

Departmental Student Chapter

Orientation Nights for Freshmen

Orientation programmes have long been a tradition of the SS mentors to send a warm welcome to the freshmen. Right before the start of their first semester at SS, 17 student mentors from the Departmental Student Chapter organized Orientation Nights for about 100 newcomers of the CRSO, PSY and SW majors. A variety of enthralling activities, ranging from survival guide and team-building games to insightful sharing by teachers and alumni, were held for our new students. They got not only a taste of university life as a SS student but also opportunities to foster bonds with their fellows. With the tremendous effort of the Student Chapter, all participants were rewarded with amusement, mutual understanding and a strengthened sense of belonging.

Criminology and Sociology Orientation Night



Welcome speech by Dr Ho Wing Chung to the new CRSO students.



Students tried hard to remember the names of their new acquaintances in 'Whack-a-mole'.

Psychology Orientation Night



With the support of Dr Tse Chun Yu, Dr Dannii Yeung and alumni Ms. Janet Cheung and Mr. Ryan Ng, all participants had a great time at the Orientation Night.



In 'Detective Game', the 'detectives' walked around the campus in search of evidence and witnesses to solve a murder case.

Social Work Orientation Night



Team members demonstrated their unity through a signature posture in the group photo.



Dr Cherry Tam and the freshmen got to know one another in a team-building game.

Mentors' Words



AU YEUNG Wan, Shirley

(Major in Criminology, Year 4)

One of the responsibilities of a mentor is to help newcomers adapt to their university life and make new friends. It is indispensable for us to organize orientation activities for them in order to fulfil our responsibilities.

The Orientation Night provided me with an array of opportunities to learn and grow. My communication skills and leadership skills have improved a lot. Although there were tons of concerns to be considered, all things went smoothly at the Orientation Night. Undoubtedly, teamwork was a key component for its success. Serving my mentees is definitely a memorable experience in my life.

CHUNG Chun Wa, Marco

(Major in Applied Sociology, Year 4)

I think the activities at the Orientation Night allowed the new students to get to know each other and marked a fresh start for their university journey. In addition, many teachers and senior students were also invited to introduce the courses, so that the newcomers could have a deeper understanding of the curriculum structure and the university.



LAU King Leung, Jacob

(Major in Applied Sociology, Year 4)

Through the Orientation Night, I secured a lot of experiences of cooperating with one another and organizing events based on the participants' needs and age. As an event planner and organizer, I had to orchestrate the flow of activities and make sure the plan could be executed seamlessly. These experiences, in turn, have delivered valuable opportunities for me to enhance my problem-solving and organizational skills that I rarely learn from lectures. This event has undoubtedly offered varied opportunities for me to enhance my capabilities instead of merely bearing the duties of a mentor.



LEUNG Ho Nam, Christy

(Major in Applied Sociology, Year 4)

At the Orientation Night, we organized various games and discussions to foster the relationships between the teachers and the new students. After the O Night, the freshmen would consult the mentors regarding their academic needs or university life. The O Night was a remarkable channel for freshmen to connect with or seek help from mentors. Overall, the activity was successfully held, but there should be improvements for future activities. When making the proposal, mentors should have better time management, which prevents activities from overrunning.



WOO Chun Nok, Jacob

(Major in Applied Sociology, Year 4)

I am glad to be a mentor of the SS Department. I met a lot of new students at the Orientation Night. I used to be a shy person, but through the orientation, I have developed my communication skills.



CHEUNG Hoi Lam, Abby

(Major in Psychology, Year 4)

Although this was not the first time for me to be a mentor, organizing the Psychology Orientation Night provided me with an enriching experience to connect with other mentors, mentees and the SS Department. Besides, I really enjoyed working with all the helpers, and everything paid off when the mentees appreciated our effort to help them adapt to university life.



