SCHOOL OF MODERN LANGUAGES AND CULTURES

HONG KONG STUDIES

Hong Kong Studies is an interdisciplinary programme aimed at giving students a broad-based education on Hong Kong—its society, culture, creative industries, economy, politics, history and environment. The programme combines the perspectives and curricular strengths of a variety of disciplines, including literature, art history, history, sociology, politics, economics, journalism and communications.

The goal for Hong Kong Studies is to adopt a “problem-based” approach where students engage with core issues in Hong Kong’s evolution such as the interaction between citizens/subjects and rulers (imperial, colonial, communist); the importance of symbols in creating Hong Kong identity within colonial and communist eras; Hong Kong’s global influence as a cultural and financial hub; the role of Chinese tradition in creating new meanings for modern Hong Kong; the role of Hong Kong as a transition zone for ideas, capital and people. Graduates will be prepared to enter a wide range of careers in the public and private sectors in which a comprehensive and sophisticated understanding of Hong Kong is essential to success.

A major in Hong Kong Studies consists of a prerequisite course HKGS1001, plus 12 introductory credits from any other Arts programme, and 54 credits taken in the subsequent years. These 54 credits consist of 18 credits of core courses (two courses from HKGS2001, HKGS2002 and HKGS2011, plus HKGS3001) and a further 36 credits of elective courses listed below. HKGS3001 is the capstone course designed to allow students to advance their analytical thinking by permitting the application of disciplinary knowledge and principle.

A minor in Hong Kong Studies consists of the 6-credit prerequisite course (HKGS1001), 12 credits of core courses (two courses from HKGS2001, HKGS2002 and HKGS2011) and a further 18 credits of elective courses as listed below totaling 36 credits.

Major (72 credits)

A major in Hong Kong Studies consists of 72 credits with the following components:

- **Prerequisite course (6 credits):**
  HKGS1001. Hong Kong’s long twentieth century (6 credits)
  *This course will be offered to undergraduates in Year 1 or 2 only.*

- **Other Arts Faculty introductory courses to be taken from any Arts programmes (12 credits).**

- **Core courses (12 credits):**
  Select two courses from the list below.
  HKGS2001. Speaking of Hong Kong: Global voices (6 credits)
  HKGS2002. Hong Kong identities in local, national and global contexts (6 credits)
  HKGS2011. Hong Kong: Whose city is it? (6 credits)

- **Interdisciplinary elective courses (36 credits):**
  Elective courses totaling 36 credits as listed below

- **Capstone experience course (6 credits):**
  HKGS3001. Hong Kong Studies research project (capstone experience) (6 credits)
  *This course will be offered to undergraduates in their third and fourth years.*
**NB 1:** The capstone course is designed to allow students to advance their analytical thinking by permitting the application of disciplinary knowledge and principles learned in the earlier years.

**NB 2:** Students may take Introductory Level courses at any point in their degree.

**NB 3:** Students are strongly advised to take “CLIT1009. Introduction to Post-colonialism and Culture” and “HIST1017. Modern Hong Kong” in their first or second year.

### Minor (36 credits)

A minor in Hong Kong Studies consists of 36 credits with the following components:

- **Prerequisite course (6 credits):**
  - HKGS1001. Hong Kong’s long twentieth century (6 credits)
  
  *This course will be offered to undergraduates in Year 1 or 2 only.*

- **Core courses (12 credits):**
  - Select two courses from the list below.
    - HKGS2001. Speaking of Hong Kong: Global voices (6 credits)
    - HKGS2002. Hong Kong identities in local, national and global contexts (6 credits)
    - HKGS2011. Hong Kong: Whose city is it? (6 credits)

- **Interdisciplinary elective courses (18 credits):**
  - Elective courses totaling 18 credits from the list below.

### Core Courses

**HKGS1001. Hong Kong’s long twentieth century (6 credits)**

This is a topical course that adopts multi-disciplinary perspectives to examine significant and complex issues in Hong Kong’s modern century. It serves as a gateway course that introduces students to the interdisciplinary approach to Hong Kong studies.

We examine both popular and scholarly materials that deal with the historical, political, social, and artistic aspects of Hong Kong and phenomenon in order to understand modern Hong Kong at its politico-cultural core, in its relations with Britain and the People’s Republic of China, and its symbolic function in the new global order.

