

PPOL5480
Political Economy of Poverty, Inequality, and Development

Instructor:

Dr. Michael TYRALA

mtyrala@ust.hk

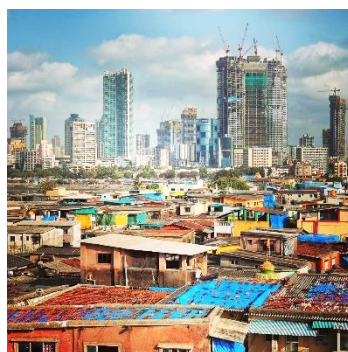
(Office hours by appointment)

Teaching Assistant:

Prithish ANAND

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Time: Mon./Wed., 18:30-21:20; Sat., 10:30-13:20 **Place:** Room 2, 30/F, Tower 1, Millennity



Course Description:

Poverty, inequality, and persistent underdevelopment are among the most pressing challenges that the world's public policy professionals and policymakers face today. Despite some progress, resulting from decades of national and international efforts, as well as impressive growth in several emerging markets, about 10.5% of the world's population, or 838 million people, still live in extreme poverty, defined in 2025 as living on less than US\$3.00 a day, a threshold which experts agree does not capture the true extent of poverty. When the threshold is set to US\$8.10 a day, which is estimated to be the minimum necessary to achieve basic nutrition and normal human life expectancy in 2025, we find that about 46% of the world's population, or 3.65 billion people, still live in poverty, with most of them concentrated in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. Meanwhile, global inequality has skyrocketed, with the world's richest 1% owning 45.8% of all the world's wealth and capturing 19% of the world's annual income, while the world's poorest 52% owned just 1.2% of all the world's wealth and earned just 8.5% of the world's annual income in 2020. Moreover, about 80% of the world's population lives in countries where income and wealth differentials are increasing, and states seem unable or unwilling to provide economic security and material improvement to their populations in ways that at least some of them once did. This raises several important questions. Why is poverty such an intractable problem in a world of unprecedented wealth? Why does global inequality keep increasing in most of the world, and why has this problem been ignored for such a long time? Why are some countries able to develop and others not? And perhaps most uncomfortably, is it possible to achieve universal progress in the fight against poverty, inequality, and underdevelopment, or does progress necessarily mean that some people and countries fall behind as others advance in the current systemic configuration? In this course, we will draw on key theories of political economy and development as well as on long-standing debates in the history of development thought and practice to try and answer these and other related questions, and critically evaluate a wide range of mainstream and alternative development models and issues, as well as the complex politics behind them. The course will be useful to students pursuing careers in national and international public administrations, academic institutions, consulting and advisory firms, think tanks, civil society organizations, news media outlets, and other relevant bodies, as well as to anyone wishing to better understand the political economy of poverty, inequality, and development, and to make a difference.

Course Objectives:

Upon successfully completing the course, students will be able to:

- Explain how poverty, inequality, and development are defined and measured, why some definitions and measurements are preferred over others, and how the three concepts are intertwined.
- Analyze how different state and non-state actors wield structural power to shape and influence the global fight against poverty, inequality, and underdevelopment.
- Distinguish between the main classical and contemporary theories of political economy and development, the different ways in which they interpret the root causes of poverty, inequality, and underdevelopment, and the different ways in which they impacted developmental practice around the world.

- Evaluate the effectiveness of the most common mainstream approaches that have been used or proposed to address poverty, inequality, and underdevelopment, and the potential effectiveness as well as the technical and political feasibility of more ambitious alternative approaches.
- Develop essential critical thinking, analytical, research, writing, and presentation skills necessary for the creation and implementation of comprehensive policy strategies and effective enforcement mechanisms aimed at eradicating poverty, reducing inequality, and fostering development that is truly sustainable.

Course Structure:

This **3-credit course** combines lectures, documentary films, videos, class and online discussions, and individual and group work to familiarize students with the various multifaceted issues related to poverty, inequality, and development. The approach is multidisciplinary, drawing on insights and methods from public policy, political science, global political economy, international relations, and development studies, and blends theory with practice through exposure to numerous real life case studies. The course is open to PPOL MPhil/PhD, MPP, MPM, and other MPhil/PhD/PG/UG students.

