



SUSTAINABLE RURAL CONSERVATION

INSTRUCTOR
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DESCRIPTION

This course takes students out to explore in-depth Hong Kong's remote countryside, visiting real sites, meeting villagers and working on actual projects. Students will understand, experience and participate in rural conservation practices in the Sha Tau Kok area of New Territories. Using centuries-old Hakka villages like Mui Tsz Lam, Lai Chi Wo, Kuk Po and Yung Shue Au as a living laboratory, the course guides students to understand the complexities and possibilities of sustainable rural development from cultural, ecological, economic, and community-based multi-dimensional perspectives.

Through lectures, case studies, field visits, and workshops, students will learn about the cultural value of Lingnan and Hakka architecture, sustainable rural design and construction methods, and the planning and operation of rural cultural tourism projects. The core of the course is to propose innovative and feasible conservation or micro-regeneration proposals for real sites through teamwork, focusing on developing students' abilities to identify problems, co-create solutions, and communicate effectively in complex, real-world contexts.

METHODS

The course is delivered in burst mode over three weeks, combining lectures, desktop research, field visits and practice workshops to build a progressively integrated understanding of rural conservation. Teaching begins with a context primer on Hong Kong/Mainland rural revitalization and an overview of local cases (Lai Chi Wo, Mui Tsz Lam, Kuk Po, etc.), followed by focused inputs on Lingnan and Hakka architecture—their spatial logics, climatic responses, geomantic ordering and contemporary translations. Field trips: first to establish on site familiarity; then to verify feasibility through targeted data collection aligned to students' selected topics.

In parallel, case study work compares Mainland/Hong Kong/overseas models to clarify transferable strategies. Iterative practice workshops support the consolidation of a complete project package—linking background analysis, SWOT, a cultural tourism operations plan (theme, activity design, organizational structure, sustainability considerations) and a phased implementation pathway (community engagement model and policy recommendations). The process culminates in a final presentation with stakeholders, villagers and scholars, with outcomes compiled into a publication for community reference.

IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY

The course is designed to produce actionable proposals that reinforce cultural value, promote sustainable rural design/operations, and support community benefit pathways. By coupling case-based learning with field trips and iterative workshops, students translate insights about Hakka heritage, village form and cultural practices into feasible cultural tourism strategies and phased implementation plans tailored to selected villages. The final public review/exhibition and community booklet aim to circulate ideas, encourage multi stakeholder dialogue and facilitate incremental adoption of proposals. Sustainability is addressed through theme positioning, carefully curated activity planning, and organizational structures that consider long term viability and local participation, alongside SWOT based risk/opportunity framing to guide decision making. The course therefore cultivates interdisciplinary collaboration and communication skills while delivering tangible outputs that communities can reference in pursuing resilient, culturally grounded rural conservation.

COURSE SYLLABUS

1: DESIGN METHODS AND CASE STUDIES IN RURAL CONSERVATION

Background and Strategies for Sustainable Rural Conservation:

Introduce rural revitalization context in Hong Kong and Chinese Mainland; Overview of Hong Kong rural conservation cases (Lai Chi Wo, Mui Tsz Lam, Kuk Po, Yung Shue Au, etc).

Rural conservation design strategies and local responses: Application of local materials, participatory design methods, translation of traditional craftsmanship, sustainable operation and business models.

Introduce characteristics of Cantonese (Lingnan) architecture: climatic response, spatial layout, decorative arts, and modern translation/revitalization cases of Lingnan architecture. Introduce classification, spatial features, Feng Shui layout logic, and village form differences of Hakka architecture in Mainland China and Hong Kong.

2: EXPLORATION AND INTEGRATED PRACTICE OF RURAL CULTURAL TOURISM DESTINATIONS

Introduce Innovative Methods in Cultural Tourism

Pathways for Hakka cultural IP transformation (e.g., festivals, crafts, cuisine); Business format mix and community benefit-sharing mechanisms; Niche tourism trends and application of digital tools.

Field Trips: On-site familiarization with Lai Chi Wo, Mui Tsz Lam, and Kuk Po villages in the Sha Tau Kok area. Explanation and feedback on the history, culture, festivals, food of different villages, as well as the built outcomes of existing conservation projects.

Targeted fieldwork in Lai Chi Wo, Mui Tsz Lam, and Kuk Po villages based on group research needs. Refinement of schemes based on collected data.