The purpose of this course is to give students a good grounding in the key symbolic sites of Hong Kong in a global context. It provides you with the analytical tools for thinking more deeply about the way such sites are infused with diverse, competing and evolving political and cultural meanings.

Topics to be covered include the following sites and discussion revolves around their symbolic significance and their meanings to Hong Kong’s evolving identity: Peninsula Hotel, Kowloon Walled City, Public Housing Estates, Statue Square, Historic Mansions, Country Parks and Sitting Out Areas, MTR & Peak Tram, the Old Star Ferry terminal and Victoria Harbour, and Street Stalls and Markets.

*Prerequisite:* Nil  
*Assessment:* 100% coursework

**HKGS2001. Speaking of Hong Kong: Global voices (6 credits)**

We explore the key international and local scholarship and commentary on Hong Kong from before its transition to a colony, through to the present. The course provides students with insights into the significance of the diverse range of voices speaking about Hong Kong.
The purpose of the course is to facilitate in students a sophisticated appreciation of the importance of perspective when analyzing materials. At the completion of this course students will be able to explain how the ‘speaking position’ of either an individual or an institution alters the significance of a given text and alters according to historical moment and genre. The materials below comprise a corpus of global voices that speak of Hong Kong in relation to its position in the Empire, as a Colony, and in the People’s Republic: Travelers’ records, missionary letters, administrators’ diaries, and reminiscences of war-time internees. These materials will be examined alongside documents such as cartographic records, gazetteers, policy statements, planning documents, photographs, census documents, and posters.

Assessment: 100% coursework

HKGS2002. Hong Kong identities in local, national and global contexts (6 credits)

HKGS2002 explores the creation of a uniquely Hong Kong identity and the contested notions of this identity from inside and outside of Hong Kong. Core aspects of local identity markers are examined. The course aims to instill in students a deep appreciation of the evolution and transformation of Hong Kong’s identity in a global and national context. At the end of this course students will have developed foundational knowledge in the politics of identity formation in the context of changing political milieus.

Assessment: 100% coursework

HKGS2011. Hong Kong: Whose city is it? (6 credits)

This course will discuss various ways of conceptualizing the city. Drawing on different aspects of humanities and related disciplines, it begins with an overview of key developments in recent studies of the city. Students will explore the influence of forces shaping contemporary cities and tactics to deal with them. They will also examine related theories and their relation to contemporary Chinese cities as centers of modernization as well as conflicts. It will then focus on the shaping forces of global capitalism and examine “Hong Kong” as a marketable brand – “Asia’s world city” – in the global context. Case studies will be used to shed light on the transformation of Hong Kong cityscape.

Assessment: 100% coursework

Capstone Experience Course

HKGS3001. Hong Kong Studies research project (capstone experience) (6 credits)

This course is required of all students intending to major in Hong Kong Studies. Students in this course pursue independent research and produce a research paper under the supervision of a teacher in Hong Kong Studies. This course is designed to provide students with the opportunity to conduct in-depth research on a topic of interest to them. Students have to synthesize their understanding of the discipline in a critical research paper on the topic. It can either adopt a single disciplinary methodology or a multidisciplinary problem-oriented perspective, demonstrates all that has been learned in his or her major, undertaking the course will negotiate the topic in conjunction with the programme coordinator to determine its feasibility and ensure academic rigor.

Prerequisite: HKGS2001

Assessment: 100% coursework
Interdisciplinary Elective Courses

Majors must select courses totaling 36 credits from the following list of electives. Minors must select courses totaling 18 credits from the following list of electives.

(Note: Not all courses are offered in a given semester; students should check with individual units on course availability; students should also check on course prerequisites and other enrollment restrictions.)