Overview of Assessment Tasks:

Assessment Task	Weight	Date
Attendance and Active Participation (Discussions of lectures, documentary films, videos, required readings, and other course materials.)	20%	Throughout
Four Mini Quizzes (A series of multiple-choice questions based on material from the whole course up to that point, with only the two best Mini Quizzes being counted.)	10%	15 June 2026 22 June 2026 29 June 2026 8 July 2026
Group Debate (Mandatory for passing the course) (Two teams of students competitively arguing the opposing sides of a chosen debate statement.)	20%	8 July 2026
Final Quiz (Mandatory for passing the course) (A combination of multiple-choice, short-answer, and long-answer questions based on material from the whole course.)	25%	13 July 2026
Final Research Paper (Mandatory for passing the course) (A 1,800–2,000-word research paper on the impact of neoliberalism or another theory of political economy and development on a chosen developmental actor or country/jurisdiction.)	25%	22 July 2026

Explanation of Assessment Tasks:

(1) ATTENDANCE AND ACTIVE PARTICIPATION (20%)

Attendance is mandatory, unless the student in question has a very good and ideally a properly documented reason, which should be provided to me (**Dr. Michael TYRALA**) at mtyrala@ust.hk, either as soon as you know before the missed class, or in cases of emergency as soon as possible after the missed class. Having more than four unexcused absences will result in 0/20 points for this portion of the overall assessment.

Lectures will frequently be interspersed with and followed by class discussions, and the Open Discussion Boards on Canvas will be available to contribute to on a regular basis as well. In addition, each Group Debate will include a Q&A session, with pertinent questions likewise counting toward Active Participation.

There is a substantial amount of required workload to be done individually by each student in this course (on average around 40-45 pages per each of the 13 normal course meetings). Students are expected to set aside sufficient time to complete this required workload before each meeting, using the class discussions, the regular Open Discussion Boards on Canvas, and the Group Debate Q&A sessions to demonstrate that they have done so. Only students that actively participate on a regular basis through clear, concise, and insightful comments, and by asking pertinent questions that enhance the discourse will be able to receive full credit for this part of the assessment. The quantity of engagement matters, but so

does its quality, so while any and all eligible participation is welcome and will be counted, not all of it will necessarily be of equal worth.

(2) FOUR MINI QUIZZES (10%)

On 15 June 2026 (Meeting 4), 22 June 2026 (Meeting 7), 29 June 2026 (Meeting 10), and 8 July 2026 (Meeting 13), an 8-minute closed book Mini Quiz will be administered in class. Each of the Mini Quizzes will consist of 5 multiple-choice questions (4 choices and 1 correct answer each) based on material from the lectures and the required workload from the whole course up to that point (the lecture and the required workload for the meeting of a given Mini Quiz will not be covered by that Mini Quiz). There will be no alternative dates for the Mini Quizzes. If a student is absent on the day of a Mini Quiz for any reason whatsoever, they forfeit the right to take that Mini Quiz. However, students will only be graded on their two best Mini Quizzes, so technically, it is possible to miss or completely fail two of the Mini Quizzes and still earn full points for this assessment task.

(3) GROUP DEBATE (20%)

On 8 July 2026 (Meeting 13), we will be holding Group Debates. Each debate group will consist of four or five students. Each debate group will first choose a debate statement and will then notify me by e-mail what their chosen debate statement is. This is to ensure that two or more debate groups do not choose the same debate statement. Debate statements are chosen on a “first come, first served” basis. Ideally, each debate group should notify me of what their chosen debate statement is at least one week before their Group Debate is scheduled to take place, so they have enough time to think of and research a new debate statement in case their chosen debate statement was already chosen by another debate group.

Each debate group will divide into two teams representing the opposing sides of their chosen debate statement, with one team arguing for it and the other team against it. For example, debate group X, consisting of students A, B, C, D, and E, chose the following debate statement: “The Belt and Road Initiative has helped alleviate poverty and reduce inequality”. Debate group X will divide into two teams, with students A, B, and C arguing YES, the Belt and Road Initiative has helped alleviate poverty and reduce inequality, and students C and D arguing NO, the Belt and Road Initiative has not helped alleviate poverty and reduce inequality. Each team is permitted to use no more than two PowerPoint slides to highlight key data or other crucial information in support of their arguments.

