

PHI 1110A Introduction to Philosophy

Course Teacher: Prof. Wong Kai-Yee

T07-08 SWH 2

Preliminary Syllabus

Course description:

This course is a general introduction to philosophical methods and problems.

The *goals* are to:

- ◇ Introduce you to the *pleasures* and *importance* of *philosophical reflection* on things that matter in *life*, such as knowledge, the nature of mind, rationality, god, moral values, art, human identity and the meaning of life.
- ◇ Demonstrate how philosophy can make a distinctive contribution to your *understanding of yourself, your beliefs* and the *world*.

You will gain a basic familiarity with some of the major philosophical fields, figures and topics, be encouraged to develop your own views and to defend them with rigorous reasoning.

Learning philosophy is a matter of acquiring not so much a body of information but skills to reflect, in a critical manner, on concepts and their relations.

Our mode of teaching/learning is traditional – reading, thinking, discussing, and writing. No IT or multimedia tools. You are expected to:

- ◇ *Attend* all classes,
- ◇ *Read* pre-class materials assigned (usually a short essay or book chapter) and *think* or try to think through them,
- ◇ Arrive *prepared* to *discuss* the materials and participate in class discussion.

In the first tutorial session. Your tutor will brief you on the format of tutorials, on what will be expected of you and what you can expect regarding teaching in tutorials.

Topics:

I. Introduction

1. What is philosophy? Why study it?

II. God, Mind and Soul

2. Faith and Reason: Can you prove God exist?
3. Mind & Body: What is consciousness? Can machines have minds?
4. Self, Person & Identity: Who am I?

III. Knowledge and Rationality

5. Matrix, Dreaming & Skepticism: Does the external world really exist?
6. Paradigm of Conceptual Engineering: What is 'knowledge'?

7. Confirmation and Induction: Are you sure the sun will rise tomorrow?
8. From Prisoner's Dilemma to the Origin of Virtues: How do we act rationally?

IV. Values and Morality

9. Subjectivism and Relativism: Are there objective values?
10. Normative Ethics: Is what is moral what has the best consequences?
11. Applying Ethics: Is discrimination always morally wrong?

Assessment

The grading of the course will be based on tutorials, short essays/quizzes, take-home examination.

References:

General only. References for each topic will be supplied in lecture notes.

Blackburn, Simon	The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy
Blackburn, Simon	Think
Blackburn, Simon	Being Good: A short Introduction to Ethics
Cahn, Steven	Exploring Philosophy: An Introductory Anthology
Cornman, J.W., <i>et al.</i>	Philosophical Problems and Arguments: An Introduction
Craig, Edward	The Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy (On-line version available in campus network.)
Gale, Eric	The Blackwell Guide to Metaphysics
Geoffrey, Thomas	An Introduction to Ethics
Goldstein, Laurence	The Philosopher's Habitat
Hamilton, <i>et al.</i>	Readings for an Introduction to Philosophy
Hollis, Martin	Invitation to Philosophy
Honderich, T.	Philosophy Through Its Past
Honderich, T. & Burnyeat, M.	Philosophy As It Is
Hospers, J.	Introduction to Philosophical Analysis
Hospers, J.	Readings in Introductory Philosophical Analysis
Dancy, Dancy	Contemporary Epistemology
Kahane, Howard	Logic and Philosophy
Kahn, Steven	Exploring Philosophy
Magee, Bryan	The Great Philosophers
McGinn, Colin	The Characters of Mind
Nagel, Thomas	What Does It All Mean?
Noaick, Robert	Philosophical Explanation
Singer, Peter	How are we to live
Pojamn, Louis	Philosophy: The Pursuit of Wisdom (2 nd ed.)
Pojman, Louis	Introduction to Philosophy: Classical and Contemporary Readings
Trigg, Roger	Philosophy Matters