

LINGNAN UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS

Term 2, AY2022-23

Course Title	:	Contemporary Socio-Economic Issues
Course Code	:	CLC9016
Recommended Study Year	:	Any years
No. of Credits/Term	:	3
Mode of Tuition	:	Lecture-Tutorial or Lecture-Service Learning
Class Contact Hours	:	3 hours per week
Category in Major Prog.	:	Management and Society Cluster
Discipline	:	Economics
Prerequisite(s)	:	N/A
Co-requisite(s)	:	N/A
Exclusion(s)	:	N/A
Exemption Requirement(s)	:	N/A

Brief Course Description

This course provides an introduction to contemporary socio-economic issues using socio-economics as an analytical tool. Socio-economics is an emerging inter-disciplinary field of social sciences that combines economics-based and sociological research methods. From street crime to global climate change, we are surrounded by problems that can be analyzed with socio-economic principles and practices. In this course, we mainly focus on examples that are relevant to our everyday life. Each lecture presents socio-economic concepts within the context of current issues facing our society. With further discussion of socio-economic theories and policy applications, students will gain more insights into the real world.

Aims

This course aims to:

1. Cultivate and deepen students' awareness and understanding of major socio-economic issues around us with particular applications to Hong Kong;
2. Equip the students with basic theories and concepts necessary to assess and solve socio-economic problems and to derive policy implications; and
3. Improve students' analytical skills and their ability to use different tools or apply different empirical methods for tackling a wide range of socio-economic issues and problems.

Learning Outcomes (LOs)

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. describe, explain and clarify the physical and theoretical background of major current socio-economic issues;
2. analyse and solve a relevant issue using a variety of strategies or methodologies with key theories and practices learned ;
3. identify, develop and apply your knowledge of key concepts and methodologies learnt from lectures and tutorials to provide a justifiable and rigorous solution to a potential

socio-economic issue relevant to Hong Kong.

Indicative Contents

1. Introduction to socio-economic reasoning
 - Economics perspective
 - Sociology perspective
 - Socio-economic research methods
2. Environmental issues: Must we foul our own nests?
 - Pollution and resource allocation
 - Social benefits and social costs
 - Socio-economics of climate change
3. Labor issues: Why is Bill Gates so much richer than you are?
 - Human capital
 - Minimum wage
 - Labor market discrimination

Teaching Method

There will be a 2-hour lecture and one 1-hour tutorial per week. In tutorials, students are expected to give presentations and comment on each other's presentations. Students are required to attend all tutorial classes. Students will explore current socio-economic issues from the socio-economic perspective through a research project and presentations during tutorials. Teaching could be supplemented by visual aids such as documentary videos in lectures and tutorials.

This course includes an **optional** Service Learning (SL) component for the continuous assessment. With the consent of the course instructor and the support of staff from the Office of Service Learning (OSL), students can choose to undertake the SL component in lieu of tutorials and the associated news portfolio. OSL staff will train these students to work with a community partner focusing on aspects of poverty (an important consequence of labor problems, studied in Indicative Content #3). The activities will have students engage with the concept of poverty in a direct and concrete manner. This contact will enhance the academic concepts related to poverty covered in lecture (e.g., definitions of poverty along with their advantages and disadvantages; consequences of poverty and their effects, both anticipated and unanticipated; policy attempts to reduce poverty such as CSSA and the minimum wage). The activities will constitute a form of direct research undertaken by students in order to understand more deeply related subject matter presented in lecture. The OSL will provide details of the available SL projects in the first week of class. Note that the precise details of the SL activity may change as the situation “on the ground in Hong Kong” changes along with the needs and

expectations of the partner agency.

Students pursuing the SL option will be excused from the tutorial and its requirements (the News Portfolio) so as to have time to engage in the SL component. Students who engage in Service Learning are encouraged keep a weekly journal of their experiences, writing approximately 1-2 pages for each session of SL activity. The journal entry should describe the activities undertaken; the student's reflections on that week's activities; and the student's thoughts linking the activities with course content. The journal entries are not for assessment but will be useful for assessment items. At the end of the term, each student should synthesize their experiences to write a reflective essay regarding the overall SL experience. Although the reflective essay can draw upon individual journal entries, the essay should not be a concatenation of journal entries. Students can also draw on the journal entries to write a group paper that analyzes, in a more academic and scholarly way, research findings from the SL experience. The professor will provide more precise advice and guidance at the beginning of the term once the particular SL service partner is identified. Students will present their group paper and experiences to their classmates at the end of the term.

