

COMMONCORE



Exploring Issues of Profound Significance to Humankind



The Common Core Curriculum is a new requirement for undergraduate students at HKU, one of the world's leading universities*. It is designed to broaden your horizons beyond your chosen discipline and give you the opportunity to explore issues of profound significance to humankind in the 21st century.

For more information on HKU's Common Core Curriculum, please visit <http://commoncore.hku.hk>

* HKU is ranked 21st in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2010-2011



COMMONCORE WHAT IS IT?

What will you study?

The Common Core Curriculum aims to help you see the interconnectedness and interdependent nature of human existence through exploring the following common human experiences:

- The aesthetic (or symbolic) expressions of ideas and emotions
- The relationship between individuals and communities, and the role of the former in the latter
- The interaction amongst communities on various scales
- The relationships and interdependencies between human beings, science, technology and nature
- The beliefs and values that are essential to human bonding and to mediating tensions within and between groups
- The relationship between our past, present and future

What are the goals?

- To enable students to develop a broader perspective and a critical understanding of the complexities and the interconnectedness of the issues that they are confronted with in their everyday lives
- To cultivate students' appreciation of their own culture and other cultures, and the inter-relatedness among cultures
- To enable students to see themselves as members of global as well as local communities and to play an active role as responsible individuals and citizens in these communities
- To enable students to develop the key intellectual skills that will be further enhanced in their disciplinary studies

How is it structured?

The Common Core Curriculum is divided into four Areas of Inquiry to enable you to explore a range of common human experiences. Each area offers numerous courses. The Areas of Inquiry are:

- Scientific and Technological Literacy
- Humanities
- Global Issues
- China: Culture, State and Society



What is required?

Form 7 students entering the 3-Year Curriculum will take two Common Core courses from two different Areas of Inquiry. SS6 students entering the 4-Year Curriculum from September 2012 onwards will take six Common Core courses, at least one and at most two from each Area of Inquiry. Each Common Core course carries six credits and the Common Core requirements account for 15% of the new 4-Year Curriculum to be implemented in September 2012.

What will you learn?

While the Common Core Curriculum as a whole will engage you in an exploration of issues of profound significance in relation to a number of fundamental human experiences, the detail of what you will learn will vary from course to course. Hence, each course has its own set of learning outcomes. These learning outcomes are statements that specify precisely what you should be able to do at the end of a course, usually expressed as knowledge, skills, or attitudes.

How will you learn?

Student workload hours for a 6-credit course amount to 120-180 hours. Common Core courses normally consist of 36 contact hours, with a 2-hour lecture and a 1-hour tutorial per week. Within these sessions, you may have first-hand encounters with your subjects of study, be asked to solve problems, or be asked to decide on issues you wish to investigate. The remainder of the hours will be made up through engaging in a number of other relevant learning activities including reading, self-study, fieldwork, visits, group projects, research, and exam preparation.

Why are tutorials important?

Tutorials are an essential and compulsory element of study in the Common Core Curriculum. Tutorials will normally be conducted weekly in groups of no more than 12 students. The purpose of tutorials is to provide a context for you to clarify and deepen your understanding of ideas and issues arising from the course through dialogue with others in an interactive setting. Additionally, tutorials offer an environment for you to improve your communication skills and develop your confidence.

How will you be assessed?

Common Core courses utilize diverse modes of assessment. As well as the more traditional exams, tests and quizzes, you are likely to be required to demonstrate your knowledge and skills in a variety of other ways, for example, by keeping a journal to reflect on lectures and readings, making a movie, engaging in fieldwork, undertaking research, constructing a website or doing group projects and presentations.



Understanding Climate Change

Climate change is consistently in the news, but do you have the scientific literacy needed to understand climate change and to consider existing and proposed solutions? In this course, students will be required to critically examine different media on the subject including critiques of two films (“An Inconvenient Truth” and “The Great Global Warming Swindle”) that present opposite sides of the climate change argument.