The formation of the debate groups will be determined by the students themselves (or otherwise assigned by me) by 24 June 2026 (Meeting 8), and the debate statements will be chosen by 29 June 2026 (Meeting 10).

The Group Debate structure is the same standard one that most debates you may have been a part of or witnessed are based on, and it is as follows:

- (1) Each of the debate group’s two teams makes an opening statement (5 minutes x2);
- (2) Each of the two teams considers the arguments of the other team’s opening statement and prepares a rebuttal (2 minutes);
- (3) Each of the two teams delivers a rebuttal (3 minutes x2);

- (4) The debate will be opened to a Q&A with the audience, with the two teams taking turns responding to questions/challenges from the audience (8 minutes);
- (5) Each of the two teams makes a closing statement (2 minutes x2);
- (6) The audience anonymously votes on which of the two teams they found to be the most argumentatively convincing, regardless of whether they agreed with the team's stance or not. The audience vote is worth a bonus 2/20 points, so there is a competitive element to the debates, which is why it is important to choose a debate statement that is genuinely controversial and could easily be argued both ways. The Group Debate grade will have an individual component (10/20) as well as a team component (10/20).

Examples of debate statements:

- The global community has made great progress in alleviating poverty, and we are well on track to fully eradicate extreme poverty within a decade or two.
- The rich are rich because generally, they are smarter, work harder, and thus deserve their wealth.
- The poor are poor because generally, they are not smart enough, do not work hard enough, and thus deserve to be poor.
- The poor are poor because they lack access to a good education.
- Poverty has nothing to do with race.
- Poverty is worse for women than for men.
- Most humans are selfish, so it is impossible to get enough people to care about global poverty and inequality.
- Most humans are only selfish because the logic of capitalism compels them to be, but under a more humane system, things could be different.
- Inequality is natural and mostly fair, and as such does not need to be addressed at all.
- Massive and increasing inequality around the world is inevitable.
- Poor countries should not use the excuse of colonialism anymore because it is ancient history.
- The inability of some countries to develop is mostly due to internal rather than external factors.
- Adopting neoliberal free market policies will increase prosperity for all.
- Free trade and globalization will increase prosperity for all.
- Capitalism will always create poverty and inequality.

- Most foreign aid is just another form of neocolonialism.
- Most foreign aid does more harm than good.
- Foreign aid should not be tied to political or economic conditionalities.
- Foreign aid NGOs only provide band-aid solutions and do not address the root causes of poverty.
- Social movements do not offer realistic solutions to poverty, they are only anti-this or anti-that.
- Western-led international organizations (e.g., the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, etc.) provide the best strategies to address poverty.
- Democracy is unnecessary to alleviate poverty and reduce inequality, and in fact, authoritarian governments do better at both.
- It is better to reform capitalism and push for a robust social welfare state than to struggle for revolution.
- Communism has a better track record of poverty alleviation and inequality reduction than capitalism.
- State capitalism is much better than neoliberalism for national development.
- If every poor country followed the East Asian developmental state model, then they too would become rich.
- China's embrace of capitalism benefits most Chinese people.
- The Belt and Road Initiative has helped alleviate poverty and reduce inequality.
- Artificial intelligence will alleviate poverty and reduce inequality.

The debate groups are NOT obligated to choose any of the above debate statements. They are welcome to come up with their own debate statements, or tweak the wording of the above ones, subject to my approval.

(4) FINAL QUIZ (25%)

On 13 July 2026 (Meeting 14), a 3-hour, open book, pen and paper Final Quiz will be administered in class. Students may bring with them and use printouts of the lecture slides and the required readings, as well as four double-sided, A4-sized sheets of HANDWRITTEN notes, but they are required to answer the questions using their own words, as opposed to copying their answers word for word from the lecture slides or the required readings. The Final Quiz will consist of 5 multiple-choice questions (4 choices and 1 correct answer each), 5 short-answer questions (around 200-word answers each), and 2 long-answer questions (around 500-word answers each), all based on material from the lectures and the required workload from the whole course.

