

City University of Hong Kong
Course Syllabus

offered by Department of Social and Behavioural Sciences
with effect from Semester A 2024/2025

Part I Course Overview

Course Title: Social Problems

Course Code: SS5426

Course Duration: One semester

Credit Units: 3

Level: P5

Medium of Instruction: English

Medium of Assessment: English

Prerequisites: Nil
(Course Code and Title)

Precursors: Nil
(Course Code and Title)

Equivalent Courses: Nil
(Course Code and Title)

Exclusive Courses: Nil
(Course Code and Title)

Part II Course Details

1. Abstract

This course aims to enable students to analyse social problems in contemporary societies with sociological theories, and to critically evaluate the social policies and generate new social development strategies to tackle real world problems with a focus on Hong Kong and China.

2. Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

(CILOs state what the student is expected to be able to do at the end of the course according to a given standard of performance.)

No.	CILOs	Weighting (if applicable)	Discovery-enriched curriculum related learning outcomes (please tick where appropriate)		
			A1	A2	A3
1.	Distinguish various concepts and principles of sociological theories for the analysis of social problems and issues;	20%	√	√	
2.	Recognise the scope and limitation of the theories to analyze the social problems in contemporary societies;	20%	√	√	
3.	Apply sociological theories to provide critical interpretation of social problems and issues; and	30%	√	√	
4.	Critically evaluate the social policies and generate new social development strategies to tackle real world problems.	30%	√	√	√
		100%			

A1: Attitude

Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.

A2: Ability

Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to self-life problems.

A3: Accomplishments

Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.

3. Learning and Teaching Activities (LTAs)

(LTAs designed to facilitate students' achievement of the CILOs.)

LTA	Brief Description	CILO No.						Hours/week (if applicable)
		1	2	3	4			
Lecture	There will be weekly lectures, with topics concerning theories and concepts on globalization, social problems, social policy, social development and social change, prepared and presented by lecturer.	√	√	√	√			
Tutorial	In each weekly lecture, approximately one hour will be reserved for tutorial discussion. The purpose of it is to give students to discuss and connect concepts, theories, social issues, social problems and social policies in depth.	√	√	√	√			
Student Presentation	Students are required to form in groups and pick up one social issue or problem as their topic. They need to select one or more relevant sociological theory(ies), concept(s), or tradition(s) to analyse the issue and reflect how it relates to the global social change. They are also required to give a short description and brief evaluation of the current policies adopted to tackle the problem.		√	√	√			

4. Assessment Tasks/Activities (ATs)

(ATs are designed to assess how well the students achieve the CILOs.)

Assessment Tasks/Activities	CILO No.					Weighting	Remarks
	1	2	3	4			
Continuous Assessment: 100 %							
<p>Term Paper</p> <p>Students are required to submit an academic paper on topics related to the subject matter. They have to identify one social problem and to apply the relevant sociological theories to analyse it as well as generating new social development strategies to tackle this problem. Max word length: 4,000.</p>	√	√	√	√		70%	
<p>Student Presentation</p> <p>Students are required to form in groups and pick up one social issue or problem as their topic. They need to select one or more theoretical perspective(s) or theory(ies) to analyse the issue. They have to collect information from existing literature to substantiate their arguments. They are also required to give a short evaluation of the current policies adopted to tackle the problem.</p>		√	√	√		30%	
Examination: _____ % (duration: _____, if applicable)						100%	

5. Assessment Rubrics

(Grading of student achievements is based on student performance in assessment tasks/activities with the following rubrics.)

Applicable to students admitted before Semester A 2022/23 and in Semester A 2024/25 & thereafter

Assessment Task	Criterion	Excellent (A+, A, A-)	Good (B+, B, B-)	Fair (C+, C, C-)	Marginal (D)	Failure (F)
1. Term Paper (70%)	Application of learning in a coherent way	High capability to understand and examine critically, apply innovatively the knowledge and theories in different types of social problems.	Significant capability to understand and examine critically, apply innovatively the knowledge and theories in different types of social problems.	Moderate capability to understand and examine critically, apply innovatively the knowledge and theories in different types of social problems.	Basic capability to understand and examine critically, apply innovatively the knowledge and theories in different types of social problems.	Poor capability to understand and examine critically, apply innovatively the knowledge and theories in different types of social problems.
2. Student Presentation (30%)	Application of learning in a coherent way and showing accurate knowledge	High capability to understand different social problems, examine critically, apply innovatively the knowledge and theories in different types of social problems.	Significant capability to understand different social problems, examine critically, apply innovatively the knowledge and theories in different types of social problems.	Moderate capability to understand different social problems, examine critically, apply innovatively the knowledge and theories in different types of social problems.	Basic capability to understand different social problems, examine critically, apply innovatively the knowledge and theories in different types of social problems.	Poor capability to understand different social problems, examine critically, apply innovatively the knowledge and theories in different types of social problems.

Applicable to students admitted in Semester A 2022/23 and thereafter

Assessment Task	Criterion	Excellent (A+, A, A-)	Good (B+, B)	Marginal (B-, C+, C)	Failure (F)
1. Term Paper (70%)	Application of learning in a coherent way	Strong evidence for the capability to understand and examine critically, apply innovatively the knowledge and theories in different types of social problems.	Good evidence for the capability to understand and examine critically, apply innovatively the knowledge and theories in different types of social problems.	Fair to limited evidence capability to understand and examine critically, apply innovatively the knowledge and theories in different types of social problems.	Insufficient evidence capability to understand and examine critically, apply innovatively the knowledge and theories in different types of social problems.
2. Student Presentation (30%)	Application of learning in a coherent way and showing accurate knowledge	Strong evidence for the capability to understand different social problems, examine critically, apply innovatively the knowledge and theories in different types of social problems.	Good evidence for the capability to understand different social problems, examine critically, apply innovatively the knowledge and theories in different types of social problems.	Fair to limited evidence capability to understand different social problems, examine critically, apply innovatively the knowledge and theories in different types of social problems.	Insufficient evidence capability to understand and examine critically, apply innovatively the knowledge and theories in different types of social problems.