Dr N.F. Goodkin Emami, Faculty of Science

“We provide students with hands on experience in studying climate - analyzing data from ice cores, interpreting rock records around Hong Kong. Then, we give them the opportunity to critique climate in the media. We hope these experiences make science more accessible to students as their future interests develop!”

A Student’s Experience

“Movie sessions are interesting and thought-provoking. I also like the field trip very much. It opens our eyes a lot.”



87 COMMON CORE courses in 2011 and over 150 by 2012

Please check <http://commoncore.hku.hk> for a complete list of courses



Catastrophes, Cultures, and the Angry Earth

What makes a natural phenomenon a natural disaster? How have different societies across time interpreted disasters? How and why have people portrayed disasters through art, literature, and the media? This course explores how natural disasters have influenced cultures and societies across time and geography. It will encourage students to reflect upon the interconnections between nature, society, and the built environment in new and exciting ways.

Dr. J. Charles Schencking, Faculty of Arts

“Two days before the 11 March 2011 earthquake and tsunami devastated Japan, I told my students: “The next big Japanese earthquake could be occurring right now, could strike next year, or maybe in twenty years time. If you travel to a disaster prone region, be prepared.” This course not only brings the history of past natural disasters dramatically alive, but it also prepares us to deal with future calamities that will wreck havoc on our planet.”

A Student’s Experience

“This course is intriguing, fun and stimulating. You don’t have to take a lot of notes and you can actually enjoy it.”



Cybersocieties: Understanding Technology as Global Change

The dual revolutions of technology and globalization are shaping each other and directing the way we live, learn, work and socialize. Within this context, this course will ask: What kind of global society are we heading toward? Who should participate in deciding the future? Students will be inspired to develop a position as informed global citizens and articulate the impact of technology on all human endeavors.



Dr. Michael Adorjan, Faculty of Social Sciences

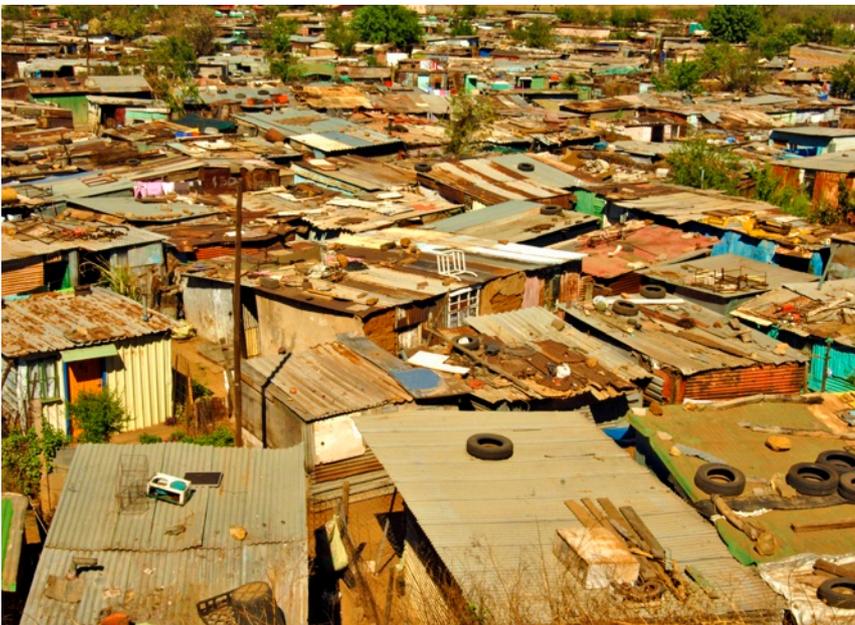
“Students are home in cyberspace. They access the internet every day but often without conscious reflection regarding how they engage with it. This course aims to have students become active and critical internet users. Cutting edge scholarship on cyberspace is connected to assignments including a group-based YouTube video contest, as well as ongoing engagement in the virtual reality platform Second Life.”

A Student's Experience

“The YouTube videos really draw our attention. They show different perspectives on issues like stigma & secrets, context collapse, etc.”