(5) FINAL RESEARCH PAPER (25%)

By 23:59 on 22 July 2026, every student is required to write and submit to Canvas a 1,800–2,000-word (not inclusive of references) Final Research Paper on ONE of the following two topics:

- (1) With detailed reference to a particular development actor (multilateral development organization, civil society organization, social movement, government agency engaged in development work, etc.), explain how neoliberalism has influenced modern development practice, especially as it relates to poverty and inequality. The specific topic should be as narrow and focused as possible, and it should include detailed examples of how neoliberalism has influenced the particular projects, programs, and agendas of the chosen development actor.

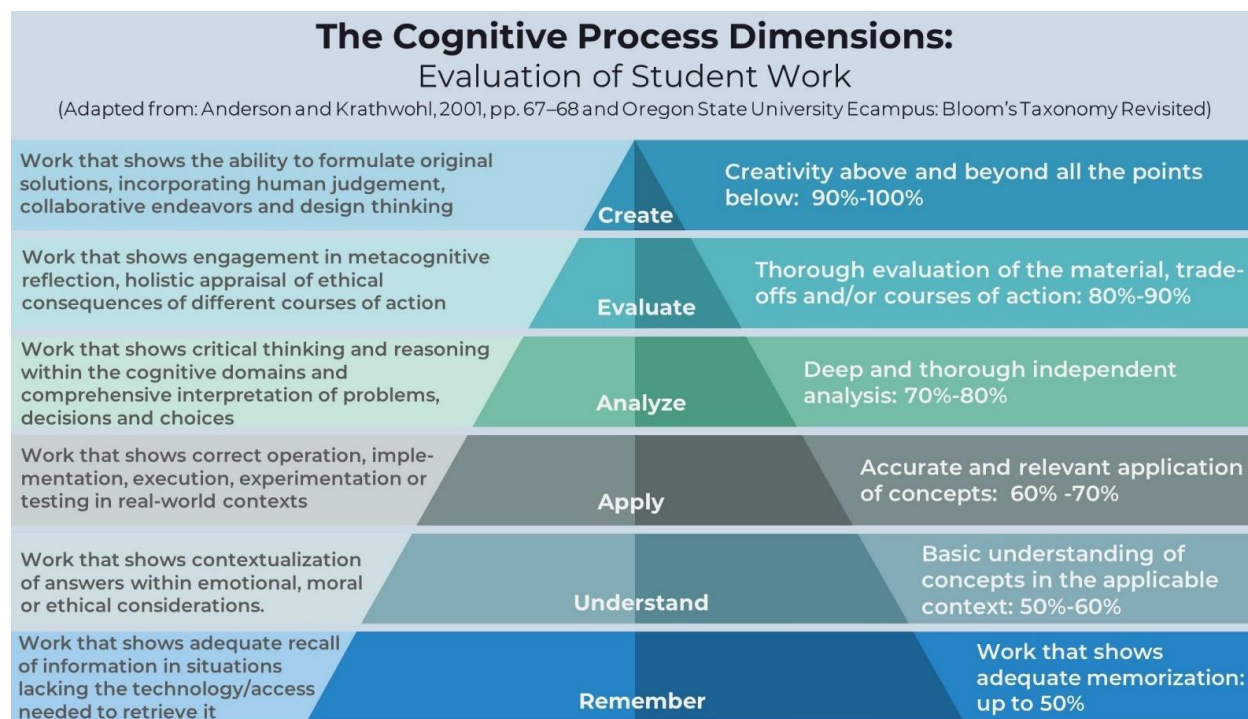
OR

- (2) Focusing on a particular country/jurisdiction, explain how a specific theory of political economy and development has impacted that country/jurisdiction, especially as it relates to poverty and inequality. The specific topic should be as narrow and focused as possible, and it should include detailed examples of how the chosen theory of political economy and development has shaped the particular development policies and society in the chosen country/jurisdiction.