Measurement of Learning Outcomes

1. Lecture attendance and quizzes (12.5%)

Each week after the first week, students who are seated in class at the beginning of the lecture will take a quiz based on material from the previous week. The quiz will simultaneously 1) gauge whether or not you are present and 2) test your understanding of recent material. The quiz will be out of 4 points: 2 points for attendance (arriving in class and being seated before the session begins, not walking in the door at exactly 30 minutes past the hour) and 2 points for the course material. If you are late to a lecture, you will be able to take the quiz but will receive 50% of the available marks. If you have a lecture or tutorial just before the lecture or tutorial for this course and are concerned about arriving on time, you can show me your course schedule and allow you to take the quiz without penalty but with no additional time in the event that you are late. The instructor will drop the 2 lowest quizzes before calculating your attendance and quiz grade. I.e., you are allowed to miss or arrive late to 2 lectures without fear of penalty. Quizzes are to be taken independently; you may not share materials during the quiz. If I catch you sharing materials, you and the person(s) with whom you are sharing will receive 0 points for that quiz. I reserve the right to assign other quizzes to be taken on Moodle outside the lecture as preparation for upcoming lectures. I will announce such quizzes in a timely manner.

2. News portfolio (25%) and tutorial presentations (12.5%) OR Service Learning (described above) (37.5%)

Students not pursuing the SL option will maintain a portfolio of news stories about socio-economics concepts. Each week, beginning approximately the 2nd or 3rd week

of class (to be confirmed later), students will submit a news article published within the last year that talks about the socio-economic concept current being discussed in lecture. The article must come from a well-respected international news source. Here are examples (note that this list is not exhaustive):

- a. BBC ([English](#), [Cantonese](#), [Putonghua](#))
- b. The New York Times ([English](#) and [Chinese](#))
- c. [France24](#)/RFI ([English](#) and [Chinese](#))
- d. Australian Broadcast Corporation ([English](#) and [Chinese](#))
- e. Deutsche Welle ([English](#) and [Chinese](#))
- f. [National Public Radio](#)
- g. [Marketplace](#)
- h. [The World](#) (Public Radio International)

Students must summarize the article (no more than 1 page) and write a commentary (no more than 1 page) about how the article informs our understanding of socio-economic concepts studied in class or how our understanding of socio-economic concepts informs our understanding of the article. The article need not be in English. Students will maintain a portfolio of news stories about socio-economics concepts. All assignments will be submitted through Moodle's Turnitin. Make sure that you submit the correct file to Turnitin as you may not be able to remove and re-submit your assignment if you make a mistake. All assignments unless otherwise stated require attaching a coversheet. This coversheet is available on Moodle. If you fail to include this coversheet or if you fill it out incorrectly, you will lose 3 marks on the assignment.

In tutorial, students will volunteer or be called on to present the articles from their News portfolio or their completed answers to an optional homework/sample exam question. Students will be expected to describe the story and explain it using concepts and tools presented in lecture and in the readings. A student who volunteers to present can receive up to 8 points. A student who is called on to present and does so can receive up to 4 points. A student who is present in class will receive 2 points. Students who do not present but make some contribution to the discussion will receive 4 points. If you have a lecture or tutorial just before the lecture or tutorial for this course and are concerned about arriving on time, you can show me your course schedule and I will not penalize you for arriving late. I will drop the 2 lowest tutorial scores before calculating your tutorial grade. I.e., you are allowed to miss or arrive late to 2 tutorials without fear of penalty.

Although SL students are not required to attend tutorials, they are welcome to do so. Students pursuing the SL option will write 2 essays and give a presentation as their assessment for the SL component. One essay will summarize the activities undertaken by the student and will be an individual assignment. The second essay will summarize the survey undertaken by the student's team and will be a group essay.

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3. Final Examination (50%)

Students' knowledge of socio-economic issues and applications of the socio-economic principles to different examples will also be measured by a final exam. The final exam will be based on readings and lectures. A student who misses more than one-third of the term may be disqualified from taking the final exam. I reserve the right to enforce this policy if you miss more than one-third of lectures (that is to say, if you miss 5 or more lectures) and more than one-third of all tutorials or the equivalent (e.g., miss no tutorial but miss 8 lectures). Also, if you have added this class late and miss the first lecture, that missed lecture will count as an absence.

Assessment

	With SL	Without SL
Lecture attendance & quizzes	12.5%	12.5%
News portfolio	--	25%
Tutorial attendance and presentations	--	12.5%
Service Learning individual essay	12.5%	--
Service Learning group essay	12.5%	--
Service Learning presentation to the class	12.5%	--
Final exam	50%	50%

Required/Essential Readings

Ansel Sharp, Charles Register, and Paul Grimes, *Economics of Social Issues*. New York, NY. McGraw Hill/Irwin. 19th Edition, 2009.

Recommended/Supplementary Readings

Charles Wheelan, *Naked Economics: Undressing the Dismal Science*, W. W. Norton & Company, 2002.

Journal of Socio-Economics, Elsevier.