“All things in the world are linked together, in one way or another. Not a single thing comes into being without some relationship to something else.” - Keiji Nishitani



Poverty, Development, and the Next Generation: Challenges for a Global World

Poverty is a global problem and increasingly affects people in Hong Kong. This course will investigate poverty and development work through case studies from Hong Kong, Mainland China, and other countries. Students will gain in-depth understanding and skills to analyze local and global responses to poverty, such as the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals, the UN Charter on Human Rights, and the Convention on Worst Forms of Child Labor.

Dr Bjorn Nordtveit, Faculty of Education

“Instead of depicting a bleak picture of the future, we try to show students that we can change the world! They evaluate problems we face, including ever-growing mass consumerism, increasing inequality, global pandemics, resource depletion, and environmental deterioration. These problems show the need to reinvent the planet as a more equal and caring place.”

A Student's Experience

“The best thing about this course is the interaction between the teacher and us. We discuss a wide range of current real-life issues in an academic way.”



China's Modernization in the East Asian Context

Is modernization just about economic development and the construction of a state structure? Or should it encompass broader advances in ideology and the embracement of universal values and norms like the protection of Human Rights? This course enables students to understand and appreciate China's quest for modernity since the 19th century, contextualized against the development of her neighbours in East Asia.



Dr Victor Teo, Faculty of Arts

"By inviting students to scrutinize the dynamics and processes involved in China's quest for modernity, we hope they can think about the implications modernization brings at different levels and appreciate the normative issues involved. We hope students will be able to appreciate the multifaceted dimensions of development and acquire a better understanding of contemporary China and East Asian affairs."

A Student's Experience

"We are encouraged to think, analyze, and develop an overall understanding of the issues with a holistic point of view."



"The one real goal of education is to leave a person asking questions." - Max Beerbohm



Love, Marriage and Sex in Modern China

This course begins from issues that are personally relevant to young people – mate choice, love, marriage, sex and family – with a view to helping students think about the historical and cultural roots of values concerning love, sexuality, marriage, and family life in China. Case studies and documentary films will be used to enable students to understand the diverse characteristics of "Chinese" ways of life.

Dr. Petula Ho, Faculty of Social Sciences

"Students are encouraged to reach out, talk to people, learn from their experiences and make films on cross-border intimacies. We have a screening event which is a dialogue between the teacher, the students and the community about what they have found through their observations, interviews and analyses. The students come to be knowledge producers rather than passive learners."

A Student's Experience

"It is hands down the best course I've taken. It's very well analyzed and organized. It really puts warmth into my heart how the teacher tries to engage us."



The Students' Experiences

Over 2,000 students have taken various Common Core courses since September 2010



“Common Core courses provide a new environment for us to learn because it is rare to have students from different disciplines discussing issues together. I’ve become more accepting of different perspectives.”

“Discussions during our tutorials are stimulating. As a result of these discussions, I am able to think diversely, taking into consideration other people’s views.”



The Science of Crime Investigation

“This course makes me think about something I’ve never thought about before. It has changed my perspective towards different groups of people in society – especially after our visit to a refugee shelter.”



Social Divisions in Contemporary Societies

“I like the interdisciplinary approach, incorporating different examples of Hong Kong culture to illustrate an encompassing point.”



Hong Kong Culture in the Context of Globalization

“This course has changed the way I look at things. It helps me look far beyond the surface with a curious mind.”



Our Living Environment

“I am amazed to learn the connection between past and present events.”



Catastrophes, Cultures, and the Angry Earth

“It helps me develop critical thinking skills and raises my awareness of a lot of issues that wouldn’t have caught my attention had I not taken the course.”



Body, Beauty and Fashion

“This course integrates many aspects of things in real life. It shows the inter-relationship of issues and is very inspiring.”



Local Cultures and Global Markets

“There are lots of videos used in class to stimulate thoughts, and we are learning in a fun way.”