Since this is a research paper, students should mostly use academic sources. Reputable institutional, policy, think tank, and media sources are permitted as well, but they should not constitute a majority of the sources used. Overall, students must meaningfully use at least 20 English language sources (including a minimum of 12 academic sources). **The use of non-English language sources is strictly prohibited.**

Grading:

The course is based on criterion-referenced assessment (CRA). It also utilizes Bloom's Taxonomy, a widely used educational framework which categorizes thinking skills into six levels, from basic recall to complex creativity. While it does not apply to all of the assessment tasks, students would do well to keep it in mind whenever they are working on anything that requires research, analysis, evaluation, or creativity.



Grade	Level of Student Achievement
A+/A	Students who are exceptionally active and engaged throughout the entirety of the course, who demonstrate an excellent level of comprehension of the course material, and who are able to apply it with a very high degree of sophistication and professionalism.
A-/B+	Students who are very active and engaged throughout most of the course, who demonstrate a good level of comprehension of the course material, and who are able to apply it with an above average degree of sophistication and professionalism.
B/B-	Students who are somewhat active and engaged throughout at least some parts of the course, who demonstrate a satisfactory level of comprehension of the course material, and who are able to apply it with an average degree of sophistication and professionalism.
C+/C	Students who are not very active and engaged throughout most of the course, who demonstrate only a marginal level of comprehension of the course material, and who are able to apply it with only a low degree of sophistication and professionalism.
F	Students who are not active and engaged in the course at all or nearly at all, who demonstrate an insufficient level of comprehension of the course material, and who are thus not able to apply it with a sufficient degree of sophistication and professionalism.

Policy on the Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI):

In this course, the policy on the use of artificial intelligence (AI) depends on the specific assessment task in question.

(1) ACTIVE PARTICIPATION – The use of AI of any kind whatsoever is **strictly prohibited**.

(2) FOUR MINI QUIZZES – The use of AI of any kind whatsoever is **strictly prohibited**.

(3) GROUP DEBATE – The use of AI is **permitted, but only for certain tasks and with certain restrictions, and only provided that it is used responsibly and with an abundance of caution**. To be specific, **the use of AI is permitted and even encouraged for: (a) planning (e.g., brainstorming topics and ideas, searching for basic background information, clarifying challenging material, drafting initial outlines); (b) polishing and editing (e.g., spelling and grammar checking, improving structure and logical flow, fine tuning style); and (c) self-testing and feedback (e.g., asking for critical feedback on the student's work)**. However, due to its inherent biases, the relatively high degree of inaccuracy and outright hallucination, and the importance of learning how to conduct rigorous research independently, **the use of AI is strictly prohibited for: (d) research (e.g., using AI as a search engine for literature, summarizing literature, etc.); and (e) content creation and analysis (e.g., creating the first draft of the output, generating significant chunks of the output or supplanting your own analysis with generated content, generating data, generating references, or any tampering with properly identified and gathered data and references without rigorous verification of the output, etc.)**.

(4) FINAL QUIZ – The use of AI of any kind whatsoever is **strictly prohibited**.

(5) FINAL RESEARCH PAPER – The use of AI is **permitted, but only for certain tasks and with certain restrictions, and only provided that it is used responsibly and with an abundance of caution**. To be specific, **the use of AI is permitted and even encouraged for: (a) planning (e.g., brainstorming topics and ideas, searching for basic background information, clarifying challenging material, drafting initial outlines); (b) polishing and editing (e.g., spelling and grammar checking, improving structure and logical flow, fine tuning style); and (c) self-testing and feedback (e.g., asking for critical feedback on the student's work)**. However, due to its inherent biases, the relatively high degree of inaccuracy and

Updated: JUN 23, 2025 10:16 PM CT

ChatGPT May Be Eroding Critical Thinking Skills, According to a New MIT Study

TECH

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE



by [Andrew R. Chow](#)
CORRESPONDENT

Does [ChatGPT](#) harm critical thinking abilities? A new [study](#) from researchers at MIT's Media Lab has returned some concerning results.

The study divided 54 subjects—18 to 39 year-olds from the Boston area—into three groups, and asked them to write several SAT essays using OpenAI's ChatGPT, Google's search engine, and nothing at all, respectively.