3: PRESENTATION AND OUTCOMES SHOWCASE

Case Study Presentations

Content: Students select and present one case study each from Mainland China, Hong Kong, and a foreign country. Compare the similarities and differences in revitalization models. Propose a preliminary feasibility update plan for selected site / village.

Practice Workshops

Content: Develop an integrated revitalization scheme that merges Hakka cultural research and cultural tourism planning; producing planning documents.

Content: Deepening the scheme, optimizing textual and visual expression, prepare final deliverables.

Activity: Group-specific professional guidance from tutors.

Final Review and Outcomes Exhibition

Present scheme and cultural tourism plan to villagers and scholars, receiving feedback and suggestions. Roundtable discussion; Outcomes compiled into a booklet for community reference.

COURSE FORMAT

Course Duration: 20 July – 6 August 2026. See course schedule for class days

Lectures in class, workshops and tutorials: class time: 9:30am – 12:30pm

Field trips: full days

DELIVERABLES

- A Comprehensive Report (electronic/printed version): The core output, integrating the following content:

- 1) Background Analysis: Village history, architectural value, community status.
- 2) Problems & Opportunities: SWOT analysis based on research.
- 3) Cultural Tourism Operation Plan: Theme positioning, activity planning, organizational structure, sustainability analysis.
- 4) Implementation Pathway: Phasing plan, community engagement model, policy recommendations.

- A Final Presentation (20 minutes presentation).

LEARNING OUTCOMES

ABILITY

1. To systematically understand the policy context, core issues, and cutting-edge practices of rural conservation in Hong Kong and the Greater Bay Area.
2. To master the basic characteristics of Lingnan and Hakka architecture and the wisdom of their village ecological layout.
3. To acquire comprehensive methodologies for rural conservation projects, ranging from design strategies and cultural tourism IP creation to sustainable operations.
4. To collaborate effectively within an interdisciplinary team, integrating diverse professional perspectives to complete a holistic rural revitalization proposal.

UNDERSTANDING / KNOWLEDGE

1. Analyze the multi-dimensional values (cultural, ecological, socio-economic) and key issues of a rural site.
2. Evaluate the similarities, differences, and applicability of rural revitalization models from different regions.
3. Create innovative and actionable conservation or micro-regeneration proposals for a specific village.
4. Collaborate to deliver a high-quality, comprehensive final presentation, demonstrating excellent communication and teamwork skills.

ASSESSMENT SCHEME

SPECIFIC ASSESSMENT

00_Attendance and In-class Participation (10%)

01_Case Study Report (20%)

02_Group Project (50%)

03_Final Presentation (20%)

Total: 100%

REFERENCES

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- Chu, V. H. Y., Lam, W.-F., & Williams, J. M. (2023). Building robustness for rural

- revitalization: A social-ecological system perspective. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 101, 103042. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2023.103042>
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 - Williams, J. M., Chu, V., Lam, W.-F., & Law, W. W. Y. (2021). Building resilient rural communities: A summary of the case study and prospects beyond lai chi wo and Hong Kong. In J. M. Williams, V.
 - Williams, J. M., Chu, V., Lam, W. F., & Law, W. W. (2021). Rural sustainability: Challenges and opportunities. *Revitalising rural communities*, 1-15.

IMPORTANT NOTE TO STUDENTS

Expectations for Professional Conduct

The motto of The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) is “Through learning and temperance to virtue”. This motto places equal emphasis on the intellectual and moral education of students. In addition to pursuing academic excellence, students of CUHK are expected to maintain and uphold the highest standard of integrity and honesty in their academic and personal lives, respect the rights of others and abide by the law. More information on Postgraduate studies can be found in the PG Student Handbook. <https://www.gs.cuhk.edu.hk/>

Attendance

Class attendance is required in all courses. For an excused absence, the instructor must be notified and presented with documentation of illness or personal matter. Please note: **Three (3)** or more unexcused absences may result in a failing grade for the course.

Academic Honesty

The Chinese University of Hong Kong places very high importance on honesty in academic work submitted by students and adopts a policy of zero tolerance on academic dishonesty

Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at: <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/>.

With each assignment, students may be required to submit a statement that they are aware of these policies, regulations, guidelines and procedures.

Third-Party Assistance

All intellectual work essential to the design project must be completed by the student and cannot, under any circumstance, be outsourced to a third party (including, but not limited to a company, consultant, alumni, and/or friend).