Origin and Evolution of Life

“I think this course is very close to us at heart. We feel connected to the issues and we are encouraged to raise questions about the issues.”



Sexuality and Gender: Diversity and Society

“Interactive. Interesting. It makes me think deeply about issues relating to development.”



Poverty, Development, and the Next Generation: Challenges for a Global World

“The assessment method of this course is very interesting – video production instead of exams!”



Love, Marriage and Sex in Modern China



AoI // Scientific and Technological Literacy



Rationale

Science and technology have brought about profound changes in our society but not all of these changes have brought benefits to us. While through technological advancements we may enjoy greater economic prosperity and better living conditions, we may also face damages and threats such as environmental degradation and ecological imbalance. Thus, because of the high stakes involved, we all need to be literate in science and technology.

Aim

The Scientific and Technological Literacy Area of Inquiry will enable students to engage critically with knowledge and discourse on science and technology and to respond actively and appropriately to issues surrounding scientific and technological advancements.

Themes

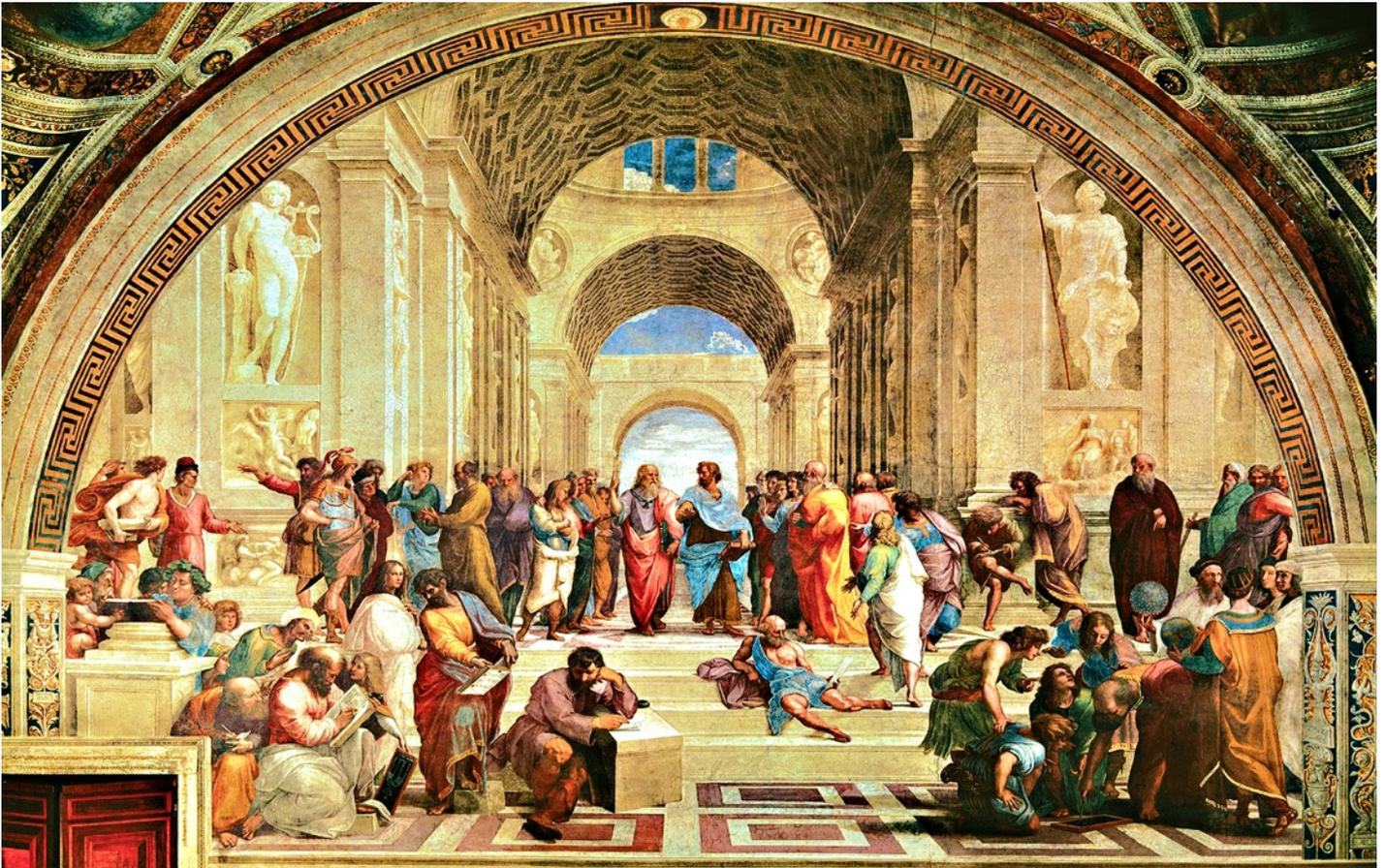
Under this AoI, the following key themes will be addressed:

