

SOCI2216/UGEC2963 Social Problems in China

Second Term 2024/25

YIA405, Wed 4:30-6:15pm

Instructor: Prof. Sara Hua ZHONG (office hour: by appointment)
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Tutors:

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

China's opening to the world has facilitated not only massive social and economic transformations, but also the emergence of many social problems. This course explores some of the major social problems faced by modern China. The nature of these social problems and their possible causes will be critically examined, in the context of a changing China under modernization, with the help of related concepts and theories in sociology. By the end of the course, students are expected to have a basic understanding of the major social problems in contemporary China and their implications for social and economic development of China in future.

This class touches upon various Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). There is an emphasis on "Reduced Inequality" (Goal 10). You can find a full list of the 17 goals and their targets here: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Students will be able to gain a basic intellectual understanding of the nature and possible causes of the major social problems faced by a changing China.
2. Students will be able to develop critical thinking on the public perception of social problems in China.
3. Students will be able to apply the theoretical perspectives and concepts gained from this course to analyze social problems they encounter in contemporary China.

HONESTY IN ACADEMIC WORK

Attention is drawn to our university policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy/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. For assignments in the form of a computer-generated document that is principally text-based and submitted via the plagiarism detection engine 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. Assignments without the receipt will not be graded by teachers.

Please indicate it at the end of your assignments if you use ChatGPT or other AI composition software for English editing ONLY. One example of the declaration is below:

During the preparation of this work, I used ChatGPT4o in order to improve readability and language quality. After using this tool, I reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the final content.

COURSE ASSESSMENT

1 Group Tutorial Presentation & Paper: 35%

Students will divide themselves into groups of 2 or 3 (2 is preferable). Each group is required to do a presentation (15%) on a topic and write a tutorial paper (20%). Paper topics and guidelines will be provided in the first tutorial class. The objective of the tutorial paper is to encourage students to reap more in-depth understanding of some specific social problem topics related to the lecture content. The length of the **main text** of the paper should be around 8-10 pages in English (double space and font size 12). But not less than 8 pages.

In addition to submitting a soft copy of the group tutorial paper in the form of a computer-generated document via VeriGuide, a soft copy with the signed VeriGuide receipt should be submitted to the corresponding Blackboard folder on or before April 22, 2025 (Tuesday). Late submission would receive a 10% daily deduction from your paper marks.

2 Tutorial Performance 15% (two short summaries 5% & participation 10%)

There will be five tutorial lessons and they are mainly conducted in English. Participation of each tutorial class is required. In the first tutorial lesson, students should submit two summaries (maximum 300 words each) about two assigned readings. At the end of each summary, please raise 2-3 questions on the reading. These questions will be discussed in the tutorial class. Five points for each summary but totally occupy 5% of your overall grade. Students should discuss the two required readings led by tutors and need to form their paper groups at this time.

In the following three tutorials, the tutor will lead each group to complete the group paper step by step. In the last tutorial, all groups need to present their papers and each of the presentation is about 15-20 minutes. In the tutorial classes, students should not just focus on their own topics. There will be an emphasis on students' discussions, which will be in the form of exchanging ideas and giving comments on the presentations made by different groups. Detailed tutorial guidance will be announced later.

3 Class Discussion Questions: 10%

In total five short essay questions (related to the class content learnt on that day) will be distributed at the end of some classes. Students are required to turn in their answers in the following class (2 points each). The answers could be hand-writing and the length is about one paragraph. The summaries of these essay question answers will be uploaded to blackboard.

4 Final exam: 40%

The final online exam includes two components: 20 MC questions and TWO essay questions in our last class (open-book). The questions will cover lecture content and required readings. This final exam aims to evaluate students' sociological understanding of social problems in China. The detailed format and overview will be announced later.

The grade descriptors for this course are as follows:

Grade A: Outstanding performance on all learning outcomes.

Grade A-: Generally outstanding performance on all (or almost all) learning outcomes.

Grade 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.

Grade C: Satisfactory performance on the majority of learning outcomes, possibly with a few weaknesses.

Grade D: Barely satisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes.

Grade F: Unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes, OR failure to meet specified assessment requirement.

COURSE CONTENT & REQUIRED READINGS

(subject to change with prior notice)

1. Jan 8: The Sociological Approach to Social Problems

Rubington, E. and M.S. Weinberg. 2011. *The Study of Social Problems—Seven Perspectives (Chapter 9: Pp 357-363)*. London: Sage Publications.

Nisbet, R.A. 1961. "The Study of Social Problems", Pp 3-18 in *Contemporary Social Problems*, edited by R.K. Merton and R.A. Nisbet. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World.

2. Jan 15: Modernization and Social Problems in China

Levy, Marion J. "Patterns (structures) of modernization and political development." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 358.1 (1965): 29-40.

