese; submitted on or before: 14 March (Friday), 11:59p.m.) **(10%)**
- **Presentation of study findings in last tutorial** (maximum 15minutes) **(10%)**
- **Final project report** (including a separate one to two pages poster design, maximum 3,500 words in English or 4,500 words in Chinese; can recycle content of the proposal; submitted on or before: 28 Apr (Monday), 11:59p.m.) **(25%)**
- All group project assignments must be submitted to VeriGuide (except for presentation PowerPoint). No hardcopy is required.

Take home essay (35%)

- Take home essay topics will be released via both Blackboard email and announcement on **18 Apr, 6pm**. (*maximum* 3000 words English submission or 4500 for Chinese submission, excluding references and footnotes).
- Students **must** first refer to lecture and tutorial reading materials, including discussions in class or tutorials or observation made during fieldtrip/guest talks (if attended). You are expected to apply and reflect on lecture and tutorial content (including readings) and demonstrate what you've learnt through out the course. Essay that makes no or little reference to class content and readings will receive lower grade.
- Students can expand their arguments via Google Scholar search for relevant literature.
- Take home essay must be submitted to VeriGuide on or before **22 Apr 11:59pm**. No hardcopy is required. Detail of the take home essay will be released later.

Field trip – (5%) (students can pick from one of the two options)

- Two field trips will be organized for this course. The first is organized on January 25th (Saturday) and will visit a village on Lamma Island. The second will be organized around March to visit transition housing. The field trips allow students to contextualize their learning through direct social observation. The detail of the trips will be announced later.

Policy concerning the use of AI

Use only with prior permission. Please obtain permission from me before collaborating with AI chatbots (like ChatGPT) on assignment(s) for this course. Explicit acknowledgement is required if permission is granted. Specifically:

- You are permitted to consult generative AI for ideas, treating it as your personal assistant for learning. You are permitted to use writing assistant, such as Grammarly, to help you improve your own draft of writing. You are permitted to use generative AI to generate the image for use in your poster design.
- You are NOT permitted to use generative AI to generate the written content of your academic work. You **MUST** write the first draft yourself, individually or in collaboration with project team members.

Students should refer to the following APA Citation Style for how to cite 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', unauthorized use of AI tools in coursework are treated as academic dishonesty case and will be handled by the disciplinary committee accordingly.

Learning outcomes (LO):

LO1: to look beyond common sense or public perception in understanding social problems

LO2: to analyze social problems in Hong Kong from sociological perspectives

LO3: to propose and draft policy responses to these social issues

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Descriptors</u>
A	Outstanding performance on all learning outcomes.
A-	Generally outstanding performance on all (or almost all) learning outcomes.
B+/B/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+/C/C-	Satisfactory performance on the majority of learning outcomes, possibly with a few weaknesses.
D+/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 requirement.

* This set of grade descriptors will be subject to review in future.

Note:

- Late submission for assignments: deduct one half grade for one day (e.g. B→B-)
- Students are required to submit all assignments in the form of a computer-generated document via VeriGuide (the Chinese University Plagiarism Identification Engine System). Please email the signed VeriGuide acknowledgement statement to the TA of the course. Submission without a signed VeriGuide acknowledgement statement will not be marked.
- Students must closely observe the academic honesty guidelines (<http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty>). Our Department also has a detailed guideline on academic citations (<http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/soc/citation.pdf>)