- The Nature and Methods of Science
- Science, Technology and Society
- Science, Technology and Global Issues
- Science and Technology in Everyday Life
- Frontiers of Science and Technology





COMMONCORE



AoI // Humanities



Rationale

The humanities engage with the fundamental questions of human existence. They unravel how humans make sense of the world through critical, analytical and interpretive methods of inquiry. They also help us understand how humans are related to each other and the moral responsibility of humans to their fellow humans and the community to which they belong.

Aim

The Humanities Area of Inquiry will enable students to appreciate how intellectual, moral, aesthetic and spiritual aspects of human existence have been explored from critical, analytical and interpretive perspectives. Students should be able to think about the meaning of our lives, and to seek wisdom and virtue, as embodied in the HKU motto: *Sapientia et Virtus*.

Themes

Education in the humanities is traditionally organized under the following fields of study: language, history, literature, visual and performing arts, and philosophy. However, this AoI will comprise five interdisciplinary themes that cross these boundaries, all of which address the intellectual, moral, aesthetic and spiritual aspects of human existence:

- The Creative Arts
- Historical Awareness: Past and Present
- Language, Communication and Society
- Mind-Body-Spirit
- Ethics and Society





Girl Power in a Man's World



Girl Power has emerged as the subject of much popular, policy and scholarly interest in the new millennium. The relevance of girls' empowerment extends beyond the borders of developed countries. This course examines different notions about girlhood, and the cultural meaning and consequences of girl power in both developed and developing societies.

Professor Nirmala Rao, Faculty of Education

"We want students to develop a critical understanding of "girl power" as it is experienced at home, school and the workplace in different cultural settings. We also want students to decipher the meanings of girl power in relation to what the legendary soul singer, James Brown, describes as "It's a Man's World." That is, how do new opportunities for girls emerge and play out? How do they affect and shape their male counterparts' experiences?"

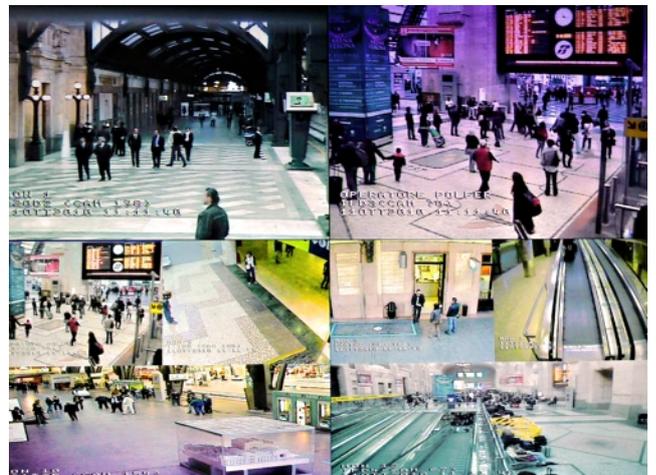


Battles for Bodies: The Birth of Surveillance Society

What is the state's final frontier? How and why have governments around the world been vested with the authority to manage the most intimate aspects of our existence: from the food we eat to our sexual behaviour? Engaging with these questions from an historical perspective provides a critical lens for re-evaluating our own relationship to society and the state.