HKGS2004. Hong Kong’s economic growth: a modernisation and internationalisation miracle (6 credits)

This course explores the dramatic transformations in Hong Kong’s political economy as it evolved from an Opium trading port to a global financial hub. It addresses core questions about the relationship between economic transformations and social, cultural and political change. The course does not require expertise in economic theory but it will introduce students to such common economic concepts as students would expect to encounter on news and current affairs media. Topics to be discussed include codification and transformation of trading regulations, negotiations between colonial and Chinese elites on business matters, the origins and impact of the Independent Commission Against Corruption on the political economy and cultural life of Hong Kong, the transformation in the legal and regulatory systems and their role in propelling Hong Kong to international financial centre status, labour rights and workers benefits, banking and stock-market cultures as experienced by ordinary people and financiers, the impact of industrialisation and de-industrialisation on the employment profile and livelihoods of Hong Kong people, the effects of China’s ‘opening up and reform’ on Hong Kong’s economy.

Assessment: 100% coursework

HKGS2005. An anthropology of Hong Kong’s belief systems and religious practices (6 credits)

Hong Kong’s population has a rich array of religious practices and beliefs systems. Some of these arrived with the migration of diverse peoples from around the world and others emerged locally as residents interacted with their environment and the life challenges it presented. Many Hong Kong people experience their spiritual life in an eclectic fashion – visiting Daoist temples as frequently as Christian churches. Others remain singular in their adherence to one faith such as Buddhism or Islam. In contrast to the secularization that has marked western societies with economic development Hong Kong sustains a vibrant religious culture. The course adopts an anthropological approach to the study of how Hong Kong people find meaning in their lives through religion, how spirituality informs their social support system and the myriad ways it creates their sense of cultural identity. Apart from providing an overview of the diverse religions manifest in Hong Kong, specific topics explored in the course include the role of folk religions in Hong Kong family life, the interaction between religious beliefs and notions of essential Chinese cultural preferences, the experience of Overseas Domestic Workers in Hong Kong’s religious life, the significance of overseas religious in Hong Kong’s cultural and ethical life (e.g. Vietnamese nuns, Irish Priests, Taiwanese Monks), religion or non-religion as a marker of class status or cultural capital, the role of religious organizations in social welfare and international outreach. The course will also introduce students to the core concepts operating in the anthropology of religion.

Assessment: 100% coursework

HKGS2006. Engendering Hong Kong: sociological and demographic perspectives (6 credits)

Hong Kong is currently unique among the world’s Chinese communities for the preponderance of females relative to males in the population. It is also remarkable for its low birth rate and growing
proportion of unmarried adults. How did this remarkable situation emerge and what are its implications for the way Hong Kong people perceive of their identities in gendered terms? Using sociological and demographic approaches this course explores key issues in the transformation of Hong Kong’s gender norms. Topics include: increases in international marriages, changing attitudes to sexual morality, tensions in work-family balance, competition-aversion as contraception, changing expectations of marital partner relationships, the prohibition on concubinage but continued prevalence of ‘second wives’, the significance of patriarchal gender norms as inhibitors to marriage, understanding Hong Kong’s divorce patterns, changing ideals of parenthood, transformations in expectations of childhood and the impact of China’s opening and reform on marriage choices through such phenomenon as ‘mainland mothers’.

Assessment: 100% coursework

HKGS2007. Geographic Challenges: the ‘space premium’ and Hong Kong society (6 credits)

Hong Kong is the most densely populated area on earth—space is at a premium. As pedestrians jostle for space on pavements, residents contemplate rising apartment prices, and leisure seekers struggle to find space to relax Hong Kong’s leaders face challenges that no other government around the world experience. This course explores the challenges that Hong Kong’s geography has posed for its leaders (indigenous, colonial and SAR), its residents and its wildlife. The course uses approaches from geography and urban planning but does not require specialist expertise—rather, it will introduce students to such common geographic and planning concepts as students would expect to encounter on news and current affairs media. The course explores key issues in the management of space in Hong Kong. Topics include: changing concerns of key planning bodies (e.g. influx of refugees from China in the 1950s), changing demands from residents as their expectations of ‘a decent life’ evolve (e.g. access to recreational space and country-parks), public debates about the impact of facilities related to death and waste disposal (e.g. real estate values, fengshui), environmental deterioration (e.g. public health concerns, economic damage, loss of habitat).

