

**SOSC 1662**  
**CONTEMPORARY HONG KONG SOCIETY**  
SPRING 2020

Wed, Fri 1:30-2:50pm, Zoom meeting/Room 2465 lift 25-26 (when permitted)

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Office Hours: One hour after class or by appointment.

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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? What explains Hong Kong's troubled political history. How do Hong Kong residents see themselves in relationship to the Chinese mainland? Why do women in Hong Kong earn less money than men? What are the experiences of Hong Kong's ethnic minorities? Why have divorce rates in Hong Kong more than doubled in the last ten years? How is family life for most Hong Kong people 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 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 from the community.

## **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 three short closed-book **exams**: two midterms 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**

<b>First midterm exam</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>Second midterm exam</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>Final Exam</b>	<b>50%</b>

**Extra Credit Opportunities:** 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
Feb 19 <sup>th</sup>	<b>How much do you know about HongKong Society?</b> Sociology and Common sense	
Feb 21 <sup>st</sup>	Thinking sociologically About Hong Kong	

### 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 26 <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 28 <sup>th</sup>	Neo-Confucianism and the Asian Values Debate.	Extra Vogel. <i>The Four Little Dragons</i> . Ch. 4 and Ch5.
Mar 4 <sup>th</sup>	Hong Kong and the Modern World System.	Alvin So. “The Economic Success of Hong Kong: Insights from a World System Perspective.”
Mar 6 <sup>th</sup>	Hong Kong's Industrial Experience. <b>What was it like for ordinary people?</b>	
Mar 11 <sup>th</sup>	The transformation of traditional Chinese beliefs: <b>Why do we love ghost stories?</b>	Joseph Bosco: <i>Young People's Ghost Stories</i>
Mar 13 <sup>th</sup>	Social Solidarity and Suicide: <b>Are we becoming more isolated?</b>	

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

## 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.

March 18 <sup>th</sup>	The “minimally integrated” political system.	“Functional Constituencies: Are They Fair?”
March 20 <sup>th</sup>	Where did the democracy movement come from	Stephan Ortmann. “The Umbrella Movement and Hong Kong's Protracted Democratization Process.” Stephan Ortmann. <i>Asian Affairs</i> .

<b>March 25<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>First Midterm Examination attendance online/in person is required</b>	
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Mar 27 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Who are the poor?</b> Hong Kong’s “New Poor” The government’s response to poverty in Hong Kong. <b>Has minimum wage legislation worked?</b>	Nelson W.S. Chow: “My Experience Researching Poverty over the Past 35 Years” <i>The China Review</i> .
Apr 1 <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.”
Apr 3 <sup>rd</sup>	The power elite	Jake Van Der Kamp and Carine Lai. “Non-positive Interventionism” How functional constituencies distort the free market
April 8 <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
April 10 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Good Friday. No Class</b>	
Apr 15 <sup>th</sup>	Gender, Socialization, language and the media.	

Apr 17 <sup>nd</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 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Discrimination and sexual orientation	Reading: Travis Kong. "Queers are Ready!?" Sexual Citizenship and the Tongzhi Movement

<b>April 24<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Second Midterm Examination Attendance online/in-class required</b>	
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April 29 <sup>th</sup>	Migrants and ethnic minorities in Hong Kong. The South Asian Experience Migrant Domestic Workers	Wai-Chi Chee: "Envisioned Belonging: Cultural Differences and Ethnicities in Hong Kong Schooling"
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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 1st	<b>Labour day: no class</b>	
May 6 <sup>th</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,"
May 8th	<b>Why so many lonely hearts?</b> The search for intimacy	
May 13th	The Changing Hong Kong Family	
May 15th	Catch-up and review	

## **RULES AND PROCEDURES**

Until the University indicates otherwise, I am required to deliver this class virtually using the Zoom software. This is far from satisfactory, in my opinion. I am much more excited about meeting you in person and enjoying your company in the classroom. I will do my best to make the class as interactive and interesting for you as possible. I will, however, need your cooperation.

### **Attendance**

The surest way to achieve a high grade on this course is to *attend all the classes* either online or face-to-face (when permitted) and disconnect from other electronic devices and activities. 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/watched the class.

As with face-to-face classes, I encourage you to attend the Zoom meetings on time. If you arrive late, you will miss important material and it might be difficult to understand what is going on.

### **Show your faces**

I too am self-conscious in front of a camera. But it would be very helpful to me and your fellow students if you turn on your webcams so that we can all see each other and make eye contact.

### **Talk to the class, not just to me**

I realize that it is easier to sit in silence when you are not in the same room as me. However, do not be shy about raising your hand and asking/answering questions in the virtual classroom. I love it when students participate and I will reward this in your assessment. Further, when using the chat functions, please direct your questions to the “everyone” not just to me since it is difficult for me to conduct conversations with individual students when the class is in progress.

A special note to **students taking, or who have taken, other courses with Prof. Groves**: As introductory sociology courses, it is unavoidable that there will be some overlap between these courses. I do not encourage you to take more than one course from me. It is better that you get a broader perspective in the social sciences by taking courses from other professors. If, however, you do decide to take more than one of my courses, please allow other students in class to answer questions that you may already know the answer to from my other courses. I do appreciate your cooperation on this.

### **Examinations**

Until further notice the examinations will take place online. I will try to replicate the regular close-book exam by giving you a strict time limit and shuffling questions. But I'm going assume that you will be taking the exams without consulting other students

or the internet. My experience has been that HKUST students are among the best I have taught, so I am going to trust you to exercise academic integrity even in these difficult times.

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 could not complete it (online or in person) at the required time. 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 on the situation in Hong Kong.**

This has been a very challenging time for us in Hong Kong. We must be cautious. But we must also remain calm and not overreact to the situation. The sociological training that you will undertake in this course reminds us to establish our positions through questioning, reasoning, and evidence. It also encourages us to be mindful of how our behaviour affects others. I admire your courage to continue your studies at this difficult time and I can't wait to meet each and every one of you when face-to-face classes begin.