

**SOSC 1662**  
**CONTEMPORARY HONG KONG SOCIETY**  
**SPRING 2019**

Tues, Thurs 3:00pm-4.20pm, Room 2407 (lift 17-18)

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### **Objectives**

What explains Hong Kong's phenomenal economic success? How is Hong Kong governed? Why do over a million people in Hong Kong live below the poverty line? Why do almost a thousand people commit suicide every year? Why do women earn less money than men? How do Hong Kong residents see themselves in relationship to the Chinese Mainland? How much do Hong Kong's ethnic minorities share in Hong Kong's success? Why have divorce rates in Hong Kong more than doubled in the last ten years? How is family life changing? What are the consequences of an aging society?

The purpose of this course is to try to answer these questions, and more, by developing a *sociological understanding* of Hong Kong society. The aim is not so much to compile facts and figures about every conceivable aspect of Hong Kong, but to develop a *sociological mindfulness* with which to understand it in new and helpful ways. We shall approach each topic by looking at the broad questions and theories that sociologists use to understand modern life. We will then discuss their relevance to Hong Kong and examine a number of local studies. The course is, then, both an introduction to sociological thinking and methods, as well as an introduction to Hong Kong society.

The theme of the course is social change in Hong Kong since the Post-War period. The focus is on how industrialization, urbanization, globalization and modernity affect our everyday lives, institutions, relationships and identities. The first two sections of the course will look at the mechanics of these changes and selected social problems associated with it; the transformation of community life, mental health, political, economic and gender inequalities. The final part will examine the implications of and responses to these problems; the rise of social movements for democracy and human rights, experiences of discrimination, the emergence of distinct Hong Kong cultural identities, the search for intimacy, and family life.

We shall learn about these issues not just through formal lectures and academic readings, but also through in-class discussions, exercises, surveys, documentary programs and films, meetings with local scholars and prominent members of the community, media artifacts, voluntary work in the community and, above all, personal reflections about living in Hong Kong.

<b>Intended Learning Outcomes</b>	<b>Learning activities</b>
To be <i>sociologically mindful</i> about Hong Kong Society.	By critically examining with what sociologists have to say about life in a modern city.
To be able to understand the social context of Hong Kong's economic and political development	By reading and studying archive materials about important moments in Hong Kong's history
To understand the diverse experiences of Hong Kong's residents – from the point of view of migrants, low income families, youth, the elderly and other groups.	By engaging with guest speakers and doing community work.

### **Readings**

Any worthwhile university course in the social sciences requires that you do some reading outside of the class on your own. I have tried to keep these to a minimum. There will be one or two short articles or book chapters assigned for each week. The relevant readings assignments will be announced at the beginning of the class. You must read the articles before coming to class in order to be able to understand the class and take part in it. I shall make all the readings available on CANVAS. I shall call on you to answer questions about them in class. Do not worry if you do not understand everything in the readings. I will help you through some of the more difficult parts in the class, so please be sure to attend.

### **Requirements and Assessment**

There will be two closed-book **exams**: a midterm and a cumulative Final (that covers the entire course). Questions will be a mixture of multiple choice and short answer questions. They will test your understanding of the readings and the in-class lectures (including guest lectures), exercises and discussions.

### **The Final Grade**

Midterm Exam 40%  
 Final Exam 60%

## **Extra Credit Opportunities**

### *Volunteer Work in the Community*

Much of what we know about Hong Kong comes from official government reports, journalists, and the published work of academics. In this course, however, we will also look at Hong Kong society from the point of view of residents who hold less privileged positions. For this reason, I will award up to **five percent extra credit** to students who take part in one of the volunteer projects in the community that I have organized for the class.

In the projects, you will have an opportunity to interview migrants, low-income families, the elderly and underprivileged children. Depending on the project, this will involve a training session and one or two service sessions either in the evening or on weekends (details to be announced in class). You will work in groups to produce a written report (approx. ten pages) answering research questions and reflecting upon your experiences. If there is time, I may ask some groups to give a short (ten minute) power point presentation to the class about their experiences.

The dates and project details will be announced after the add/drop period (15<sup>h</sup> February).

### *In-class participation:*

Up to **three percent extra** credit may be awarded to individual students who make regular and outstanding contributions to the in-class discussions or who frequently ask relevant questions throughout the entire semester.

## TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE<sup>1</sup>

### INTRODUCTIONS

Date	Topic	Reading
Jan 31 <sup>st</sup>	<b>How much do you know about HongKong Society? Sociology and Common sense</b>	

Feb 5-7 Lunar New Year. No Class

Feb 12 <sup>th</sup>	Thinking sociolocally about Hong Kong	
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### PART ONE: SOCIAL CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT

How do we explain the rapid development of the newly emerged Southeast Asian economies like Hong Kong, and what can we learn from it? Can it be explained by the unique technologies, entrepreneurs and value systems held by their residents? Or does Hong Kong owe its development to the external forces of the modern world economic system? In addition to these questions, we examine sociological accounts of how the fabric of community life and belief systems continue to change as a result of Hong Kong's modernization, along with continuing problems of urban isolation and suicide among vulnerable groups.