Dr Robert Peckham, Faculty of Arts

"Government agencies, commercial interests, and the media increasingly monitor our behaviour in the name of health. This course draws on a range of material, including feature films and documentaries, to explore the social, economic and political forces that shape how we act, feel and think about our bodies. Students develop a new critical perspective on the world, with the confidence to ask: how free are we?"





AoI // Global Issues



Rationale

Today we live in a world with an unprecedented level of interdependence. Our lives are profoundly affected by decisions and events that occur in places far away from us. How are we to comprehend the complex nature of globalization that shapes our personal, social, cultural, economic, and political lives? What duties and rights do people of this global village have towards each other? What are the opportunities and challenges that confront the contemporary world? These questions merit careful thinking by every HKU student.

Aim

The Global Issues Area of Inquiry will enable students to develop their capabilities in intercultural understanding and global citizenship. Students should be able to think globally and live as informed and active members of a global community.

Themes

An understanding of globalization can be approached from various perspectives, including the impact of globalization on our daily lives, the processes of globalization and the resulting interdependencies and inequalities at local, national, international levels, the challenges of global governance in relation to globalization, and the duties and rights of global citizens. The following themes elaborate on these perspectives and serve as a framework for organizing courses:

- Global Issues, Local Lives
- Challenges of Global Governance
- Globalization and Economic Development
- Global Ethics and Citizenship



