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Department of Economics
Lingnan University

Course Title	:	Social Problem Solving and Decision Making in the Modern World
Course Code	:	CLA9010
Recommended Study Year	:	NIL
No. of Credits/Term	:	3
Mode of Tuition	:	Lecture-tutorial
Class contact hours	:	3 hours per week
Category in Core Curriculum	:	Creativity and Innovation
Discipline	:	Abnormal Psychology, Behavioural Economics, Cognitive Psychology, Medical Sociology, Social Psychology
Prerequisite(s)	:	N/A
Co-requisite(s)	:	N/A
Exclusion(s)	:	N/A
Exemption Requirement(s)	:	N/A

Brief Course Description

This course introduces students to social problem solving models to help them find ways to deal with problems effectively in their day-to-day lives. Life is a dynamic process, filled with many flourishing experiences which make life meaningful. However, when some experiences become troublesome or involve problems, people may face uncertainty and be unable to cope effectively. Hence, the study of social problem solving deals innovatively with different types of problems including intrapersonal problems (such as emotional, or personal health), interpersonal problems (such as marital conflict, domestic violence), and impersonal problems (such as insufficient finances). Topics of interest include conflict management, suicide risk, decision-making, and financial investment.

Aims

This course aims to:

1. equip students with basic social problem solving models, abilities and assessment in coping with different types of problems in day-to-day lives;

2. explain and understand individual behaviours in areas such as personal health, suicide risk, couple conflict, and domestic violence.

3. apply concepts in behavioural economics to decision-making and financial investment in the modern world; and

4. appreciate the process of problem solving in adjustment and innovation in the modern world.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. recall, describe and summarise basic concepts, principles, models and assessment in social problem solving;

2. determine and explain the factors affecting conflicts and decision-making; and contextualise individual behavioural differences;

3. apply the concepts and principles learnt from the course and demonstrate critical thinking and logical reasoning in analysing key problems in the modern world, such as personal health, suicide risk, domestic violence, decision-making and financial investment ; and

4. show appreciation for and articulate the value of innovative problem-solving strategies such as problem-solving therapy in family dynamics.

Indicative Content

I. Introduction

  a. Major concepts in social problem solving: Problem solving, problem and solution

  b. Social problem solving: Heuristics and biases affecting decision making

II. Social problem solving applications

  a. Behavioural health

  b. Suicide risk

III. Social problem solving training and couple/marital conflict

  a. Therapy and families

b. Domestic violence

IV. Decision-making

a. Steps in decision-making
b. Irrationality in behavioural economics? An introduction.
c. Decision-making under risk: the prospect theory
d. Risk aversion and expected utility theory
e. Framing effects
f. Endowment effects, loss aversion, and status quo bias
g. Mental accounting
h. Stress of financial investment

Teaching Method

Lectures combined with tutorials involving discussions and oral presentations. Everyday life examples will be used to illustrate the application of social problem solving assessment/abilities/models/principles. Teaching will be supplemented by multi-media resources during lectures and tutorials. Students are encouraged to choose topics relating to problems in day-to-day lives for presentation during tutorials. Class discussions will be facilitated to stimulate students to give critical responses to the assigned readings and current issues and enhance their reflective mind on the subject matter.

Measurement of Learning Outcomes

1. A mid-term test will assess students' comprehension of basic concepts, principles and key theories of social problem solving in coping different types of problems (LOs 1-2).

2. Students' communication skills and critical analysis, as well as their values and orientation towards the topics studied (e.g., couple conflict, financial investment) will be assessed in class presentations and discussions in tutorials. Students are required to present their interpretation and defend their arguments of a chosen topic. Students will apply the assessment/ abilities/models/theories of social problem solving to their everyday life experience. The credibility of the presentation and the ability of the team to answer questions are assessed. In

addition, students are encouraged to think critically and give constructive comments to peers' presentations. (LOs 1-4)

3. A final examination will assess students' overall understanding of the theories and synthesis of knowledge in social problem solving and decision-making in different types of problems in the modern world. (LOs 1-4)

Assessment

Continuous assessment: 50%

Part I tutorial presentation and participation:	10%
Part I Mid-term test:	15%
Part II tutorial presentation:	15%
Part II class and tutorial participation:	10%

Final examination: 50% (25% for Part I and 25% for Part II)

Recommended/Supplementary Readings

Required/Essential Readings

For Part I:

Chang, E.C., D'Zurilla, T.J., and Sanna, L.J. (eds.), Social Problem Solving: Theory Research, and Training, Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2004. [Textbook CDZS]

For Part II:

Ariely, Dan, Predictably irrational: the hidden forces that shape our decisions, New York, NY HarperCollins, 2010.

Thaler, Richard H. and Sunstein, Cass R., Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, and Happiness, New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 2008.

Kahneman, Daniel, Thinking, Fast and Slow, New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux & Penguin Books, 2011.

Supplementary Readings

Bond, M. H. (ed.), The Handbook of Chinese Psychology, Hong Kong; Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Cockerham, W. C., Medical Sociology, 8th Edition, Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 2001.

Cowling, A. G., Stanworth, M. J. K., Bennett, R. D., Curran, I., and Lyons, P., Behavioral Sciences for Managers, 2nd Edition, London: Arnold, 1988.

Frank, Robert, The Economic Naturalist: In Search of Explanations for Everyday Enigmas, Basic Books, 2007.

Gerrig, R. J., and Zimbardo, P. G., Psychology and Life, 18th Edition, Boston: Pearson Education Inc., 2008.

Hanna, S.L., Suggett, R., and Radtke, D., Person to Person, 2nd Edition, New Jersey: Pearson-Prentice Hall, 2008.

Ho, L.S. Psychology and Economics of Happiness, Routledge, 2013

Kahneman, D., and Tversky, A., Choice, Values, and Frames, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Levitt, Steven, and Dubner, Stephen, Freakonomics, Penguin Books, 2005. Myers, D. G., Exploring Psychology, 8th Edition, Worth Publishers, 2011.

Nevid, J. S., Rathus, S. A., and Rubenstein, H. R., Health in the New Millennium, New York: Worth Publishers, 1998.

Taylor, S. E., Peplau, L. A., and Sears, D. O., Social Psychology, 10th Edition, New Jersey, Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 2000.

Weiss, G. L., and Lonnquist, L. E., The Sociology of Health, Healing, and Illness, 2nd Edition, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1997.

Weiten, W., Lloyd, M. A., Dunn, D. S., and Hammer, E. Y., Psychology Applied to Modern Life: Adjustment to the Turn of the Century, 9 th Edition, Wadsworth, 2009.

Important Notes:

(1) Students are expected to spend a total of 9 hours (i.e. 3 hours of class contact and 6 hours of personal study) per week to achieve the course learning outcomes.

(2) Students shall be aware of the University regulations about dishonest practice in course work, tests and examinations, and the possible consequences as stipulated in the Regulations Governing University Examinations. In particular, plagiarism, being a kind of dishonest practice, is “the presentation of another person’s work without proper acknowledgement of the source, including exact phrases, or summarised ideas, or even footnotes/citations, whether protected by copyright or not, as the student’s own work”. Students are required to strictly follow university regulations governing academic integrity

and honesty.

(3) Students are required to submit writing assignment(s) using Turnitin.

(4) To enhance students' understanding of plagiarism, a mini-course "Online Tutorial on Plagiarism Awareness" is available on https://pla.ln.edu.hk/.

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