THE EDUCATION UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG
Course Outline

Part I

Programme Title	**:**	All Full-time Undergraduate Programmes
Programme QF Level	**:**	5
Course Title	**:**	Work: From Factory Floor to Our Robot Future
Course Code	**:**	GEI4011
Department	**:**	Department of Literature and Cultural Studies, FHM (Hosting) Department of Asian and Policy Studies, FLASS (Participating) Department of Education Policy and Leadership, FEHD (Participating)
Credit Points	**:**	3
Contact Hours	**:**	39
Pre-requisite(s)	**:**	Completion of any GE Breadth Learning Strands 1~3 (GELS) or Positive and Values Education course (PAVE) (No Pre-requisite for Senior Year Entrants)
Medium of Instruction	**:**	English
Course Level	**:**	4

Part II

The University's Graduate Attributes and seven Generic Intended Learning Outcomes (GILOs) represent the attributes of ideal EdUHK graduates and their expected qualities respectively. Learning outcomes work coherently at the University (GILOs), programme (Programme Intended Learning Outcomes) and course (Course Intended Learning Outcomes) levels to achieve the goal of nurturing students with important graduate attributes.

In gist, the Graduate Attributes for Sub-degree, Undergraduate, Taught Postgraduate, Professional Doctorate and Research Postgraduate students consist of the following three domains (i.e. in short "PEER & I"):

- **P**rofessional **E**xcellence;
- **E**thical **R**esponsibility; **&**
- **I**nnovation.

The descriptors under these three domains are different for the three groups of students in order to reflect the respective level of Graduate Attributes.

The seven GILOs are:

1. Problem Solving Skills
2. Critical Thinking Skills
3. Creative Thinking Skills

4a. Oral Communication Skills
4b. Written Communication Skills

5. Social Interaction Skills
6. Ethical Decision Making
7. Global Perspectives

1. Course Synopsis

Look at your iPhone. Or your shrimp har gow. Or your t-shirt. Now, think of the workers who made them for you. Who polishes the glass on the front of your phone? Who handles the shrimp for your yum cha? Who spins the cloth for your shirt? Behind our stuff is a hidden global network of people – people who often work dangerous jobs for little pay. This course helps students to see the people behind the things and invites us to ask: How can we shape the world of work and make things better in the future?

We begin by examining two moments when work was transformed: the Industrial Revolution and the Asian economic "miracle." We start at the factory and see how movies depicted the smoke, the machines, the assembly line as a "model" modern workspace; but, we also ask whether the modern factory actually started outside the "West" in China and the Caribbean. This background will help us understand why our workplaces and worklives look the way they do today; and will introduce important concepts about work.

We then explore how factories powered Asia's "miraculous" economic growth after World War II by examining the lives of workers in South Korea, Hong Kong, and China. We then travel beyond the factory to understand how people work in living rooms, public parks, and education, thinking about how work changes when the workplace is a home or school.

Next, we ask how globalization is creating a new world of work beyond the factory, as more people work in retail, service, office, medical, computing, and classroom jobs. We will trace how work is transforming, with email and remote work taking over our homes and our free time. And we will ask how the work we do shapes the broader world around us, impacting everything from fairer labour conditions to the environment.

Finally, we will ask ourselves: if robots and AI come to take our jobs in a few years, what will "work" even mean?

Assignments ask students to analyze workplaces today and propose new improvements for the future – to make work safer, greener, and more equitable. Students will be prepared to complete these assignments through exposure to important themes and analytical lenses that are important at all periods throughout the history of work. Important analytical "lenses" will include class, race, gender, age + family structure, and dis/ability. Important themes will include education as work, the environment and work, workplace safety, and inclusive workplaces. No prior knowledge or experience of work is required. However, a curious mind and a keen eye will help!

By the end of the course, students will be better prepared to navigate the world of work so that when they graduate, they can adapt to future worlds of work yet to come.

2. Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

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

$CILO_1$ Describe how work and workers connect across time and place, situating Hong Kong, East Asian, and Asian workers and industrialization in historical

and geographic context.

$CILO_2$ Explore the lives and concerns of Hong Kong, East Asian, and Asian workers from a diversity of perspectives, developing a sense of empathy and understanding.

$CILO_3$ Analyze the Hong Kong, East Asian, and Asian worlds of work and workers, with special attention to economics, politics, education, the environment, and power.

$CILO_4$ Develop concrete work skills and a deeper understanding of how work is changing – preparing students for the new world of work they will enter when they graduate.

3. Content, CILOs and Teaching & Learning Activities

Course Content	CILOs	Suggested Teaching & Learning Activities
Introduction: concepts of work, early factories, and work in the "modern" era. Students will be introduced to the course "lenses" of race, class, gender, age + family structure, and dis/ability, which work in tandem with important course touchstones including the environment, worker safety, care work and affective work, and inclusive workplaces.	$CILO_{1,3}$	Readings, lecture, discussion/in-class activities.
The "Asian miracle": overview of the "miracle" of postwar growth and industrialization in East Asia, focusing on Hong Kong, South Korea, and Mainland China. Students will learn about worlds of work in 1960s-70s Hong Kong, the Cold War context of South Korea's wig and hair industry, and the global supply chains have been built through China.	$CILO_{1,2,3}$	Readings, lecture, discussion/in-class activities, midterm project.
Beyond the factory: work outside the large, centralized factory, including "living room factories" and outwork, outsourcing, precarious and domestic work, and the work of education. Students also will learn about smart cities, affective and gendered work, and the work of leadership.	$CILO_{2,3,4}$	Readings, lecture, discussion/in-class activities.
The end of work?: how East Asia and Asia are positioned in this new economy, and ask how the new world is built on and breaks from the habits and structures of the old world of work. Including robots, AI, virtual, and other new modes	$CILO_{2,3,4}$	Readings, lecture, discussion/in-class activities, final project.

of working such as work from home, and work and the environment.		