Feb 14 <sup>th</sup>	<b>What explains the “Hong Kong Economic Miracle?”</b> Technology and Capital	Ezra Vogel. <i>The Four Little Dragons</i> . Ch1. “A New Wave of Industrialization”
Feb 19 <sup>th</sup>	Neo-Confucianism and the Asian Values Debate.	Extra Vogel. <i>The Four Little Dragons</i> . Ch. 4 and Ch5.
Feb 21 <sup>st</sup>	Hong Kong and the Modern World System.	Alvin So. “The Economic Success of Hong Kong: Insights from a World System Perspective.”
Feb 26 <sup>th</sup>	Hong Kong's Industrial Experience. <b>What was it like for ordinary people?</b>	
Feb 28 <sup>th</sup>	The transformation of traditional Chinese beliefs: <b>Why do we love</b>	Joseph Bosco: <i>Young People's Ghost Stories</i>

<sup>1</sup> The dates of topics and readings may change. Please listen for announcements in class.

	<b>ghost stories?</b>	
Mar 5	Social Solidarity and Suicide: <b>Are we becoming more isolated?</b>	

## PART TWO. SOCIAL AND POLITICAL INEQUALITIES

Continuing with the theme of social breakdown and conflict since the post-war period, we examine the gap that exists between the community and its political leaders. First, we look at early sociological observations that construct Hong Kong citizens as being apathetic toward politics, and then contrast these accounts with accounts of the development of what is now known as the democracy movement in Hong Kong. Political imbalances are also mirrored by social differences between rich and poor, men and women, locals and immigrants, and these topics will also be discussed drawing on your volunteer experiences.

Mar 7 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Do Hong Kong residents care about politics?</b>	“Functional Constituencies: Are They Fair?”
Mar 12 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Where did the democracy movement come from?</b>	Stephan Ortmann. “The Umbrella Movement and Hong Kong's Protracted Democratization Process.” Stephan Ortmann. <i>Asian Affairs</i> .
Mar 14 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Who are the poor?</b> Hong Kong’s “New Poor”	Nelson W.S. Chow: “My Experience Researching Poverty over the Past 35 Years” <i>The China Review</i> .
Mar 19 <sup>th</sup>	The government’s response to poverty in Hong Kong. <b>Has minimum wage legislation worked?</b>	

<b>March 21: MIDTERM EXAMINATION (in class). Attendance is Required</b>
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Mar 21 <sup>st</sup>	Class Analysis in Hong Kong <b>Who Moves up? Who Moves Down?</b>	Time Out Magazine: “The Men Who Rule Hong Kong.”
Mar 26 <sup>th</sup>	The power elite	Jake Van Der Kamp and Carine Lai. “Non-positive Interventionism” How functional constituencies distort the free market

Mar 28 <sup>th</sup>	<b>How Equal are men and women in Hong Kong?</b> The Facts of Gender Inequality	SCMP: "Hong Kong Follows Global Trend with Women Dominating Higher Education." 17 Jan, 2014
Apr 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Gender, Socialization, language and the media.	
Apr 4 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Why don't more men stay home to look after children?</b> Understanding Gender inequality in the home.	Groves and Lui: "The Gift of Help" <i>Sociology</i>
Apr 9 <sup>th</sup>	Discrimination and sexual orientation	Reading: Travis Kong. "Queers are Ready!?! Sexual Citizenship and the Tongzhi Movement"
Apr 11 <sup>th</sup>	Guest Speaker: Benita Chik	

Apr 16 <sup>th</sup>	Migrants and ethnic minorities in Hong Kong	Wai-Chi Chee: "Envisioned Belonging: Cultural Differences and Ethnicities in Hong Kong Schooling"
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April 18-23. Mid-term break. No Class

April 25 <sup>th</sup>	Migrant Domestic Workers	
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### **PART THREE. IDENTITY, INTIMACY AND FAMILY**

The run-up to Hong Kong's reunification with China, along with the arrival of migrants and tourists from the Mainland have all led to questions about Hong Kong's unique cultural identity. The final part of the course explores the shaping of the identity of the "Heunggongyahn" (香港人) since the 1960s. We also examine the more intimate aspects of social life, such as marriage and the family.

May 2 <sup>nd</sup>	<b>Who am I?</b> The rise of the "Heunggongyahn" (香港人)	"Heunggongyahn" : On the Past, Present, and the Future of Hong Kong Identity,"
	<b>Why so many lonely</b>	

May 7 <sup>th</sup>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>hearts?</b>  The Search for Intimacy  and The Changing Hong  Kong Family</p>	
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## RULES AND PROCEDURES

This is a large class with a diversity of students from many backgrounds. Most of you will be studying in a second language (English) because this is the only language that we all share. Some of you may not have taken social science classes before. Others will have been used to different academic environments with different expectations. All this means that we need to have some common rules about how the class is to proceed so that everyone has an opportunity to learn and perform well.