Researchers used an EEG to record the writers' brain activity across 32 regions, and found that of the three groups, ChatGPT users had the lowest brain engagement and “consistently [underperformed](#) at neural, linguistic, and behavioral levels.” Over the course of several months, ChatGPT users got lazier with each subsequent essay, often resorting to copy-and-paste by the end of the study.

outright hallucination, and the importance of learning how to conduct rigorous research independently, **the use of AI is strictly prohibited for: (d) research (e.g., using AI as a search engine for literature, summarizing literature, etc.); and (e) content creation and analysis (e.g., creating the first draft of the output, generating significant chunks of the output or supplanting your own analysis with generated content, generating data, generating references, or any tampering with properly identified and gathered data and references without rigorous verification of the output, etc.).**

Academic Misconduct:

Academic misconduct pertains to a variety of both intentional and unintentional breaches of academic integrity that can haunt a student or professional long after it has been committed. For students, it frequently results in disciplinary proceedings and severe penalties impacting their assignments, their grades, their ability to continue their studies and finishing on time, and even the awarding of their degrees as such. For professionals in the real world, the consequences can be even more serious, including but not limited to journal article retractions, job losses, reputational losses, and in extreme cases even lawsuits.

On their website (<https://registry.hkust.edu.hk/resource-library/what-academic-misconduct>), the Academic Registry (ARO) of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) lists the following as prominent examples of academic misconduct:

- **Getting hold of examination or test questions without the instructor's permission, or giving other students questions without permission;**
- **Giving or receiving unauthorized information or help to answer questions during examinations or tests;**
- **Having someone else take a test or examination for you, or taking an examination or test for someone else;**
- **Handing in assignments on which you received help from fellow students or others that went beyond what was approved by the instructor, or giving such help;**
- **Making up facts or references and using them in assignments;**
- **Using other people's work in an assignment and presenting it as your own;**

University of Hong Kong professor steps down from associate deanship after AI-generated references scandal

An internal probe by the University of Hong Kong confirmed that a paper – which listed Professor Paul Yip as corresponding author and was published in an academic journal – used non-existent publications generated by AI in its references.



by KELLY HO

14:44, 18 DECEMBER 2025



Why you can trust Hong Kong Free Press

A University of Hong Kong (HKU) professor has stepped down from his position as associate dean after a paper that listed him as a corresponding author was found to contain non-existent references generated by artificial intelligence (AI).

- **Helping a fellow student to cheat; and**
- **Incomplete or no referencing of the work of others, which can result in plagiarism.**

However, as the Academic Registry itself rightly points out, “this list is by no means exhaustive”. Indeed, with the advent and now widespread use of AI, several of the examples above have evolved in a particularly worrisome way, giving rise to the following new forms of academic misconduct:

- **Using AI to produce the entire submitted output, the entire first draft of the output, or significant chunks of the output** – this constitutes plagiarism and is thus unacceptable (in this course for certain, in other courses it may depend on the specific assignment and the applicable policy on the use of AI, but please note that even when the applicable policy explicitly allows the use of AI in this way, AI frequently makes mistakes or outright hallucinates when generating facts, data, and references, so the submitted output may still end up constituting misrepresentation and other forms of plagiarism);
- **Using AI to populate the output with references you are not personally familiar with** – this subverts the entirety of the research process and by itself constitutes deception and fraud but it may easily also result in misrepresentation and other forms of plagiarism if AI fails to place the references where they belong in the text, or simply generates non-existent references or mashups of existing references (as it frequently does); and
- **Using AI to populate the output with references that you genuinely did read and did use to produce your output, or to simply produce the final list of references in the requested referencing format** – this may seem benign and if done diligently, it may not constitute academic misconduct, but please note that if not done diligently, same as above, it may easily result in misrepresentation and other forms of plagiarism if AI fails to place the references where they belong in the text, or simply generates non-existent references or mashups of existing references (as it frequently does).