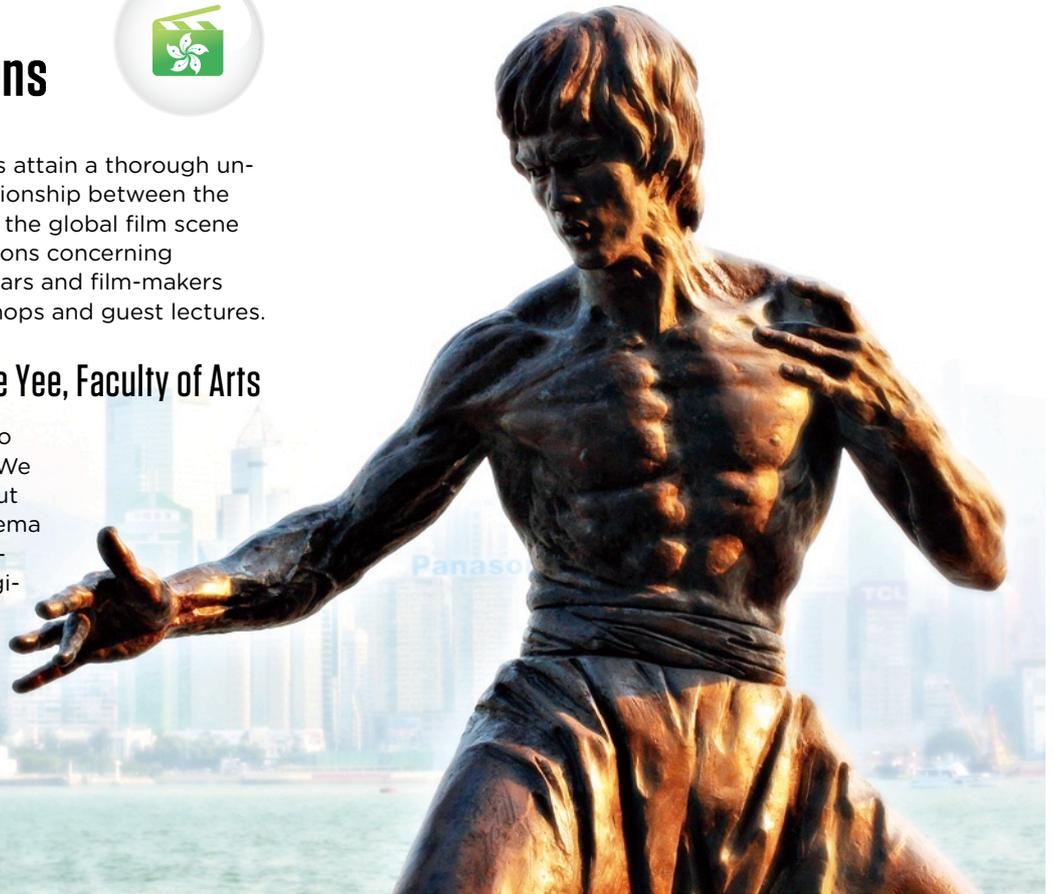
Hong Kong Cinema through a Global Lens



This course aims to help students attain a thorough understanding of the two-way relationship between the local, popular entertainment and the global film scene by investigating the major questions concerning globalizations. Film critics, scholars and film-makers will be invited to conduct workshops and guest lectures.

Dr Gina Marchetti & Dr Winnie Yee, Faculty of Arts

"We want our students to learn to read culture by analyzing films. We want them to think critically about the way in which Hong Kong cinema transforms in a context of global-local interdependency, technological advancement and shifting tastes."