Steven D. Levitt, and Stephen J. Dubner, *Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything*, William Morrow, 2005.

Steven D. Levitt, and Stephen J. Dubner, *SuperFreakonomics: Global Cooling, Patriotic Prostitutes, and Why Suicide Bombers Should Buy Life Insurance*, William Morrow, 2009.

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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/>.
- (5) Academic Regulation 12.8 states “A student whose accumulated leave of absence exceeds one-third of the term should not be assessed and awarded credits for the courses enrolled in the term.”

Rubric for quizzes

Marks earned	4	3	2	1	0
	The response provides ample and correct evidence for the question asked, with no extraneous detail.	The response provides significant amounts of correct or mostly-correct evidence in order to answer the question asked. Some detail is extraneous.	The response provides some evidence, but less than is needed. Some points may be clearly wrong. There is a significant amount of extraneous detail.	The details of the response relate very thinly to the question asked. The response is poorly supported.	The response is fully wrong and unrelated to the question asked.

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Exam, news portfolio, and SL essay rubric

	4 marks	3 marks	2 marks	1 mark	0 marks
Analysis	The response has a clear thesis that is analytically interesting and creative, plausible; the analysis has impressive depth	The response meets most of the criteria listed in the column to the left, but is lacking in one or more of them-or accomplishes all of them at a slightly lower level than excellence	The response has an identifiable thesis, but it may be a bit mundane or uninteresting, and not particularly creative; the analysis is superficial	The response has an identifiable thesis, but it is not analytically interesting, plausible; there is little analysis	The response lacks any clear thesis and little to no analysis.
Documentation	The response provides ample evidence in support of its thesis, with no extraneous detail; evidence is well-connected to the thesis; documentation is clear.	The response provides significant amounts of supporting evidence, well-connected to the thesis; some detail is extraneous; documentation is mostly clear.	The response provides supporting evidence, but less than is needed to make the argument; there is a significant amount of extraneous detail; documentation is incomplete or unclear.	The details of the response relate very thinly to a main argument; the evidence is poorly documented.	The response provides little to no evidence in support of a main argument; most evidence provided is undocumented.
Organization	All writing relates to the thesis in a clear manner; individual paragraphs have a clear focus; there are clear transitions between paragraphs or ideas when appropriate; the order in which the ideas are presented makes sense.	Nearly all writing relates to the thesis in a clear manner; all or most individual paragraphs have a clear focus; there are generally clear transitions between paragraphs or ideas; the order in which the ideas are presented makes sense.	Most writing relates to the thesis in a clear manner, most individual paragraphs have a clear focus, and the order in which the ideas are presented generally makes sense; but there are often unclear transitions between ideas.	Most writing relates to the thesis in a clear manner, most individual paragraphs have a clear focus; it is often unclear why ideas are presented in their particular order, and there are often unclear transitions between ideas.	The response is extremely disorganized to the point that the order in which ideas are presented appears virtually random.
Language skills	The writing displays excellent English language skills, with few mistakes, and is easily understandable	The writing contains several fairly minor errors, but the writing is clear and understandable	The writing contains several minor errors and/or a few major ones; the writing is mostly clear but may be difficult to understand in places.	The writing contains numerous writing errors that are serious enough that the paper is very difficult to understand	The writing contains an unacceptably large number of writing errors, major or minor, to the point of making it difficult or impossible to understand.

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Presentation rubric

	4 marks	3 marks	2 marks	1 mark	0 marks
Analysis and topic	Presentation has a clear thesis that is analytically interesting and creative, plausible; the analysis has impressive depth	Presentation meets most of the criteria listed in the column to the left, but is lacking in one or more of them-or accomplishes all of them at a slightly lower level than excellence	Presentation has an identifiable thesis, but it may be a bit mundane or uninteresting, and not particularly creative; the analysis is superficial	Presentation has an identifiable thesis, but it is not analytically interesting, plausible; there is little analysis	Presentation lacks any clear thesis and little to no analysis
Documentation	Presentation provides ample evidence in support of its thesis, with no extraneous detail; evidence is well-connected to the thesis; documentation is clear	Presentation provides significant amounts of supporting evidence, well-connected to the thesis; some detail is extraneous; documentation is mostly clear	Presentation provides supporting evidence, but less than is needed to make the argument; there is a significant amount of extraneous detail; documentation is incomplete or unclear	The details of the presentation relate very thinly to a main argument; the evidence is poorly documented	Presentation provides little to no evidence in support of a main argument; most evidence provided is undocumented
Organization	All sections relate to the thesis in a clear manner; individual sections have a clear focus; there are clear transitions between sections or ideas; the order in which the ideas are presented makes sense	Nearly all sections relate to the thesis in a clear manner; all or most individual sections have a clear focus; there are generally clear transitions between sections or ideas; the order in which the ideas are presented makes sense	Most sections relate to the thesis in a clear manner, most individual sections have a clear focus, and the order in which the ideas are presented generally makes sense; but there are often unclear transitions between ideas	Most sections relate to the thesis in a clear manner, most individual sections have a clear focus; it is often unclear why ideas are presented in their particular order, and there are often unclear transitions between ideas	The presentation is extremely disorganized to the point that the order in which ideas are presented appears virtually random
Language skills	Presentation displays excellent English language skills, with few mistakes, and is easily understandable	Presentation contains several fairly minor errors, but the language is clear and understandable	Presentation contains several minor errors and/or a few major ones; the language is mostly clear but may be difficult to understand in places.	Presentation contains numerous language errors that are serious enough that the presentation is very difficult to understand	Presentation contains an unacceptably large number of language errors, major or minor, to the point of making it difficult or impossible to understand

