

SOSC 1662
CONTEMPORARY HONG KONG SOCIETY
SPRING 2021

Tues, Thurs 1500-16:20, on Zoom

Prof. Julian M. Groves sosc1662@ust.hk
Division of Social Science, Rm 3371
Office Hours: One hour after class or by appointment.

Teaching Assistant:
Mr. Stephen Choy choyho@ust.hk
Office hours: 12noon to 1pm Monday or by appointment.

Objectives

What explains Hong Kong's rapid rise to 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 in Hong Kong 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, inequalities, 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.

Intended Learning Outcomes	Learning activities
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 don't understand everything in the required readings. I will assist you by telling you in advance what I want you to get out of them. I will also help you with the more difficult points 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

Attendance (with cameras on)	5%
Participation	5%
First midterm exam	25%
Second midterm exam	25%
Final Exam	40%

TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE¹

INTRODUCTIONS

Date	Topic	Reading
Feb 2 nd	How much do you know about HongKong Society? Sociology and Common sense	
Feb 4 th	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 community life and belief systems continue to change as a result of Hong Kong's modernization, along with continuing problems of urban isolation among vulnerable groups.

Feb 9 th	What explains the “Hong Kong Economic Miracle?” Technology and Capital	Ezra Vogel. <i>The Four Little Dragons</i> . Ch1. “A New Wave of Industrialization”
Feb 11 th	Neo-Confucianism and the Asian Values Debate.	Extra Vogel. <i>The Four Little Dragons</i> . Ch. 4 and Ch5.
Feb 16 th	Hong Kong and the Modern World System.	Alvin So. “The Economic Success of Hong Kong: Insights from a World System Perspective.”
Feb 18 th	Hong Kong's Industrial Experience. What was it like for ordinary people?	
Feb 23 rd	The transformation of traditional Chinese beliefs: Why do we love ghost stories?	Joseph Bosco: <i>Young People's Ghost Stories</i>
Feb 25 th	Social Solidarity and Suicide: Are we becoming more isolated?	

¹ 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 2 nd	The “minimally integrated” political system.	“Functional Constituencies: Are They Fair?”
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March 4th	First Midterm Examination attendance online/in person is required	
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March 9 th	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>
Mar 11 th	Who are the poor? Hong Kong’s “New Poor” The government’s response to poverty in Hong Kong. Has minimum wage legislation worked?	Nelson W.S. Chow: “My Experience Researching Poverty over the Past 35 Years” <i>The China Review</i> .
Mar 16 th	Class Analysis in Hong Kong Who Moves up? Who Moves Down?	Time Out Magazine: “The Men Who Rule Hong Kong.”
Mar 18 th	The power elite	Jake Van Der Kamp and Carine Lai. “Non-positive Interventionism” How functional constituencies distort the free market
Mar 23 rd	How Equal are men and women in Hong Kong? The Facts of Gender Inequality	SCMP: “Hong Kong Follows Global Trend with Women Dominating Higher Education.” 17 Jan, 2014
Mar 25 th	Gender, Socialization, language and the media.	

March 30 th	Gender inequality in the workplace	
April 1 st	Why don't more men stay home to look after children? Understanding Gender inequality in the home.	Groves and Lui: "The Gift of Help" <i>Sociology</i>
April 6 th	<i>The day following Easter Monday. No Class</i>	

April 8th	Second Midterm Examination Attendance online/in-class required	
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April 13 th	Discrimination and sexual orientation	Reading: Travis Kong. Oral Histories of Older Gay Men in Hong Kong. Introduction. p. 1-20
April 15 th	Migrants and ethnic minorities in Hong Kong. The South Asian Experience	Wai-Chi Chee: "Envisioned Belonging: Cultural Differences and Ethnicities in Hong Kong Schooling"
April 22 nd	Migrant domestic workers	

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 "Heunggonyahn" (香港人) since the 1960s. We also examine the more intimate aspects of social life, such as marriage and the family.