Remember that academic misconduct need not be intentional for it to qualify as academic misconduct. As such, especially when using AI, be exceptionally vigilant, and keep in mind that ultimately, it is you and not AI that will be held accountable should your unsanctioned or irresponsible use of it result in any form of academic misconduct, such as but not limited to the examples listed above. **Unfortunately, the incidence of improper placement of references in the text, non-existent references, or mashups of existing references have become such commonplace forms of academic misconduct in the written assignments of students, that as of Spring Term 2025-2026, it is now the official policy of the Division of Public Policy (PPOL) that the use of AI for any task having to do with referencing is now strictly prohibited, with all instructors and all teaching assistants in all PPOL courses explicitly charged with verifying that all of the references used by students in their written assignments are real and used properly.** To avoid these serious forms of academic misconduct, make sure to approach your research in a responsible and organized way, and familiarize yourself with at least the simplest of proper referencing tools like **ZoteroBib** (<https://zbib.org/>), which are nearly as fast as AI and far more reliable. You can find more sophisticated referencing tools on the website of the HKUST Library as well (<https://libguides.hkust.edu.hk/referencing/tools>).

As students, it is your duty to observe and uphold the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty, and as instructors and teaching assistants, it is our duty to not only observe and uphold them but also to

enforce them. As such, in what is the most unpleasant part of our work, we are obligated to report any form of academic misconduct to the PPOL Disciplinary Committee, which upon meeting and considering all of the relevant facts may choose to impose penalties on the offending student, including severe ones such as the possibility of zero points for the affected assignment, a grade of “F” for the course, or a permanent note about the incident on the student’s Transcript of Records, with repeat offenses possibly even resulting in expulsion from the whole program.

Importance of Maintaining Proper Communication:

All too often, when students encounter any difficulties with the course or outside circumstances that are out of their control but undermine their ability to perform as well as they could, for one reason or another, they keep it to themselves and try to handle the matter on their own. The result is often a combination of avoidable underperformance, unexcused absences, missed assignments, late or no submission of assignments, and in the worst cases assignments involving some form of academic misconduct. If students do eventually reach out at all, it is often only after a significant amount of time has passed, which usually means that many of the better ways of addressing whatever the situation may be are already out of my hands or no longer on the table at all, leaving only a more limited set of bad and worse options.

To avoid this, **I encourage you to maintain proper communication throughout the course.** If you need additional support with understanding some of the course content, do let me know. I am always happy to stay behind after class for as long as you need, and should some scheduling conflict emerge, or you have another class right after, we can always arrange a Zoom meeting. If you cannot avoid missing a class, do let me know as soon as you can. If there is a very good and ideally a properly documented reason for it, such as a medical issue (with a doctor’s note or other proof) or an important job interview that overlaps with the class (with an e-mail invitation or other proof), and such cases remain reasonably exceptional, excusing an absence is not a problem. If you need a deadline extension because you are facing some extenuating circumstances, do let me know. I cannot promise that properly communicating your issues or needs will ALWAYS result in you getting what you want when you want it, but it is ALWAYS worth a try. On the one hand, due to the task being relatively easy and the time for it quite sufficient, I will usually not entertain submitting Open Discussion Board contributions past their deadline. The four Mini Quizzes likewise have set dates that will not change, and allowing students to make up for the ones they missed is logistically impossible (but only your two best Mini Quizzes count, so quite a bit of leeway is already built into this assignment). As for the Final Quiz, due to it taking place in the classroom and needing 3 hours to invigilate, I am also very set on the date specified in the syllabus, aside from genuinely special cases or emergencies, which, like everything else, should be communicated as far in advance as possible. On the other hand, take-home assignments like papers are generally more flexible and extensions thus quite feasible.

