

Course Title	: Social Problem Solving and Decision Making in the Modern World
Course Code	: CLA9010
Category in Core Curriculum:	Creativity and Innovation
Discipline	: Abnormal Psychology, Behavioural Economics, Cognitive Psychology, Medical Sociology, Social Psychology
Instructors	: Prof. Kelvin Lui (WYL 118) [kelvinlui@ln.edu.hk] Prof. Zhang Tianle (WYL 212) [tianlezhang@ln.edu.hk]

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
- Course outline

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- 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 quiz will assess students' comprehension of basic concepts, principles and key theories of social problem solving in coping different types of problems.
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.

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.

Assessment :

Continuous assessment: 50%

Part I Tutorial presentation and participation:	10%
Part I Quiz:	15%
Part I Final exam:	25%
Part II Tutorial presentation:	20%
Part II Class and tutorial participation:	5%
Part II Final exam:	25%

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.

Recommended/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 Lonquist, 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.

Part I Tentative Schedule

Week	Lecture		Tutorial		Readings (all on Textbook CDZS)
	Date	Topics	Date	Topics	
1		Introduction: social problem solving (SPS) in the real world		Tutorial briefing & Project grouping	Chapter 1
2		Public Holiday		Public Holiday	
3		Factors related to SPS I		Group discussion -presentation topic -project scope	Chapters 1-2
4		Factors related to SPS II		Group discussion - define and formulate the problem - generate alternative strategies - evaluating solutions and decision making	Chapters 1-2
5		Stress, suicide risk, schizophrenia, and SPS		Project consultation	Chapters 3-5
6		Positive psychology and SPS		Project presentations	Chapters 6 - 8
7		SPS for couples and families		Project presentations	Chapters 11 & 12
8		- Quiz- (For Part I)		Project presentations	

Part II Tentative Schedule

Week	Lecture		Tutorial		Readings
	Date	Topics	Date	Topics	
9		Introduction, standard decision-making theory		Tutorial briefing & Project grouping	References and ppt files will be provided in class
10		Framing effect, the prospect theory, Anchoring		Group discussion	References and ppt files will be provided in class
11		Loss aversion and endowment effect		Group discussion	References and ppt files will be provided in class
12		Status quo bias, Sunk cost fallacy		Project consultation	References and ppt files will be provided in class
13		Public Holiday		Project presentations	
14		Free and choice paradox, hyperbolic discounting		Project presentations	References and ppt files will be provided in class
15		Review of Part II			

Grading Criteria (for CLA 9010 part I)

1. Content (40%): Accuracy and Understanding of materials + Scope and Relevance
2. Intellectual efforts (40%): Organization and Originality + Integration/Extension and Critical thinking
3. Communication (20%): Presentation of materials and Connection to the outside world

	Criteria (20% each)	Good (20% – 14%)	Average (13% – 7%)	Poor (6% – 0%)	Scores
Content (40%)	Accuracy and Understanding of materials	Content is highly accurate and complete, with no or few inaccurate pieces of information, with sources appropriated referenced. Demonstration of in-depth understanding of materials, with little or no misconception.	Content is somewhat accurate, but with several inaccurate points/pieces of information; references are either incomplete or systematically inappropriate. Demonstration of general understanding of the content, but with occasional incomplete and/or inaccurate understanding or misconception.	Content is inaccurate in general, with inaccuracies in major points/arguments. Sources are not appropriated referenced. Presence of misconception in key concepts, and/or lack of understanding of the content.	
	Scope and Relevance	Scope is appropriately broad and deep for the purpose of the course. Content is directly related and highly relevant to the course.	Scope is generally appropriate, with certain parts being somewhat too broad/narrow, or too deep/shallow for the purpose of the course. Some irrelevant content is included or mentioned without further discussion or elaboration.	Scope is inappropriate for the purpose of the course, typically being too narrow and/or shallow. Content is irrelevant and/or disorganized to the purpose of the course.	