Part III Other Information (more details can be provided separately in the teaching plan)

1. Keyword Syllabus

(An indication of the key topics of the course.)

Social Theories and Social Problems:

The concept of social problem; sociological perspectives on social problems; the theories and perspectives on contemporary globalization; an outline of major social issues and social problems in contemporary societies.

Social Issues and Social Problems in Hong Kong:

Major social problems and policy debates in Hong Kong, e.g. aging, gender inequality, poverty and social security, working poor and wage policy, work and employment, social mobility and social stratification, family violence, crime and punishment, immigration and ethnic groups, development and environment.

Social Problems and Social Development in China:

Key issues in the social development of China, e.g. rural development, sweatshop, sex and sexualities, queer studies, crime and human trafficking, labour regulations and social protection for migrant workers, family, aging, pollution and environmental issues.

2. Reading List

2.1 Compulsory Readings

(Compulsory readings can include books, book chapters, or journal/magazine articles. There are also collections of e-books, e-journals available from the CityU Library.)

1.	Henslin, J. M., & Fowler, L. A. (2009). <i>Social problems: A down-to-earth approach</i> . New Jersey: Pearson.
2.	Hudson, J., & Lowe, S. (2009). <i>Understanding the policy process: Analysing welfare policy and practice</i> . Bristol: Policy Press.
3.	Macionis, J. (2007). <i>Social problems</i> (3rd ed.). New Jersey: Pearson.
4.	Ritzer, G. (Ed.). (2004). <i>Handbook of social problems: A comparative international perspective</i> . Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
5.	Sernau, S. R. (2009). <i>Global problems: The search for equity, peace, and sustainability</i> . New Jersey: Pearson.
6.	Walker, A. et. al. (Eds.). (2010). <i>The Peter Townsend reader</i> . Bristol: Policy Press.

2.2 Additional Readings

(Additional references for students to learn to expand their knowledge about the subject.)

1.	Aspalter, C. (2001). <i>Conservative welfare systems in East Asia</i> . Westport: Praeger.
2.	Baker, P. J. (1993). <i>Social problems: A critical thinking approach</i> . Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
3.	Bennholdt-Thomsen, V., Faraclas, N., & Werlhof, C. W. (2001). <i>There is an alternative: Subsistence and worldwide resistance to corporate globalization</i> . London: Zed Books.
4.	Chiu, S., & Lui, T. L. (2009). <i>Hong Kong: The global city</i> . London: Routledge.
5.	Coleman, J. W., & Kerbo, H. R. (2003). <i>Social problems: A brief introduction</i> (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
6.	Feagin, J. R., & Feagin, C. B. (1997). <i>Social problems: A critical power-conflict perspective</i> (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
7.	Finsterbusch, K. (Ed.). (2003). <i>Social problems 03/04</i> . Guilford, Conn.: McGraw-Hill/Dushkin.
8.	George, V., & Page, R. M. (Eds.). (2004). <i>Global social problems</i> . Cambridge; Malden, MA: Polity.

9.	Giddens, A. (1996). <i>Introduction to Sociology</i> . New York: W.W. Norton.
10.	Heiner, R. (2006). <i>Social problems: An introduction to critical constructionism</i> . New York: Oxford University Press.
11.	Kendall, D. E. (2004). <i>Social problems in a diverse society</i> (4th ed.). Boston, Mass.: Pearson/Allyn and Bacon.
12.	Lloyd-Sherlock, P. (2010). <i>Population ageing and international development: From generalisation to evidence</i> . Bristol: Policy Press.
13.	Lopata, H. Z., & Levy, J. A. (Eds.). (2003). <i>Social problems across the life course</i> . Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield.
14.	Mazur, A. (2007). <i>Global social problems</i> . London: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
15.	Midgley, J. (1997). <i>Social welfare in global context</i> . Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
16.	Murphy, R. (Ed.). (2008). <i>Labour migration and social development in contemporary China</i> . London: Routledge.
17.	Neubeck, K. J., & Neubeck, M. A. (1997). <i>Social problems: A critical approach</i> (4th ed.). New York: The McGraw-Hill Companies.
18.	Nolan, P., & Lenski, G. (1999). <i>Human societies: An introduction to Macrosociology</i> . London: McGraw-Hill.
19.	Rubington, E., & Weinberg, M. S. (Eds.). (1995). <i>The study of social problems: Seven perspectives</i> . Oxford: Oxford University Press.
20.	Rubington, E., & Weinberg, M. S. (Eds.). (2002). <i>Deviance: The interactionist perspective</i> . Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
21.	Sanderson, S. K. (1999). <i>Macrosociology: An introduction to human societies</i> . New York: Longman.
22.	Townsend, P., & Gordon, D. (2002). <i>World poverty: New policies to defeat an old enemy</i> . Bristol: Policy Press.
23.	Yan, H. R. (2008). <i>New masters, new servants: Migration, development, and women workers in China</i> . Durham: Duke University Press.
24.	Yeates, N. (2001). <i>Globalization & social policy</i> . London: Sage.
25.	Zastrow, C. (2000). <i>Social problems: Issues and solutions</i> (5th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Key Journals

Sociology

British Journal of Sociology

American Journal of Sociology

Critical Social Policy

Journal of Social Policy

Social Policy and Society

Global Social Policy

Community Development Journal

Social Policy Review