None of this is meant as an invitation for you to seek out robust preferential arrangements or to abuse my goodwill. Your studies should remain your absolute number one priority, and you should aim to meet all your deadlines. **However, if you do find yourself overwhelmed, properly communicate your situation, where applicable provide evidence, and I will do my best to help you succeed. I would rather receive good work that only needed a few extra days than extremely rushed work that was submitted on time, or worse yet, work that was submitted on time but only because its completion involved some form of academic misconduct (that is always unacceptable and there is never any excuse for it).**

Course Schedule:

LECTURES	
Time: Mon./Wed., 18:30-21:20; Sat., 10:30-13:20 Place: Room 2, 30/F, Tower 1, Millennity	
MEETING 1	(Monday, 8 June 2026): Course introduction – Syllabus walkthrough and documentary film screening.
PART I: KEY CONCEPTS AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	
MEETING 2	(Wednesday, 10 June 2026): Poverty and inequality – How are poverty and inequality defined and measured, and how do they relate to each other? Are dominant measurements of poverty and inequality adequate in capturing their full extent and complexity?
MEETING 3	(Saturday, 13 June 2026): Development and foreign aid – How is development defined and measured, and how does it relate to poverty and inequality? Are dominant measurements of development adequate in capturing its full extent and complexity? What is foreign aid, and what are the main controversies surrounding it?
PART II: CLASSICAL AND CONTEMPORARY THEORIES OF POLITICAL ECONOMY AND DEVELOPMENT	
MEETING 4	(Monday, 15 June 2026): Mercantilism and liberalism – What are the main characteristics of these classical theories of political economy and development, how have they approached poverty and inequality, and what lessons can public policy professionals learn from them today? + Mini Quiz [1]
MEETING 5	(Wednesday, 17 June 2026): Marxism – What are the main characteristics of this classical theory of political economy and development, how has it approached poverty and inequality, and what lessons can public policy professionals learn from it today?
MEETING 6	(Saturday, 20 June 2026): Modernization theories, dependency theory, the developmental state model, and world-systems analysis – What are the main characteristics of these post-World War 2 theories of political economy and development, how have they approached poverty and inequality, and what lessons can public policy professionals learn from them today?
MEETING 7	(Monday, 22 June 2026): Neoliberalism and the Washington Consensus – What are the main characteristics of neoliberalism, what impacts did neoliberal policies have on poverty and inequality in developed and developing countries, and what lessons can public policy professionals learn from them today? + Mini Quiz [2]

MEETING 8	(Wednesday, 24 June 2026): Neoliberalism and the Post-Washington Consensus – Why was neoliberalism forced to soften its policy toolkit, what impacts has this softening of neoliberal policies had on poverty and inequality in developed and developing countries, and what lessons can public policy professionals learn from them today?
PART III: THE ROOTS OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT AND CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES TO KEY ISSUE AREAS	
MEETING 9	(Saturday, 27 June 2026): The rise of the West and the “rise” of the rest – How did the most developed countries develop, and why is much of the developing world still struggling with persistent underdevelopment? Which theories of political economy and development have been the most successful in fostering development and why?
MEETING 10	(Monday, 29 June 2026): Climate change, labor, gender, education, and health in the context of modern developmental discourse – How do the United Nations and the World Bank differ in their policy approach to climate change, labor, gender, education, and health, and what are the reasons behind these different approaches? What progress has been made in the global efforts to eradicate extreme poverty and reduce inequality as part of the Millenium Development Goals, the Sustainable Development Goals, and beyond? + Mini Quiz [3]
HOLIDAY	(Wednesday, 1 July 2026): Hong Kong SAR Establishment Day (NO CLASS)
PART IV: CURRENTLY EXISTING ALTERNATIVES AND BEYOND	
MEETING 11	(Saturday, 4 July 2026): Currently existing alternatives – What are the strengths and weaknesses of proposals like support for organized labor, expansion of the welfare state, worker cooperatives, and fair trade, and what can public policy professionals learn from China’s and India’s decades-long experience with poverty alleviation and from the Kerala model of development?
MEETING 12	(Monday, 6 July 2026): Beyond currently existing alternatives – What are the strengths and weaknesses of proposals like debt resistance, radical democratization of the workplace, poverty floors, wealth ceilings, global redistribution through global tax initiatives, degrowth, and the promise of modern democratic socialism?
MEETING 13	(Wednesday, 8 July 2026): Course wrap-up + Group Debates + Mini Quiz [4]
STUDY BREAK	(Saturday, 11 July 2026): Study break (NO CLASS)
MEETING 14	(Monday, 13 July 2026): FINAL QUIZ

+ **The Dark Side of Hong Kong Walking Tour** (Subject to availability – date and time to be announced.)