	Criteria (20% each)	Good (20% – 14%)	Average (13% – 7%)	Poor (6% – 0%)	Scores
Intellectual efforts (40%)	Organization and Originality	<p>Materials and information are well-structured and organized in a logical and coherent way.</p> <p>Presence of novel and original ideas that are appropriate and suitable for the purpose of the course, including creative method(s) of presentation.</p>	<p>Generally organized, with some material misplaced or incoherently organized.</p> <p>Demonstration of effort to produce novel and original ideas, although certain parts may seem inappropriate or unsuitable for the purpose of the course.</p>	<p>Lacks a coherent structure; materials are not logically organized; difficult to comprehend.</p> <p>No intention to provide novel or original ideas or thoughts; lack of creative elements</p>	
	Integration /Extension and Critical thinking	<p>Concepts and topics are well connected and integrated to bring out new views/ideas. Applications and extensions of knowledge and concepts are suitable and insightful.</p> <p>Arguments are sound; evaluation of information is fair and comprehensive; arguments or evaluations are supported by evidence.</p>	<p>Content connects various concepts and topics to bring out new views/ideas; with minor mistakes.</p> <p>Integration/extension/application of concepts and knowledge are generally appropriate, but may not be very convincing and/or may seem far-fetched.</p> <p>Arguments and evaluations are reasonable but with flaws; lack of evidence at times.</p>	<p>Content is disconnected and shows minimal effort to connect or integrate any material. No attempt of integrating, extending, or applying knowledge or concepts to other contexts.</p> <p>Arguments and evaluations are unconvincing, unfair, lacking evidence or deduction to support the views.</p>	
Communication (20%)	Presentation of materials and Connection to the outside world	<p>Presentation is clear, easy to understand from the receiving end, without much need for clarifications.</p> <p>Analogies, metaphors, and/or everyday examples are appropriately used, drawing relationship with the world outside of the course, making communication more effective.</p>	<p>Key ideas are generally clear, with multiple unclear points that require a few clarifications.</p> <p>Analogies, metaphors, and/or examples are used, but not necessarily making communication more effective.</p>	<p>Key ideas are unclear; lacking clarifications even when prompted.</p> <p>Analogies, examples and/or metaphors are absent, inadequate, or inappropriately used, creating confusion; no attempt to relate content to the outside world.</p>	

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Rubrics for tutorial presentation (part II) (20%)

Criteria	Excellent- (17-20 marks)	Good (13-16 marks)	Fair (9-12 marks)	Pass (5-8 marks)	Failure (0-4 marks)
Content (10%)	Shows excellent grasp of the topics; incorporates ample relevant and useful information from reliable external sources.	Shows good grasp of the topics; incorporates relevant information from some external sources.	Shows fair grasp of the topics; incorporates relevant information from some external sources.	Shows acceptable grasp of the topics; includes some relevant information from reliable external sources.	Shows little or no grasp of the topics; includes little or no relevant information from reliable external sources.
Organization (5%)	Presents materials in a logical and appealing way that is easy to understand.	Presents materials in a generally logical way that is understandable.	Presents materials in a fairly logical way that is understandable.	Presents materials in a way that is not easy to understand.	Presents materials in an illogical way that is hard to understand.
Clarity of exposition (5%)	The writing or presentation is excellent with no glaring errors of spelling, usage, or grammar.	The quality of writing or presentation is good with few, though noticeable, errors in usage,	The quality of writing or presentation is fair with few, though noticeable, errors in usage,	There are frequent language errors in usage, spelling, and/or grammar.	There are frequent language errors

Assessment Rubrics class participation attendance (part II) (5%)

Criteria	Excellent (5 marks)	Good (4 marks)	Fair (2-3 marks)	Pass (1 marks)	Failure (0 mark)
1. Class participation attendance	Always attend classes and show active participation	Usually attend classes and show some participation	Sometimes attend classes and show little participation	Seldom attend classes and show no participation	Never attend classes

Important Note

- a. 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.
- b. 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.
- c. Students are required to submit writing assignment(s) using Turnitin.
- d. To enhance students’ understanding of plagiarism, a mini-course “Online Tutorial on Plagiarism Awareness” is available on <http://pla.ln.edu.hk/>.