

**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. (4<sup>th</sup> 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 (7<sup>th</sup> 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**

<b>Week</b>	<b>Topic</b>
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>)