4. Assessment

Assessment Tasks	Weighting	CILOs
(a) **In-class activities (individual + group).** Fun in-class work, such as drawing posters or creating fake "ad" campaigns. Activities reward students for attending lecture by building on in-class discussions and encouraging students to exchange ideas with classmates in an informal setting. "Low-stakes" (check plus/check/zero) grading gives students chances to try out new ideas about work. Please note: In some weeks, students will work in groups, and some weeks students will work individually. This enables us to create a classroom community while also providing an opportunity for students who do not work as well in groups, or students who want to be able to demonstrate their individual knowledge.	15%	$CILO_{1,2,3,4}$
(b) **Midterm project (individual).** Visit a real-life workplace (a coffee shop, a clothing store, etc.) and draw (or computer-draw) a map of the workplace. Annotate the map to analyze how "work" takes place there, and complete a short worksheet summarizing your analysis. Students will be guided closely in how to connect course material with this assessment through detailed assignment sheets as well as "worksheet" guides that enable students with no previous expertise in the topic to be able to produce creative, thoughtful assignments. The project will draw on key ideas and analytics covered in the first half of the course as discussed above, such as class and dis/ability; and begin to build out ideas of how Hong Kong connects to Asian and global worlds of work.	40%	$CILO_{1,2,3,4}$
(c) **Final project (group).** Imagine you are part of a team of workplace consultants. Select a specific workplace and create a concrete "plan" for how to improve that workplace in terms of a specific criterion (gender equity, health and safety, etc.). Students will be evaluated on a short group presentation of that plan to the three instructors, including a brief question and answer session (worth 40% of the total 45%). Students also will submit an individual written "reflection" on the "plan" (300 words; worth 5% of the total 45%). Students will be guided closely in	45%	$CILO_{1,3,4}$

how to connect course material with this assessment through detailed assignment sheets as well as "worksheet" guides. Students are expected to engage with key course ideas and analytics, as described above, and, where appropriate, to draw on their own subject and disciplinary expertise as University majors. This project is intended to allow students to develop concrete workplace skills such as group work and build experience in business-style presentations; and expand on ideas about how Hong Kong connects to Asian and global worlds of work.		

5. Use of Generative AI in Course Assessments

Please select one option only that applies to this course:

☐ ***Not Permitted***: In this course, the use of generative AI tools is not allowed for any assessment tasks.

☑ ***Permitted***: In this course, generative AI tools may be used in some or all assessment tasks. Instructors will provide specific instructions, including any restrictions or additional requirements (e.g., proper acknowledgment, reflective reports), during the first lesson and in relevant assessment briefs.

6. Required Text(s)

All required readings will be uploaded to Moodle. Readings (subject to revision) may include **short readings or short excerpts from**:

Blyton, P., & Jenkins, J. (2007). *Key concepts in work.* Los Angeles: Sage.

Enloe, C. (2007). Tracking the militarized global sneaker. In Enloe, C. (Ed.), *Globalization and militarism: Feminists make the link* (pp. 19-38). Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

Leisure and Cultural Services Department. (2021). 香港記憶: Hong Kong memory. www.hkmemory.hk/MHK/collections/oral_history/index.html.

McDowell, R., M. Mason, & M. Mendoza. (2015, March 25). AP investigation: Slaves may have caught the fish you bought. https://www.ap.org/explore/seafood-from-slaves/ap-investigation-slaves-may-have-caught-the-fish-you-bought.html.

Nadeem, S. (2017). *Dead ringers: How outsourcing is changing the way Indians understand themselves.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2021). The future of work. www.oecd.org/future-of-work/.

Susskind, D. (2020). *A world without work.* New York: Metropolitan Books.

Vristian, M. (2019, June). Short story: "The jade bracelet." *Asian review of Books.* https://asianreviewofbooks.com/content/short-story-the-jade-bracelet-by-mega-vristian/.

7. Recommended Readings

Harari, Y. (2018). *21 lessons for the 21st century*. New York: Spiegel & Grau.

Honey, M. (2001). *Black workers remember: An oral history of segregation, unionism, and the freedom struggle*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Hsiung, P. C. (1996). *Living rooms as factories: class, gender, and the satellite factory system in Taiwan*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Kelly, A. (2018, January 23). Thai seafood: Are the prawns on your plate still fished by slaves? *The Guardian.*

Ledderose, L. (2007). *Ten thousand things: Module and mass production in Chinese art.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Matos, J. (2017, January 30). How can I help you? *Wired.*

Miller, E., & S. Bonvini. (2015). Hidden dreams. *HK helpers campaign.* http://hkhelperscampaign.com/en/photography-hidden-dreams-portraits-of-hong-kongs-domestic-helpers/.

Ngai, P., & J. Chan. (2012, July). Global capital, the state, and Chinese workers: The Foxconn experience. *Modern China*, 38(4), 383-410.

Ogasawara, Y. (1998). *Office ladies and salaried men: Power, gender, and work in Japanese companies*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

8. Related Web Resources

Nil

9. Related Journals

Nil

10. Academic Honesty

The University upholds the principles of honesty in all areas of academic work. We expect our students to carry out all academic activities honestly and in good faith. Please refer to the *Policy on Academic Honesty, Responsibility and Integrity* (https://www.eduhk.hk/re/uploads/docs/00000000001633679892454 8BbN5). Students should familiarize themselves with the Policy.

11. Others

Nil

14 August 2025