### **Attendance**

The surest way to achieve a high grade on this course is to *attend all the classes* and while doing so, disconnect from all electronic devices and participate. The PowerPoint slides shown in the class and placed on the course webpage are intended only as outlines of the main concepts covered. They are not substitutes for class attendance and will not make sense to you unless you have attended the class. You are responsible for taking your own notes during the classes. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to catch up from another classmate.

Students often ask me to put more detailed notes on the course webpage. My experience, however, has been that if you are not inclined to attend the class, it is unlikely that you will have the time or inclination to study the materials outside of class. Please note also that I do not permit any recording or filming in the classroom. I will do my part, however, to make the classes worthwhile, going *slowly* in the class, and making frequent summaries to assist those with language difficulties. Fair enough?

### **Coming Late and Leaving Early**

The class will not begin until all students are seated and quiet. When students come late to the classroom they delay the whole class by walking around the classroom to find a seat or look for their friends while the class is in progress. They also miss important information that will be covered on the exam. Some instructors solve this problem by locking the doors after the class has begun. This, however, is an extreme measure and sends a negative message. To minimize disruption, I will reserve the tables nearest to the doors at the side of the classroom for late students. On the occasion that you have to come late to the class, please sit at these tables, rather than wonder around the room.

As with late students, students who leave the class early disrupt the class and miss important information. Each class will have a ten minute break in the middle. Please wait until the break or the end of the class before leaving (except, of course, in the case of medical emergency or fire). Students who repeatedly come late or leave early will not be eligible for extra credit for class participation.

## **Mobile Phones, Emailing, Texting and Computers**

*This course has a strict policy on electronic devices which will be rigorously enforced.*

Mastering a sociological outlook on Hong Kong will require your full attention during the class. Ringing phones and tweeting apps disrupt the class. If you are texting on your phone or using laptop computers (for whatever purpose, including note taking or translating) you will miss important information. By multi-tasking, you are also turning away from your classmates, the instructor, and the course content and depriving everyone of a good learning environment.

I used to simply require that electronic devices be switched off during the class. But I have discovered that as long as the devices are in front of you, it is impossible to resist the temptation to play with them or continue to take calls and text messages. I am therefore going to require that all electronic devices *not only be switched off, but also put away* in a bag or purse and remain completely *out of sight* while the class is in progress. The class will not begin until this is done. If you walk out in the middle of a class to take a call, you will be asked to return to your seat.

If you continue to text or take phonecalls during the class, your name will be recorded and *your Final Grade for the course may be affected.*

## **Eating and Drinking in the Classroom**

Bringing food into the classroom leaves a mess and smell for your classmates. This does not create a conducive atmosphere for learning. Would you like it if your classes were held in a McDonalds restaurant? I wouldn't think so. For this reason, the University prohibits eating in the classroom. There are many places where you can eat on campus. Please observe the "No Eating" signs in the classroom, and have your meals before or after the class.

## **Volunteer Projects**

You may earn up to 7 percent extra credit by participating in the volunteer projects organized by the instructor. The projects, however, require some commitment and responsibility on your part. If you sign up for the projects, we will require you to attend both the training session and the project itself. Since the organizations that we will be helping in the projects will be relying upon your services, we will not award the extra credit if you fail to show up at the required times. Please do not sign up for volunteer work unless you are sure that you can attend all the required meetings.

## **Examinations**

Exams will be closed-book and must take place without communicating with other students.

This is a large class and it is impossible to schedule make-up exams for individual students, except where medical documentation (from a licensed Western medical practitioner) is provided to say why you cannot attend. In the case of an exam missed due to medical circumstances, you must contact us within a week after the missed exam to arrange a make-up, otherwise your entitlement to a make-up will be forfeited. The exam dates will be announced early in the semester, which will give you plenty of time to plan. Do not schedule job interviews or other activities on these dates.

A special note to **international students**: You have been instructed by the University during your orientation that you are required to stay for the entire exam period. Please do not book your flights home before the Final Exam. Similarly do not schedule trips outside of Hong Kong during the mid-term examination (**March 21st**). No make-up exams will be offered should you choose not to attend the exams for these reasons and you will not be credited with any score for the exam you miss.

A special note to **students taking, or who have taken SOSC1850 (Understanding Society) with Prof. Groves**: As introductory sociology classes, it is unavoidable that there will be some overlap between these two classes. I do not encourage you to take both classes. It is better that you get a broader perspective in the social sciences by taking classes from other professors. If, however, you do decide to take both classes, please allow other students in class to answer questions that you may already know the answer to from SOSC 1850. I do appreciate your cooperation on this.

A Special Note to **Final Year Students**. This is an introductory (1000-level) course and it is designed primarily with First Year or Year Zero Students in mind. Their English and study skills may not be as developed as yours and they may be taking a social science course for the first time. I care that every student performs well, so I will be making special efforts to go slowly and make frequent summaries of what we have covered so that they can follow. I do appreciate your patience while I do this. I encourage you to take more advanced classes if you feel that this course is too introductory for you.