Youth in a Global World

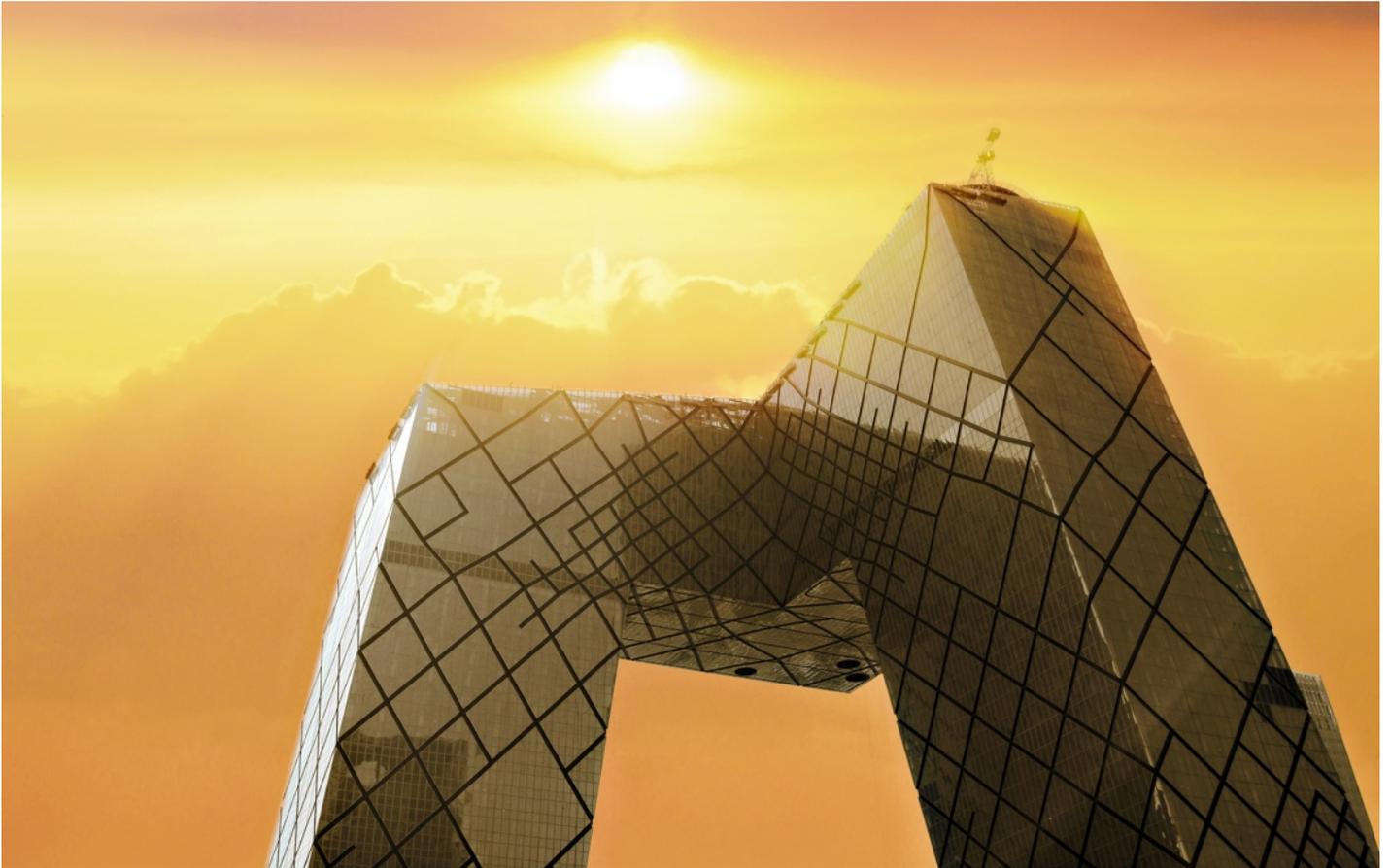


This course facilitates students as 'young people' to be more aware of the interconnectedness of the world and to critically assess how globalization influences different aspects of young people's daily lives. Various social issues such as consumerism, transnationalism, cosmopolitanism and digitalism that confront young people in their everyday life will be examined in a systematic manner.

Dr Eric Chui, Faculty of Social Sciences

"Young people participate in globalization every day of their lives, often unconsciously, as consumers of products, services, media, information and ideas. We want to encourage our students to critically examine their own role as global citizens, in order to become active agents of change. With a strong theoretical base and field visits, the course inspires students to think and act globally and locally."





AoI // China: Culture, State and Society



Rationale

China is a rich, enduring, yet progressing civilization that instills awe or admiration across the globe. Studying Chinese civilization, in terms of both grandeur as well as setbacks, enables us to understand the historical processes that have shaped the conditions of the Chinese across time and space. Reflecting upon China's past, interpreting her present, and exploring the prospects of her progress and future pose a series of intellectual puzzles that merit the attention and thought of every student at HKU.

Aim

The aim of the China: Culture, State and Society Area of Inquiry is to enhance the interest and intellectual ability of students in understanding China from past to present and from different disciplinary perspectives and to engage them in critical inquiries of the issues and problems faced by China.

Themes

The following key themes will be addressed in the AoI:

- Chinese Culture: Thoughts, Values and Ways of Life
- Chinese Civilization: State, Society, and Economy
- China's Changing Environment
- China's Quest for Modernization
- The Rise of China in the 21st Century: Challenges and Prospects



Chinese House and Garden: Architecture, Landscape, and Material Culture



By looking into the physical significance of Chinese architecture, cities and landscapes, this course introduces theories and principles of Chinese houses and gardens. The course particularly addresses how the culture profile was manifested in the architecture and urban spaces during the late Ming – an era of unique aesthetic orientation cultivated from a distinct stage of social and economic development in Chinese history.

Mr Weijen Wang, Faculty of Architecture

“Through analyzing forms and spaces, we want students to understand how geography, ideology and society shape the traditional architecture and landscape in China. We also want them to think what makes the quality of places, and how regional culture can still take part in the making of our contemporary city and environment.”



Buddhism and Chinese Culture



For over two thousand years, Buddhism has interacted with all levels of Chinese culture such as literature, philosophy, moral and behavioral norms, arts and architecture, and religions of all classes. The aim of this course is to enhance students' intellectual understanding of Chinese culture and Chinese people's way of life and belief. Students will be engaged in historical analysis and theoretical enquires into the key aspects of China's long interaction and exchange with Buddhism.

Ven. Dr Guang Xing, Faculty of Arts

“I want students to reflect critically on how much an open minded attitude can influence our way of life and society through the examination of the interactions between Buddhism and Chinese Culture in the last two thousand years. Students will learn in what ways Buddhism has contributed to Chinese culture.”