Apr 27 th	Who am I? The rise of the "Heunggonyahn" (香港人)	"Heunggonyahn" : On the Past, Present, and the Future of Hong Kong Identity,"
Apr 29 th	Why so many lonely hearts? The search for intimacy	
May 4 th	The Changing Hong Kong Family. Understanding Marriage and Divorce in Hong Kong	Susanne Choi Cross-border marriages.
May 6 th	Development of youth culture	

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. I am much more excited about meeting you in person and enjoying your company in the classroom. I will, however, do my best to make the class as interactive and interesting for you. But I will need your cooperation on a few matters.

Attendance and cameras

The surest way to achieve a high grade on this course is to *attend all the Zoom classes*, turn on your cameras and participate.

The University policy on cameras is as follows:

“Students should turn on the camera in class for class participation and interaction. For courses with participation scores, students with video turned off should expect lower participation scores.”

The Powerpoint slides shown in the class and placed on the course webpage are intended only as outlines of the materials covered. They are not substitutes for class attendance. While the recordings of the Zoom classes will be made available to you, my experience has been that if you do not have the time or inclination to attend the class, it is unlikely that you will have the time or inclination to study the materials outside of class. I will do my part to make the classes worthwhile, going *slowly*, and making frequent summaries to assist those with language difficulties. Fair enough? I also have a lot of interesting interactive activities that students tell me they enjoy.

Your attendance will be recorded on Canvas. To count as attendance, you must

1. Attend the whole class (absence of more than 20 minutes will count as an absence)
2. Turn on your camera during the entire lecture (but not necessary during the Break) so that we know you are there (still photos or emojis do not count).
3. Please do not log in with more than one device. That other device may not have a camera and your attendance may not be recorded.
4. To allow for technical problems and other unforeseen circumstances, I will allow for **up to THREE absences/no-camera shows without penalty**.

Please make sure we can see your full names and do not change your names, so that we can record your attendance accurately. It would be helpful also if you could put your first name (or the name you would like to be called) in brackets, so that I and the other students know how to call you. e.g. Chi Ho CHOY (Stephen).

For the purpose of assessment, we will start recording attendance after the Drop add period.

Participation

It is difficult for me to monitor the chat box, so for participation to count please raise your hand and I will unmute you for you to speak. My teaching assistant will keep a record of the frequency of your participation. Please be patient for me to get to you when your hand is raised because this is quite a large class. To give everyone a chance, I will sometimes call on the first hands up, sometimes call on the last hands up and then sometimes call on those in the middle of the waiting list.

Please note that posting foul language, or comments that have no relevance to the class in the chat room or anywhere else may result in a deduction of points for attendance and participation.

PowerPoints

As noted, the PowerPoints are not substitutes for class attendance. They are mostly outlines of the lecture. I will post them shortly AFTER, and not before each class. I cannot post them before the class because doing so may give away answers or influence the discussions. Also posting them in advance gives me less flexibility to change them during the class. I provide the PowerPoints for your own study use, but they remain my intellectual property. They are watermarked, so please do not post them on course sharing websites.

Examinations

Until face-to-face proctored examinations are permitted, examinations for this course will have to be conducted on Canvas. I expect them to be completed under closed-book conditions without communicating with other students, consulting PowerPoints or the internet. Precautions will be taken to prevent misconduct, including:

- Filming yourself on Zoom so that we can monitor you and your computer.
- Giving a limited time for your answers.
- Shuffling questions and answers.

This is a large class and it is impossible to schedule make-up exams for individual students who miss exams, except where medical documentation is provided by a licensed medical practitioner to say why you could not attend. If you have to miss an exam 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.

Policy on re-grading

I have noticed that increasing numbers of students are expecting higher grades for their work. Students sometimes contact me with a request that their work be re-graded with the hope of obtaining a higher score. You will, however, appreciate that the grading of a large number of assignments and exams requires tremendous resources. We make every effort to grade your work accurately. If you do, however, request that your work/grade is reviewed, please be prepared for the possibility that your grade may move up *or down* (if, the latter case, we find your work more deficient than our original

assessment). If you do ask us to look at your work or your scores again, please make sure that you have a very strong and clear justification for doing so.