

**City University of Hong Kong**

**Information on a Course  
offered by Department of Applied Social Sciences  
with effect from Semester A in 2012/2013**

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**Part I**

Course Title:	Applying Psychology to Contemporary Issues
Course Code:	SS5755
Course Duration:	One semester
No. of Credit Units:	3
Level:	P5
Medium of Instruction:	English
Medium of Assessment:	English
Prerequisites:	SS2023 Basic Psychology or its equivalent
Precursors:	Nil
Equivalent Courses:	Nil
Exclusive Courses:	Nil

**Part II**

**Course Aims:**

This course aims at sensitizing students to how human problems are determined by the environments in which they function as well as by their own personal attributes. By doing so, it is hoped that students will have a better understanding of psychology's role in responding to social problems and how psychology can contribute toward social progress.

## Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

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

No.	CILOs	Weighting
1.	Analyze the extent to which human sufferings are a product of individual deficiency as well as social malady;	60%
2.	Compare and contrast the roles played by psychologists when a problem is defined as existing within the individual or within a broader social context; and	10%
3.	Compare and contrast how psychology has responded to social issues or human suffering by working to change individuals versus by working to change their environments.	30%

## Teaching and learning Activities (TLAs)

*(Indicative of likely activities and tasks designed to facilitate students' achievement of the CILOs. Final details will be provided to students in their first week of attendance in this course)*

CILO No.	TLA1	TLA2	Hours / week (if applicable)
CILO 1	√	√	
CILO 2	√		
CILO 3	√	√	

Describe the TLAs:

### TLA 1: Lectures

The lectures will explain common psychological approaches and techniques for dealing with human problems and will discuss how such approaches were developed within mainstream psychology. Such approaches will be contrasted with other approaches used or proposed by psychologists to deal with the social or environmental basis of human problems. Case examples will be used to illustrate both approaches, and to facilitate an in-depth analysis of how both approaches can be applied to ameliorate human problems. Small group discussions will also be used in lectures to facilitate such an analysis.

### TLA 2: Audiovisual Aids

Whereas lectures will be primarily a didactic form of instruction, audiovisual aids will be used to illustrate both the complexity of the causes of human problems, and how different psychological approaches are applied to tackle them. These audiovisual aids will be important supplements to the lectures in order to show how abstract ideas are realized in actual life.

## Assessment Tasks/Activities

*(Indicative of likely activities and tasks designed to assess how well the students achieve the CILOs. Final details will be provided to students in their first week of attendance in this course)*

CILO No	Type of assessment tasks/activities	Weighting	Remarks
CILO 1	AT1: Term paper 1	10%	
CILO 1	AT2: Term paper 2	50%	
CILO 2, 3	AT3: Quiz	40%	

Further description of ATs:

AT 1: Term Paper 1 (10%)

Students will be required to do a collective literature search in order to show how psychology explains a certain human problem. The individual writing will be around 500 words.

AT 2: Term Paper 2 (50%)

Students will be required to do a thorough literature search individually in order to show how a specific human problem is determined by both environmental and personal factors. 2,500 words.

AT 3: Quiz (40%)

In the 3-hour quiz, students will be given multiple choice questions as well as short and essay questions on materials covered in the readings and in the lectures that pertain to CILOs 2 and 3.

**Grading of Student Achievement:**

Refer to Grading of Courses in the Academic Regulations for Taught Postgraduate Degrees.

<b>Letter Grade</b>	<b>Grading criteria in relation to CILOs</b>
A+ A A-	Strong evidence of original thinking; good organization, capacity to analyse and synthesize; superior grasp of subject matter; evidence of extensive knowledge base.
B+ B B-	Evidence of grasp of subject, some evidence of critical capacity and analytic ability; reasonable understanding of issues; evidence of familiarity with literature.
C+ C C-	Student who is profiting from the university experience; understanding of the subject; ability to develop solutions to simple problems in the material.
D	Sufficient familiarity with the subject matter to enable the student to progress without repeating the course.
F	Little evidence of familiarity with the subject matter; weakness in critical and analytic skills; limited, or irrelevant use of literature.

**Part III**

**1. Keyword Syllabus:**

Historical development of psychological services; orientations of psychological interventions; concept of mental illness and psychodiagnosis; overview of clinical assessment practices; overview of psychotherapy systems; social ecology; resilience; psychological programs to enhance individual development through modifying the environment; mutual assistance groups.

**2. Recommended Reading:  
Text(s)**

## Essential Readings

There is no textbook for this course. Readings will be selected from books and journals for each topic.

## Supplementary Readings

- Albee, G. W., & Gullotta, T. P. (1997). *Primary prevention works*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1977). Toward an experimental ecology of human development. *American psychologist*, 32, 513-531.
- Cowen, E. L., Hightower, A. D., Pedro-Carroll, J., Work, W. C., Wyman, P. A., & Haffey, W. G. (1996). *School-based prevention for children at risk: The primary mental health project*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Fairweather, G. W., & Fergus, E. O. (1993). *Empowering the mentally ill*. Austin, TX: Fairweather Pub.
- Kristjánsson, K. (2012). Positive psychology and positive education: Old wine in new bottles? *Educational Psychologist*, 47(2), 86-105.
- Levine, M., & Levine, A. (1992). *Helping children: A social history*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Levine, M., Perkins, D. D., & Perkins, D. V. (2005). *Principles of community psychology: Perspectives and applications* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New York: Oxford Univ. Press.
- Leone, P. E. (1990). *Understanding troubled and troubling youth*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Lorion, R. P. et al. (Eds.). (1996). *Psychology and public policy: Balancing public service and professional need*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Mandinach, E. B. (2012). A perfect time for data use: Using data-driven decision making to inform practice. *Educational Psychologist*, 47(2), 71-85.
- Millon, T. (2004). *Masters of the mind: Exploring the story of mental illness from ancient times to the new millennium*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Sarason, S. B. (1974). *The psychological sense of community: Prospects for a community psychology*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Sarason, S. B. (1985). *Caring and compassion in clinical practice: Issues in the selection, training, and behaviour of helping professionals*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Shinn, M., & Toohey, S. M. (2003). Community contexts of human welfare. *Annual review of psychology*, 54, 427-459.

Woodhead, M. (1988). When psychology informs public policy. *American psychologist*, 43, 443-454.