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Examples of language skills are contained in the following rubric:

Excellent	<p>A few (generally no more than 3, though this number is not a sharp cut-off) instances of awkward turns of phrase such as:</p> <p>“These cities use their wastes by incineration in modern waste treatment facilities and landfilling the resultant ash.”</p> <p>“The people have a rigid thought”</p> <p>“China is facing criticism from other countries on its air pollution problem” where “on” should be replaced by “over”</p> <p>“These kinds of measures usually involve a huge cost on it.”</p> <p>“As a result, the world is having negative views on China’s environment.”</p> <p>Instead of “As a result, the world has negative views on China’s environment.”</p> <p>“In China, it is facing water crisis.”</p> <p>“The consequences cannot be turned back,” instead of “The consequences cannot be undone.”</p>
Acceptable	<p>Several awkward turns of phrase or a few (generally no-more than 3, though this number is not a sharp cut-off) instances of surface errors examples of which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● The misuse of articles (“Some terrible companies have destroyed a beautiful scenery in Indonesia” – no “a” before “beautiful”; “A obvious hazard” - it should be “An obvious hazard”)● Mistaken use of homophones or near-homophones (“their” versus “there” or “Tourist visiting Hong Kong may think that those light declarations is beautiful” when “decorations” is clearly the intended word)● Misuse of the form of a word (“Some of the manufactures install filters in their factories” instead of “Some of the manufacturers install filters in their factories” or “Greenpeace has hold an event called “Protect Paradise” instead of “Greenpeace has held an event called “Protect Paradise” or “Shortsighted fishermen urged the reopen of closed areas” instead of “reopening” or “A reduce of annual budget by \$100 million is targeted to the Environment Department” instead of “reduction”)● Run-on sentences or sentence-like structures (“Though in her opinion, China’s active involvement in improving global warming is only for the nation’s interest, not for the ideal goal of saving the planet, the measures that China is taking indeed effective” or “In my opinion, I

	<p>think that Greenpeace has done a great job on protecting the environment and the tigers habitats, although not all companies have commit to protect the forests, it is still better than doing nothing.”)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Errors of capitalization (“Here, the government promotes User-pays rubbish scheme...”) ● Mixing different tenses of time (“China successfully reduces the cost of solar panels by 80%, which lead to a more popular use of renewable energy” – should be “has lead” or “reduced” or “In 1980’s, a fishery council was delegated the rights to manage the industry in New England but most decision makings are biased because they were in favour of short term revenue maximization.”) ● Disagreement between the singularity/plurality of the subject and the singularity/plurality of the verb (“Every single Hong Kong people produce” or “For instances, there are one landfill in Tseung Kwan O...”) ● Incorrect spacing (“But ,it is too expensive as it needs 14.9 billion. Therefore,taxpayers bear a huge pressure.Then,people suggest to reduce waste at source like rubbish tax.”) ● General misuse of punctuation (“Pollution, has been one of the dilemmas among the environmental issues nowadays.” – there should be no comma after the word “pollution”) ● Omitting verbs (“They can’t adapt to an environment that different from the original” instead of “They can’t adapt in the environment that is different from the original”)
Poor	Several instances of surface errors.

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Tentative Schedule

18-Jan-23	Intro
25-Jan-23	No class
1-Feb-23	Capitalism and democracy: Affluence, inequality, and the environment
8-Feb-23	Capitalism and democracy: Affluence, inequality, and the environment
15-Feb-23	Concepts of poverty
22-Feb-23	Social interactions and economic outcomes
1-Mar-23	Social interactions and economic outcomes
8-Mar-23	Public policy for fairness and efficiency
15-Mar-23	Public policy for fairness and efficiency
22-Mar-23	Minimum wage
29-Mar-23	Market successes and failures
5-Apr-23	No class
12-Apr-23	Market successes and failures
19-Apr-23	Governments and markets in a democratic society