Yang, Kuo-Shu. "Chinese responses to modernization: A psychological analysis." *Asian Journal of Social Psychology* 1.1 (1998): 75-97.

Saich, Tony. 2004. "China's Changing Road to Development: Political History, 1949-78", Pp 25-56 in *Governance and Politics in China*. NY: Palgrave MacMillan.

3. Jan 22: Evolution of the Communist Party and State since 1978 (Political Problem)

Walder, Andrew G. 1995. "The Quiet Revolution from Within: Economic Reform as a source of Political Decline", Pp. 1-26 in *The Waning of the Communist State: Economic Origins of Political Decline in China and Hungary*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Zhou, Xueguang. 2022. *The logic of governance in China: An organizational approach* (Chapter 12). Cambridge University Press.

4. Feb 5: Rural Problems

Gu, X., 2022. "“Save the children!”: Governing left-behind children through family in China's Great Migration". *Current Sociology* 70(4): 513-538.

Ruan, Ji and Peng Wang. 2023. "Elite capture and corruption: the influence of elite collusion on village elections and rural land development in China". *The China Quarterly* 253:107-122.

5. Feb 12: Urbanization and migration

Zhou, Yang. 2024. "Trapped in the platform: Migration and precarity in China's platform-based gig economy." *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 56(4): 1195-1210.

Zhao, Shaohua. 2011. "What determines migrant workers' life chances in contemporary China? Hukou, social exclusion and the market." *Modern China* 37: 243-285.

6. Feb 19: Social inequality

Chen, W., Wu, X., & Miao, J. 2019. "Housing and Subjective Class Identification in Urban China". *Chinese Sociological Review* 51(3): 221-250.

Jain-Chandra, M. S., Khor, N., Mano, R., Schauer, J., Wingender, M. P., & Zhuang, J. 2018. *Inequality in China—trends, drivers and policy remedies*. International Monetary Fund. <https://www.elibrary.imf.org/view/journals/001/2018/127/001.2018.issue-127-en.xml>

7. Feb 26: Social Resistance

Spires, Anthony J. 2011. "Contingent Symbiosis and Civil Society in an Authoritarian State: Understanding the Survival of China's Grassroots NGOs." *American Journal of Sociology* 117(1):1-45.

Liu, Sida, and Sitao Li. 2024. "Rights in China: Myths, Abuses, and Politics." *Annual Review of Sociology* 50:737-755.

8. March 12: Population and the challenge of Chinese growth

Cai, Y. and Feng, W., 2021. "The social and sociological consequences of China's one-child policy". *Annual Review of Sociology* 47(1): 587-606.

Yu, Jia, and Yu Xie. 2022. "Is there a Chinese pattern of the second demographic transition?" *China Population and Development Studies* 6(3): 237-266.

9. March 19: Crime trends and responses of criminal justice system

Biddulph, S., Nesossi, E., & Trevaskes, S. 2017. "Criminal justice reform in the Xi Jinping era." *China Law and Society Review* 2(1): 63-128.

Xin, Yanyu, Yiwei Xia, and Yu Chai. 2024. "Routine activities and fraud re-victimization among older adults: Do types of routine activities matter?" *Criminology & Criminal Justice*: 17488958241257860.

10. March 26: Good/Bad Technology

Lüthje, B. 2019. "Platform Capitalism 'Made in China'? Intelligent Manufacturing, Taobao Villages and the Restructuring of Work". *Science, Technology and Society* 24(2): 199- 217.

Zhang, Zongyi. 2021. "Infrastructuralization of Tik Tok: Transformation, power relationships, and platformization of video entertainment in China." *Media, Culture & Society* 43(2): 219-236.

11. April 9: Illicit Drugs and AIDS

Zhang, Yunran and Jakob Demant. 2021. "Effects of self-control, drug-use peers, and family attachments on illicit drug use among Chinese users: A gender-specific analysis." *Drug and Alcohol Review* 40(7): 1369-1376

Guo, Z., Xiao, D., Xu, S., & He, K. 2020. Analysis and forecast of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Mainland China, 1985–2016. *Journal of Public Health* 42(4): e458-e467.

12. April 16: In-Class Test (open-book)

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

1. Perry, Elizabeth J and Mark Selden (ed.). 2010. *Chinese Society: Change, Conflict and Resistance* (3rd edition). Routledge.
2. Chan, Kin Man & Hua Zhong (ed.). 2016. *A Difficult Transition: Modernization and the Chinese Society (in Chinese)*. CUHK press.

REMARKS

- Weekly lecture notes and required readings will be uploaded to Blackboard on every Tuesday.
- Please inform the TA or the instructor about your absence and the reason (with evidence) BEFORE that class/tutorial to allow the necessary arrangements.
- Please check the following website for Basics on Contemporary China: <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/soc/socionexus/resources/chisoc/f-chisoc.htm>