Assessment: 100% coursework

HKGS2008. Introduction to Hong Kong Cantopop lyrics (6 credits)

Since the mid-1970s, Hong Kong popular music has been very much identified with Cantopop, a distinctive genre with lyrics written in standard modern Chinese as well as Cantonese. Cantopop lyrics have exerted a profound impact on Hong Kong people over the past forty years. The course will be divided into two parts. The first half will introduce renowned Hong Kong Cantopop lyricists and examine their typical styles. The second half will discuss Cantopop lyrics from cultural perspectives. The course will enhance students’ understanding of Cantopop through close textual readings. The medium of instruction will be Chinese.

Assessment: 100% coursework

HKGS2009. We are what we eat: Hong Kong food and foodways (6 credits)

In every gulp we are allowing a bit of the external world, in the form of food, to gain access to our bodily, cultural and social existence and change us in ways we do not always know. The feelings, emotions and memory we involuntarily but actively produced are being inscribed, in return, onto the individual and collective foodscape of the city through our everyday food choices and continuous habits and practices. This course examines the food experiences and practices and their ideological effects that shape diners and their city. It also traces the crystallization of a conscious distinction of Hong Kong food and their influences among the residents of the city and overseas. In this course we will explore how the exercise of the right to the city follows not only our hearts’ but also our stomachs’ desire, and the food for the stomach is always and simultaneously the food for thought.
HKGS2012. Shop till you drop: the symbols of consumer culture in Hong Kong (6 credits)

Economic prosperity in Hong Kong allows its residents a vast array of consumption choices. These choices, though made by individuals, come under the heavy influence of debates on ethnicity and modernity, as well as comparisons with other developing communities. Our discussion will focus on the development of certain department stores in Hong Kong. Unlike individual retail establishments with defined areas of specialty, department stores present shoppers with entire packages of lifestyle choices that encompass products in such areas as fashion, household goods, food items, as well as health and beauty merchandise. Some of these department stores owed their origin to British merchants or overseas Chinese entrepreneurs while others were established as extensions of Japanese chains or outlets for merchandise from mainland China. We will explore these issues of material culture by examining print and television advertisements, company brochures, corporate documents, as well as records of consumer experience.

Assessment: 100% coursework

HKGS2013. Law, history and culture (6 credits)

This course will enable students to research and examine the history of law and its connection with social, political and economic development of Hong Kong and China in the 19th and 20th centuries through students’ first-hand exploration of archival documents and images stored in libraries and the Public Records Office. Students, through a close reading of archival materials, will be asked to reflect critically on their conventional basic ideas about the legal system, social customs and culture of Hong Kong and China. These ideas include, among others: ‘Imperial China lacks the rule of law’; ‘Hong Kong’s rule of law is a British colonial legacy’; and ‘Chinese traditionally preferred settling disputes through mediation than resorting to the law’. Adopting an interdisciplinary approach, this course will explore how the notion of law functions as a site of discourse in the expression of identity as well as the articulation of ethnic, cultural and socio-economic differences.

Assessment: 100% coursework

HKGS2014. Hong Kong literature (6 credits)

This course introduces students to the development of Hong Kong Literature from the 1920s through representative writers and their works in various genres. The selected works will be closely examined in relation to their cultural and historical contexts. The cultural production and literary connections between Hong Kong, Mainland China and the world will also be highlighted to increase the student’s awareness of Hong Kong’s unique cultural fluidity and hybridity. The medium of instruction will be Chinese.

Assessment: 50% coursework, 50% examination.

Non-permissible combination: CHIN2172

HKGS2015. Understanding Hong Kong through mass media (6 credits)

This course introduces students to the historical and cultural development of Hong Kong in modern times through mass media, with a particular emphasis on printed media and discussion surrounding the interrelationship between Hong Kong and China. Selected printed media texts will be closely examined with reference to the role Hong Kong played in, for instance, the public sphere in the late-Qing dynasty; the cultural development of the May-Fourth Movement; the spread and reception of Modernism and Communism in the Cold War period; and the narration of the Chinese nation in the
British colonial days. This course further introduces students to how Hong Kong can be seen as a liminal space for literary communication and cultural production at critical times. It also leads students to discuss the various cultural issues surrounding Hong Kong mass media, such as identity formation, gender issues and censorship.
Assessment: 100% coursework

