

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

Second Term, 2021-22
Monday, 9:30am – 11:15am

Esther Lee Bldg LT3

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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 of 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 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 intervention that is theoretically grounded and empirically supported.

For students who need to attend via Zoom, please send a request to the course instructor. An email with the login detail will be sent to you separately.

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>

CUHK I-Care Programme: see Social Service Projects Scheme / Social Enterprise Startup Scheme / Lean Poverty Alleviation Initiative – <http://www.icare.cuhk.edu.hk/>

CUHK Sustainable Development Goals Action Fund - <https://www.srsdo.cuhk.edu.hk/en-gb/sd/sdg-action-fund>

* Required text / # Supplementary text

Course Schedule

Week	Topic
10 January	Introduction
17 January	Problems of social order? Functionalism and urban delinquency
24 January	Symbolic interactionism - from social censure to welfare stigma
31 January	No class – Lunar New Year Vacation
7 February (1st tutorial)	Conflict perspective: capitalism, inequality and the welfare state
14 February	Drug use and drug policy in the risk society
21 February (2nd tutorial)	The medicalization of deviance: gambling and other addictions
28 February	Global poverty – social exclusion and social capital
7 March	No class – Reading Week
14 March	Gender and sex work – how occupational identity mediates sex work related risks
21 March (3rd tutorial)	The housing problem – from housing exclusion to the study of homelessness
28 March	Racial inequality in the global city
4 April (4th tutorial)	Healthy aging and ageism
11 April	Environmental problems and social inequalities – climate change as a global social problem
18 April (5th tutorial)	No class – Easter Holiday
	Take Home Essay topics will be released through Blackboard at 8pm, 18 April

Course Assessment

Individual online and offline tutorial participation (20%):

- Tutorial participation (15%): there will be five tutorials, each lasts for two sessions. For details please refer to handout “Tutorial Guideline”.
- Social annotation (5%): before tutorials 2, 3 and 4, students will engage in collaborative

‘Social Annotation’ (<https://web.hypothes.is/>) on web-based materials (e.g. Secretary for Labour and Welfare Blog at: <https://www.lwb.gov.hk/en/blog/index.html>) assigned by the tutors that is relevant to the lecture/tutorial topics.

Group project (45%)

- Students will form groups of three to four people to study a social problem and to propose policy responses (based on literature and second-handed data or reports). While students can choose to conduct their online interview or online focus group or online ethnography, **FIELDWORK in PHYSICAL SETTING IS NOT MANDATORY**. Students will first submit a group project proposal in March. The final report will then be presented by the group in the last online tutorial before being submitted in May. Apart from self-selected topics, students can also choose from one of the listed case study topics @ Blackboard to conduct a comparative case study.
- Students are encouraged to use Zoom for project discussion. (<https://cuhk.zoom.us/>)
- **Group project proposal** (around 750-1000 words; English or Chinese; submitted on or before: 20 March (Sunday), 11:59p.m.) **(10%)**
- **Group project presentation of findings in last tutorial** (maximum 15minutes) **(10%)**
- **Group final project report** (including a separate one to two pages poster design, maximum 3,500 words; can recycle content of proposal; English or Chinese; submitted on or before: 2 May (Sunday), 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 April, 8pm**. (*maximum* 3000 words excluding references and footnotes).
- Students can refer to lecture and tutorial reading materials, including those discussed via ‘Social Annotation’ if it is relevant to the essay topic.
- Take home essay must be submitted to VeriGuide on or before **25 April 11:59pm**. No hardcopy is required. Detail of the take home essay will be released later.

Learning outcomes:

- (a) look beyond common sense or public perception in understanding social problems in Hong Kong
- (b) analyze social problems in Hong Kong from sociological perspectives
- (c) 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 form to the TA of the course. Submission without a signed VeriGuide acknowledgement form 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>)