Mentors' Words



LEE Wing Man, Priscilla

(Major in Psychology, Year 4)

This was my second time to organize an orientation event for our department. Although there were a number of hiccups during the process, such as the Typhoon Signal No. 8 hoisted on the morning of the event day, I was delighted that we were able to overcome all the obstacles and had the event held as planned. It was encouraging that I could meet our teachers, freshmen and other mentors in person. Hope everyone who participated enjoyed it as much as I did!

ZHAO Wanying, Miranda

(Major in Psychology, Year 3)

After years of online learning, getting the chance to host an offline event is truly memorable. I am thankful to everyone who contributed to the planning and execution of the Orientation Night. It was wonderful to meet each of them there. I enjoyed talking and working with them all. I am also glad to hear from participants that they all are working hard to achieve their goals and adjusting well to the new environment.



SUN Lejia, Dave

(Major in Psychology, Year 2)

Being in my first year as a student mentor, I find it intriguing to stand in the freshmen's shoes and recall the difficulties I faced when I first entered university. I have realized that mentoring is never an easy job after my mentees shared some of their problems, which also confused me. Being a mentor is really a long journey that requires consistent learning.

CHEUNG King Yuen, Christy

(Major in Social Work, Year 2)

Organizing this year's Orientation Night for Social Work and BDSS freshmen was a precious opportunity for me. The theme this year is 'Social Work Show Your Worth'. I was glad to see the freshmen start building up a relationship with one another, enhancing their understanding of CityU, and having a glimpse of social work values. The organizing journey was smooth with the help of different teachers and Social Work student helpers. It is empowering to see the positive impact we have co-created through the event.



LAU Chen Zhen, Harmony

(Major in Social Work, Year 2)

It is my pleasure to be one of the Social Work student mentors in this academic year. Thanks to the teachers, staff and other student mentors in the SS Department, we could hold the Social Work Orientation Night smoothly. With their support, the bonding was strengthened between newcomers and the Year 2 students as all of them got a precious opportunity to know more about our department. I hope all the freshmen can begin and enjoy their journey with passion in CityU.

LEE Pui Lam, Gen

(Major in Social Work, Year 2)

I am grateful that the Orientation Night was held successfully despite the COVID restrictions. After a year of online learning, it was nice to participate in face-to-face activities again, and to work with helpful groupmates to conduct this event for the freshmen to meet their classmates for the first time. This is also my first time becoming a mentor, and I was glad to meet the mentees. I hope that I will be able to not only support them throughout their university life but also see them grow and become influential social workers.



Meet Our New Faculty — Dr Zhen Shanshan

Dr Zhen Shanshan joined the SS department in August 2022. Dr Zhen received her PhD in psychology from the University of Singapore. Her research spans several areas in psychology and social cognitive neuroscience, focusing on decision-making and social reasoning in different populations (e.g., young adults, children and subclinical populations). She employs model-based neuroimaging (e.g., fMRI/EEG) and paradigms from behavioural economics to better understand the neurocomputational bases of decision bias and human decision-making in social contexts.

Why do you study decision-making with neuroscience methods?

Is it necessary to bring an umbrella today? Should I take up the job? Should I get married to this person? Every day, we use our brains to make decisions on both minor and major issues. The brain consumes more energy than any other human organ (up to 20% of total body energy). We also have the most complex brain compared to other animals, particularly in the prefrontal cortex. Having a complex brain allows us to make various types of decisions that are concrete or abstract, short-term or long-term, personal or interpersonal. Recently, neuroscientists, psychologists, economists and computer scientists have begun to collaborate in order to better understand the biological basis underlying decision-making mental processes. Uncovering these brain mechanisms will not only help us make better decisions but will also shed light on how mental disorders with decision-making deficits develop and persist.

What do you find most intriguing about social neuroscience?

The field of social cognitive neuroscience has captured the attention of many researchers during the past twenty years. The beauty of social neuroscience is its interdisciplinary approach to using a variety of neuroscience measures to understand how other people influence our thoughts, feelings and behaviour. How do we understand and represent others? How do we represent social groups? How do we manage our emotions and socially unacceptable reactions? Given the development of functional neuroimaging methods, we are able to understand how humans develop their distinct social brains.

Why are you also interested in irrational decision-making?

Irrational decision-making refers to decisions that do not maximize the utility of the individual. We all have decision biases from time to time. I observe myself and others making decisions that do not make much sense. Decision biases are cyclical. Understanding these biases better allows us to identify our own biases, avoid common decision-making traps and ultimately allow people to make better choices.



Meet Our New Faculty — Dr Jiang Mengyin, Maggie

Dr Jiang Mengyin (Maggie) joined the SS Department in August 2022. She received her PhD in experimental psychology from the University of Oxford. Through her research, Dr Jiang hopes to understand how social environments, experiences and relationships influence the way people learn and process information around them.



How did you start your career in psychology?

I have always had a fascination with psychology ever since I was young. Although my initial interest was in counselling, my experience of living in different countries sparked my interest in cultural psychology. One of the first research projects I worked on was comparing the cognitive differences between people from the East and West. Later, in my postgraduate years, my interest expanded from culture to social cognition.

What is your research about?

My research investigates how social factors influence the way people process perceptual information. Social factors such as social experiences, relationships and cultural background can have a significant impact on how quickly and accurately information is processed in the brain. For example, information about the self is perceived as socially salient, and thus self-related information receives prioritized processing—reflected in faster reaction times and higher accuracy of responses to self-related information. Similarly, information about one's family members and close friends is also socially important, and that, too, is processed with greater speed and accuracy. The goal of my research is to try to understand what and how social factors modulate this prioritized processing of information, as well as its underlying mechanisms, using both behavioural and neurophysiological methods.

How are you adjusting to life in Hong Kong?

I have always lived in the North, so this is the first time for me to live in the South, and so far, it has been quite the experience. I keep waiting for autumn and winter to happen, but it is almost December and it still hasn't happened yet. I'm still wearing my summer clothes, and although my mind understands what's happening, my body feels very confused! As a Chinese, I never expected to have trouble understanding written Chinese, but since I arrived in Hong Kong, I have had to resort to translational software for Cantonese texts, which feels very ironic. Despite this, it has been a lovely experience. Everyone has been very friendly, and I have had some very heart-warming experiences since I arrived in Hong Kong. I look forward to learning more about this city.



Message from CRIM Graduate (Studies and Sports Career), Dolphin



I am from the Class of 2022, majoring in criminology and sociology, and minoring in international studies. I am currently working as a research assistant in the Social Sciences Department, alongside Dr Rebecca Wong. I am a former member of the Hong Kong Swimming Team and the current member of the Hong Kong Lifesaving Team.

Life at CityU was always exciting and full of challenges. I joined the CityU family through the Student-Athlete Admission Scheme (SAAS) in 2018 and joined the Swimming Team to compete in the USFHK Aquatics Meet. I was selected to be the women's team captain in my final year. This was a great opportunity for me to contribute to the team not just as a competitor but also as a leader. The COVID-19 pandemic and the closure of the school's swimming pool added more challenges to our team since we were not able to recruit enough members. With all the effort, we captured the Women's 1st runner-up and overall 1st runner-up in the USFHK Aquatics Meet 2021. The responsibility of a student-athlete was not just competing for the CityU sports team; with all the resources and patience given by the school, I was able to balance both my study and sports career. Throughout the four years' journey, I went to various international competitions with the Hong Kong Lifesaving Team, and I was so grateful that the professors and teachers who taught me have given me flexibility on taking quizzes and exams so that I could focus on my competitions and yet be able to catch up with the class schedule. At the end of my final year, I was honoured to receive the Stephen Hui Outstanding Student-Athletes Scholarship and the Hong Kong Chiu Chow Chamber of Commerce Ltd. Elite Athlete Scholarship.

Aside from my school life, as one of the Hong Kong Lifesaving Team members, I owned seven Hong Kong records and am currently ranked first in Asia in my main event. Also, I was the junior champion in the Commonwealth Lifesaving Championships 2019. In September 2022, I was selected to participate in the Lifesaving World Championships, held in Riccione, Italy. That was the first time I competed in a top-level international competition. I gained a lot of experience and learnt from the world's finest athletes. It is an honour to be able to compete with them!

Other than that, I am planning on enrolling in a master's degree in environmental management or marine science and management next year to pursue my dream as a marine scientist.

Facing Failure with a Growth Mindset

How would you describe the millennials? Teenagers are being labelled as “Snowflakes”, the less resilient generation. They are regarded as having an inflated sense of self, deemed as overly emotional and easily offended. The label became popular in recent years, as we are facing not only the COVID-19 global pandemic but also an unprecedented mental health challenge. More and more students suffer from stress, anxiety or depression, and schools are given the responsibility to alleviate this situation. The Positive Education Laboratory in the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences has been promoting positive education through teacher training, parent seminars and life-education curriculum throughout recent years, and below is our experience in using group games to promote resilience among students.

I was once invited to play a game with Form 5 secondary students in a local school, which has a high university admission rate and school banding. The students were regarded as smart and diligent. The game requires them to guess some popular movie heroes whom they were familiar with, after asking a number of questions. At the beginning, the whole class kept silent, and they did not initiate the first question. After several minutes of silence, the teachers helped to ask questions. After the groups obtained more information from the questions, they started to have some discussion and write down two or three answers on the answer sheet. However, some answer sheets were still blank. Even though teachers encouraged them to give random answers, all students were hesitant to do so. Another three minutes passed, and they did not give additional answers. After that, correct answers were given by me. Students sighed and blamed one another for asking “wrong” questions or making “wrong” guesses. Some of them even yelled that they wanted to give up.

Do you think that these students are “Snowflakes”? After the first round, I asked the students why it seemed fatal to ask “wrong” questions or make “wrong” guesses, and why failure was so terrifying. Most of them answered that failure reflected their incompetence and inferiority, and they would feel stressful when others stared at them after a failure. “This is a fixed mindset”, I told them, “if you think talents are set in stone, and you must prove yourself by trying to look smart and talented at all costs, and avoid challenges at all expense”. You may have the following thinking: “How smart I am is all inborn” or “Talent alone creates success without effort”. People with a fixed mindset, when looking at the “wrong” answer on paper, would frame the failure as incompetence. I asked, “Do wrong answers help?” A student answered, “Yes, wrong answers give me extra information”. Another student said, “I know what to ask in the next round”. Hence, students recognized that they could learn from wrong answers. After the debriefing, all of them were involved in the game, asked “wrong” questions, and made “wrong” guesses; but at the same time, they enjoyed the failure.

The game created a platform for the students to examine their mindset, which is “The result determines the value of the process”. Conventional education emphasizes positive outcome and overlooks failure, and the example above reflects that knowledge and ability might not be enough to prepare young people for the present society. Equipping students with a growth mindset might be the most valuable gift teachers could give. People with a growth mindset believe that talents can be developed and abilities are built over time through effort. They are willing to face challenges and accept criticism and feedback. In addition, they are eager to find opportunities and believe that things can be changed. Failure is the “First attempt in learning”. The harder



Professor Sylvia Kwok

Associate Head
Department of Social & Behavioral Sciences
City University of Hong Kong

we try and the more failure we face, the more we learn and grow. After failure, we can review what went wrong, identify our strengths and weaknesses, examine the causes of failure and gain insights from the experiences. It is also important to identify the skills, knowledge and resources that can help us achieve the goal next time. “Snowflakes” can agglomerate and endure the carving process, finally evolving into a beautiful ice sculpture.

As an example, four local elite athletes were admitted to our department through the Student-Athlete Learning Support and Admission Scheme in 2022. They are Ho Kwan Kit (table tennis), Pau Yik Man (table tennis), Lo Sum Man (Karatedo), and Leung Sze Lok (badminton). As elite athletes, they won a number of prizes in different Asian and international competitions. However, can you imagine how much disappointment, sacrifices, adversity, rejections and failures they have undergone? Without being persistent and having a growth mindset, they could not have this success and achievement.