**HKGS2016. Ghostly Hong Kong: Otherworldly configurations (6 credits)**

From the colonial to the post-handover periods, Hong Kong has long been haunted by ghosts and supernatural existences. Beyond the questions of veracity, these otherworldly visitors interrogate the very basis of Hong Kong imaginaries and political intricacies. From literature, history, urban legends to popular cultural productions, ghosts unfold Hong Kong’s deep-seated fear, prejudices and uncertainties about coloniality, nationality and transnationality. This course provides students with insights into the significance of the diverse range of otherworldly voices speaking from and on behalf of Hong Kong, with examples drawn from literature, history, film, media and theoretical texts. Reading them closely students are able to excavate dark, hidden and alternative sources for understanding the transforming Hong Kong identities and imaginations.
Assessment: 100% coursework

**HKGS2017. Postcolonial Studies: the case of Hong Kong (6 credits)**

Considered as an “anomaly” in postcoloniality, Hong Kong makes the perfect case for the study of major theories and concerns in Postcolonial Studies for their critical capacity and limitations. This course engages canonical theorists and texts in Postcolonial Studies in dialogue with local voices of critique across fields and disciplines to reexamine (post)colonial experiences of Hong Kong and their legacy and imprints expressed in cultural, literary, cinematic, historical texts. By unpacking the anomaly of the case of Hong Kong and organizing local critical scholarship on cultural production, this course also seeks to “reconfigure postcolonial discourse as a critical mode of imagination in a world altered now by global capitalism”.
Assessment: 100% coursework

**List of electives from other Faculties/Schools**

I. Faculty of Arts

*School of Chinese*
- CHIN2153. Sinophone literature and film (6 credits)
- CHIN2332. Translation in Hong Kong society (6 credits) (requires advanced knowledge of Chinese)

*School of English*
- ENGL2097. Imagining Hong Kong (6 credits)
- ENGL2119. English in Hong Kong: Making it your own (6 credits)
- ENGL2123. Language and identity in Hong Kong (6 credits)

*School of Humanities*
- CLIT2064. Hong Kong Culture: Popular arts and everyday life (6 credits)
- CLIT2065. Hong Kong Culture: Representations of identity in literature and film (6 credits)
- CLIT2075. Modern Poetry: Hong Kong and beyond (6 credits)
- CLIT2085. Hong Kong: Community and cultural policy in the global context (6 credits)
- FINE3013. Hong Kong art workshop (6 credits)
HIST2034. A history of education in Hong Kong (6 credits)
HIST4024. Writing Hong Kong history (capstone experience) (6 credits)
MUSI2015. Popular music (6 credits)

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GCIN2007. Film and media: Cultural and organizational dynamics (6 credits)
GCIN2009. Art worlds: Aesthetics, money, and markets (6 credits)
GCIN2010. Fairs, festivals and competitive events (6 credits)
GCIN2011. Understanding Hong Kong TV industry (6 credits)
GCIN2016. Financing for creative industries (6 credits)
GCIN2017. Luxury markets in East Asia (6 credits)
GCIN2018. Publishing industry in digital age (6 credits)
GCIN2019. The arts entrepreneurship in Hong Kong (6 credits)
JAPN2050. Creative industries in East Asia (Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea and Japan) (6 credits)
JAPN2058. Understanding popular culture in Japan (6 credits)
JAPN3039. Japanese popular music and Hong Kong society (6 credits)
SINO2002. China in the world: critical paradigms (6 credits)
SINO2004. Research skills for China Studies (6 credits)
SINO2007. Creative industries in China in a global context (6 credits)
SINO2008. World heritage in Asia (6 credits)

II. Faculty of Architecture
CONS2004. History of urban Hong Kong and its built heritage (6 credits)
RECO2028. Planning and development (6 credits)

III. Faculty of Social Sciences
GEOG3403. Urban planning in practice in Hong Kong (6 credits)
POLI3019. Hong Kong and the world (6 credits)
POLI3020. Hong Kong politics (6 credits)
POLI3035. Public administration in Hong Kong (6 credits)
POLI3118. Special topics in NGO studies (6 credits)
SOCI2015. Hong Kong popular culture (6 credits)
SOCI2016. Hong Kong society (6 credits)
SOCI2075. Hong Kong: community and cultural policy in the global context (6 credits)