In the design studio context, students may utilize external resources, such as printing services for presentation materials, and/or laser cutting and 3D printing services for prototyping purposes. Use of such third-party services constitutes non-intellectual work done by others. It is only permitted with prior written consent from the studio tutor and acknowledgment of such work done by the third party.

Assistance from other students or friends for aspects of project production also constitutes non-intellectual work done by others; this is allowed only if declared and acknowledged in a written statement attached to any such work that has received assistance.

Under all circumstances, students must declare all work done by others by completing the school's designated form before assessment. This form must include a detailed explanation of the third party's identity (name and relationship to the student), when and how they were utilized, and the specific tasks they performed in the project. The completed form, signed by the student, must be endorsed by the tutor and presented during the final review. The school will collect and retain this form for record-keeping purposes.

Failure to follow this code of conduct may be considered a case of academic dishonesty, to be reviewed by a disciplinary board, and possible failure of the course.

Artificial Intelligence

According to CUHK guidelines, this course will adopt Approach 3 – “Use only with explicit acknowledgement.” Students are allowed to use AI tools in any learning activities as long as they explicitly acknowledge the use of these tools. When utilising AI tools, students must document the following in their process book: the specific AI tools used; how these tools were employed, including details of their interactions; their assessment of the feedback received from the AI tools and whether that feedback was incorporated into their submitted work.

Student Work

Submission of studio documentation must be complete and correctly formatted. Missing or incomplete submission of the documentation folder will result in the grade for the course being withheld. This will prevent registration for the following term or delay graduation. In addition, a grade deduction of *one letter grade* will be made.

Summer Term: 20 July 2026 (Monday) – 6 August 2026 (Thursday)

WEEK 01 Design methods and case studies in rural conservation		
20.07	Course Introduction - Background and Strategies for Sustainable Rural Conservation. Lectures 1 & 2	Activity: Form groups, village selection, ice-breaking, assignment of village research tasks.
21.07	Architectural Culture Special - Lingnan and Hakka Architecture. Lectures 3 & 4	Teaching interaction
22.07	Field Trip 1 (full day) Lai Chi Wo, Mui Tsz Lam, Kuk Po villages	On-site familiarization of HK Hakka villages. Hakka specialty food experience.
24.07	Group Case Study Presentations	
WEEK 02 Exploration and integrated practice of rural cultural tourism destinations		
27.07	Introduction to Innovative Methods in Cultural Tourism (Guest Speaker) Lecture 5	
28.07	Rural Conservation Practice Workshop 1	Deepen proposals & plans, group-specific tutor guidance
29.07	Field Trip 2 (full day)	Targeted fieldwork. Scheme refinement
30.07	Scheme Integration and Mid-term Review	Present mid-term report. Receive feedback from interdisciplinary tutors.
WEEK 03 Presentation and outcomes exhibition		
03.08	Rural Conservation Practice Workshop 2	Develop integrated scheme, produce documents/video
04.08	Rural Conservation Practice Workshop 3	Deepen scheme, optimize expression, structure final deliverables. Group-specific tutor guidance.
06.08	Final Review and Outcomes Exhibition	Public review, roundtable, booklet compilation. Exhibition of Achievements

Grade	Descriptor	Criteria	Points
A	Excellent	Comprehensively excellent performance on all aspects of the design intention, development, technical resolution and presentation. Achieving all learning outcomes with distinction.	4
A-	Very Good	Generally outstanding performance on the design intention, development, technical resolution and presentation. Achieving all learning outcomes with merit.	3.7
B+	Good	Substantial performance on the design intention, development, technical resolution and presentation. Achieving all learning outcomes satisfactorily.	3.3
B			3
B-			2.7
C+	Fair	Fair performance on the design intention, development, technical resolution and presentation. Achieving all learning outcomes at a passing standard.	2.3
C			2
C-			1.7
D+	Pass	Barely satisfactory performance on the design intention, development, technical resolution and presentation. Achieving all learning outcomes at a barely satisfactory standard.	1.3
D			1
F	Failure	Unsatisfactory performance on the design intention, development, technical resolution and presentation. Not achieving all learning outcomes.	0

Written Feedback to Students

Term: _____

Grade: _____

Course Code: _____

Review: _____

Tutor: _____

Student Name: _____

Student ID: _____

Feedback from Course Instructor:

Achievements:

Challenges: