



SSCI3001

Evaluating Complexity

Session 1, In person-scheduled-weekday, North Ryde 2025

School of Communication, Society and Culture

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

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Credit points

10

Prerequisites

120cp at 1000 level or above and (SSCI2001 or SSCI2010) and (SSCI2002 or SSCI2020)

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description

How can social scientists apprehend and advise on matters of profound social complexity? This unit prepares students to demonstrate advanced competencies in social science theories and methods, focusing on evaluation and policy techniques. Students will engage with the challenge and change agendas confronting different populations, critiquing how these are framed by decision makers, and practising techniques for intervening and evaluating claims to social benefit or effect. Students will also critically assess influential approaches to problem definitions in policy and describe the contestability of both the issues and their stances when defending their own proposed approaches, using data as part of their analysis. Throughout the unit, ethical and practical issues that arise when designing and doing applied social science in complex contexts are considered. Students will demonstrate a commitment to the role of a professional and ethical contributor in addressing matters of social and policy concern, and the capacity to navigate the open-ended and interacting qualities of social complexity.

Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at <https://www.mq.edu.au/study/calendar-of-dates>

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

ULO1: Critique and communicate how problems and issues are identified and framed in

complex systems, policies and processes.

ULO2: Apply skills, knowledge and techniques to demonstrate advanced competency in social science theories and methods.

ULO3: Analyse and evaluate processes, policies and interventions to determine the veracity of claims for benefit and impact.

ULO4: Demonstrate knowledge of the ethical and engagement obligations inherent to the process and function of being a social science practitioner.

General Assessment Information

ASSESSMENT 1. MESS MAPPING

This individual task requires you to develop a mess map for ONE wicked problem. Wicked problems are complex, intractable and recurrent issues that attract ongoing political debate (i.e. climate change). For this task, you should select a wicked problem that is listed on the unit iLearn page OR you can choose an issue related to your interests, provided that you discuss it with teaching staff to confirm it is suitable (by the end of week 4). Depending on the wicked problem you have selected, you should undertake your own research on its cultural, economic, political and/or social dynamics (whichever you consider most important).

Mess maps are visual tools that aim to display the complexity of wicked problems, present the uncertainty surrounding both problem formation and potential solutions, and capture the extent of political debate. Your mess map should present the key political, social, cultural and/or economic dynamics of the wicked problem you have selected, as well as the interconnections between these dynamics. The challenge is to present the context and complexity of the wicked problem in a way that aids understanding of it to a non-expert audience.

Mess mapping will be discussed in the week 3 lectional. The mess map should be presented on one page in landscape or portrait orientation. We recommend using software programs such as Canva, Microsoft Word, Microsoft Powerpoint, Apple Pages, Apple Keynote, Google Docs, Google Slides or Adobe Creative Suite. Your mess map should be uploaded to Turnitin by the due date in .pdf, .png or jpg formats. Please check the resolution of your mess map after you have submitted it on Turnitin to ensure that it is legible.

ASSESSMENT 2. CASE STUDY RESEARCH REPORT

This individual task requires you to write a 2000-word research report on the complex social issue that have you focused on in your mess mapping assignment. This report should be formatted using word processing software and submitted online via Turnitin. Standard fonts size 12 and 1.5 line spacing should be used. The goal of this task is to research, examine and reflect upon the various political, social, economic and/or cultural dimensions of your case study. Complexity is central to understanding social problems as well as to their possible or provisional solutions, and should be a key focus of this Research Report. In your report, make sure to describe and clearly sketch out the full dimensions of your social/political issue, the main protagonists involved in its historical unfolding, as well as the complexity of any provisional policy

or political 'solutions' you identify to manage, contain, or deal with it.

ASSESSMENT 3. EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

This individual task requires you to write a 1500-word paper that presents an evaluation framework that you have developed to assess a policy proposal or existing program. While it is not compulsory, we highly recommend that you select a proposal or policy that is related to the wicked problem you selected for the Case Study Research Report. If you have any concerns about the suitability of a proposal or program, please consult with teaching staff. This evaluation framework should provide background information on the issue/problem that the proposal or program seeks to address, a clear overview of the proposal or existing program and develop an applied social research methodology. This applied social research methodology should: identify the research problem to be addressed, including which aspects of the proposal or program will be assessed: select either an evaluation or social impact assessment approach (providing a short justification); explain what social research methods (qualitative, quantitative and/or mixed methods) will be applied to address the research problem; and briefly identify key ethical issues that may arise. More information will be presented on iLearn.

Important Assessment Information

Academic Integrity

Academic Integrity is an integral part of the core values and principles contained in the Macquarie University Ethics Statement. Its fundamental principle is that all staff and students act with integrity in the creation, development, application and use of ideas and information. This means that:

- All academic work claimed as original is the work of the author making the claim
- All academic collaborations are acknowledged
- Academic work is not falsified in any way
- When the ideas of others are used, these ideas are acknowledged appropriately
- Self-plagiarism (resubmitting your own work - including past assignments for this or other units - without attribution) is an unacceptable academic activity
- **Chat GPT and other generative AI software programs** should not be used when preparing or drafting assessments.

University Grading Policy

The grade that a student receives will signify their overall performance in meeting the learning outcomes of the unit of study. Graded units will use the following grades

HD	High Distinction	85-100
D	Distinction	75-84

Cr	Credit	65-74
P	Pass	50-64
F	Fail	0-49

Results published on platform other than [eStudent](#), (eg. iLearn, Coursera etc.) or released directly by your Unit Convenor, are not confirmed as they are subject to final approval by the University.

Special Consideration (Extensions)

The University recognises that students may experience events or conditions that adversely affect their academic performance. If you experience serious and unavoidable difficulties at exam time or when assessment tasks are due, you can consider applying for Special Consideration.

You need to show that the circumstances:

1. were serious, unexpected and unavoidable
2. were beyond your control
3. caused substantial disruption to your academic work
4. substantially interfered with your otherwise satisfactory fulfilment of the unit requirements
5. lasted at least three consecutive days or a total of 5 days within the teaching period and prevented completion of an assessment task scheduled for a specific date.

More information about Special Consideration is available in the Policies and Procedures section of the unit guide. You can apply for Special Consideration via <https://connect.mq.edu.au/s/>

Late Assessment Submission Penalty

Unless a Special Consideration request has been submitted and approved, **a 5% penalty (of the total possible mark) will be applied each day a written assessment is not submitted**, up until the 7th day (including weekends). After the 7th day, a mark of '0' (zero) will be awarded even if the assessment is submitted. Submission time for all written assessments is set at 11.55pm. A 1-hour grace period is provided to students who experience a technical issue.

This late penalty will apply to non-timed sensitive assessment (including essays, reports, posters, portfolios, journals, recordings etc). **Late submission of time sensitive tasks** (such as tests/exams, performance assessments/presentations, scheduled practical assessments/labs etc) will only be addressed by the unit convenor via a Special consideration application that has been submitted online. The Special Consideration outcome may result in a new question or topic.

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Hurdle	Due
Mess mapping	30%	No	04/04/2025

Name	Weighting	Hurdle	Due
Case study report	40%	No	09/05/2025
Evaluation framework	30%	No	04/06/2025

Mess mapping

Assessment Type ¹: Poster

Indicative Time on Task ²: 20 hours

Due: **04/04/2025**

Weighting: **30%**

Select a wicked problem to create a mess map

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Critique and communicate how problems and issues are identified and framed in complex systems, policies and processes.
- Apply skills, knowledge and techniques to demonstrate advanced competency in social science theories and methods.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the ethical and engagement obligations inherent to the process and function of being a social science practitioner.

Case study report

Assessment Type ¹: Report

Indicative Time on Task ²: 40 hours

Due: **09/05/2025**

Weighting: **40%**

2000 word case study report.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Critique and communicate how problems and issues are identified and framed in complex systems, policies and processes.
- Apply skills, knowledge and techniques to demonstrate advanced competency in social science theories and methods.

- Analyse and evaluate processes, policies and interventions to determine the veracity of claims for benefit and impact.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the ethical and engagement obligations inherent to the process and function of being a social science practitioner.

Evaluation framework

Assessment Type ¹: Case study/analysis

Indicative Time on Task ²: 30 hours

Due: **04/06/2025**

Weighting: **30%**

Evaluation framework. 1500 words

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Critique and communicate how problems and issues are identified and framed in complex systems, policies and processes.
- Apply skills, knowledge and techniques to demonstrate advanced competency in social science theories and methods.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the ethical and engagement obligations inherent to the process and function of being a social science practitioner.

¹ If you need help with your assignment, please contact:

- the academic teaching staff in your unit for guidance in understanding or completing this type of assessment
- the [Writing Centre](#) for academic skills support.

² Indicative time-on-task is an estimate of the time required for completion of the assessment task and is subject to individual variation

Delivery and Resources

Unit Sessions

Lectorials will be held at 3pm to 6pm on Mondays in the **Group Activity Space 216 on Level 2 of Building 01 Central Courtyard** from weeks 1 to 13 of semester (inclusive).

Required and recommended resources

There is no required textbook for SSCI3001. Required readings are online available via Leganto

(see below).

Technology used

The following technologies are used in this unit...

Email

Make sure that you regularly check your student email for correspondence with teaching staff and unit announcements.

iLearn

Important information about the weekly schedule, course readings and assessment are all available on the course *iLearn* page. If you do not have access, please contact IT help. You are required to check iLearn and your student email regularly for course updates and information.

Turnitin

All written assessments need to be submitted online via Turnitin only. A link to Turnitin will be available via the Assessments tab on the iLearn page. Please contact the convenor if you cannot find it (do not leave it until the day of the assessment). There is no need to submit a hard copy of the assessment or to include a cover sheet.

Feedback will be made available online via Turnitin. It will take four forms (in no particular order): specific comments in the text of your paper; overall comments; a score on a qualitative rubric (that cannot be used to calculate your mark numerically); and a numeric score out of 100. Once you have received your assignment back, please make sure that you have access to these forms of feedback.

ECHO Active Learning Platform

Recordings of the lectorials will be made available via the ECHO Active Learning Platform. These recordings will not necessarily cover the entire session and will become available after the session is held on Monday afternoon (typically within 24 hours).

Leganto

Leganto is the electronic system for accessing unit readings that can be accessed via the iLearn page. Readings are allocated via topic. As well as the required readings for each topic, you will find recommended and optional readings. The required readings are available in pdf or electronic format. If you are not able to access the readings, please contact the unit convenor via email.

Unit Schedule

Week	Lecture Topic	Discussion Topic
1	Evaluating the 'Complexity Explosion'	Unit Introduction
2	Science is the Solution! But Should we Simply Follow the Science?	Thought Experiment: Who wants to live in Rationalia?
3	Social Complexity, Paradoxes & Wicked problems	Case Study: Religion in a Secular Age

Week	Lecture Topic	Discussion Topic
4	Complex Worlds	Case Study: Conscientious Objection and Freedom of Religion
5	Analysing Social Complexity	Case Study: Cities, Planning, and Politics
6	Analysing Complex Solutions	Case Study: Cities, Habitation, and Dwelling
7	Evaluating Social Complexity	Case Study: The Housing Crisis
8	Evaluation Frameworks	Case Study: Homelessness
9	Evaluation Tools	Case Study: Closing the Gap
10	Evaluating Proposals for Action	Case Study: Climate Change
11	Evaluating Practices	Case Study: Domestic & family violence
12	Communicating Evidence for Impact	Thought Experiment: What strategy will have most impact?
13	Unit Conclusion	Wrap Up

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central \(https://policies.mq.edu.au\)](https://policies.mq.edu.au). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

- [Academic Appeals Policy](#)
- [Academic Integrity Policy](#)
- [Academic Progression Policy](#)
- [Assessment Policy](#)
- [Fitness to Practice Procedure](#)
- [Assessment Procedure](#)
- [Complaints Resolution Procedure for Students and Members of the Public](#)
- [Special Consideration Policy](#)

Students seeking more policy resources can visit [Student Policies \(https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/policies\)](https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/policies). It is your one-stop-shop for the key policies you need to know about throughout your undergraduate student journey.

To find other policies relating to Teaching and Learning, visit [Policy Central \(https://policies.mq.edu.au\)](https://policies.mq.edu.au) and use the [search tool](#).

Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: <https://students.mq.edu.au/admin/other-resources/student-conduct>

Results

Results published on platform other than [eStudent](#), (eg. iLearn, Coursera etc.) or released directly by your Unit Convenor, are not confirmed as they are subject to final approval by the University. Once approved, final results will be sent to your student email address and will be made available in [eStudent](#). For more information visit connect.mq.edu.au or if you are a Global MBA student contact globalmba.support@mq.edu.au

Academic Integrity

At Macquarie, we believe [academic integrity](#) – honesty, respect, trust, responsibility, fairness and courage – is at the core of learning, teaching and research. We recognise that meeting the expectations required to complete your assessments can be challenging. So, we offer you a range of resources and services to help you reach your potential, including free [online writing and maths support](#), [academic skills development](#) and [wellbeing consultations](#).

Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit <http://students.mq.edu.au/support/>

Academic Success

[Academic Success](#) provides resources to develop your English language proficiency, academic writing, and communication skills.

- [Workshops](#)
- [Chat with a WriteWISE peer writing leader](#)
- [Access StudyWISE](#)
- [Upload an assignment to Studiosity](#)
- [Complete the Academic Integrity Module](#)

The Library provides online and face to face support to help you find and use relevant information resources.

- [Subject and Research Guides](#)
- [Ask a Librarian](#)

Student Services and Support

Macquarie University offers a range of [Student Support Services](#) including:

- [IT Support](#)
- [Accessibility and disability support](#) with study
- Mental health [support](#)
- [Safety support](#) to respond to bullying, harassment, sexual harassment and sexual assault

- [Social support including information about finances, tenancy and legal issues](#)
- [Student Advocacy](#) provides independent advice on MQ policies, procedures, and processes

Student Enquiries

Got a question? Ask us via the [Service Connect Portal](#), or contact [Service Connect](#).

IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit http://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/offices_and_units/information_technology/help/.

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the [Acceptable Use of IT Resources Policy](#). The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.

Unit information based on version 2025.04 of the [Handbook](#)