PHIL 5543

Philosophy of the Human Condition: Life, Death, Love & Desire

1st Semester, 2010/11
Prof. Cheung Chan Fai (cheungcf@cuhk.edu.hk)

Course Description:

The main themes of this seminar course are eros and thanatos. It is a philosophical reflection of our conditio humana: love, lust, desire and death. Through intensive study of major Western and Chinese philosophical thought on these topics, the meaning of life will be the focus of discussion. Participants are expected to read significant amount of primary texts and related articles so that fruitful discussion can be achieved in class.

Course Outline:

1. Introduction: Between Birth and Death – Mortality vs Immortality
2. All Begin with Plato: Eros in Symposium and Thanatos in Phaedo
3. The Epicurean and the Stoic Reaction
4. The Christian Answer to Lust, Death and Love
5. The Chinese Ways of Qing and Death: Confucianism and Daoism
6. The Psychoanalysis of Eros and Thanatos: Sigmund Freud
7. The Extremity of Eroticism: the Marquis de Sade and Georges Batielle
8. The Phenomenon of Death and the Phenomenology of Dying: Heidegger and Sartre
9. Reflections: On the Possibility of a Meaningful Life

Film Study and Discussion:

2. Nagisa Ohima. In the Realm of the Senses (感官世界), 1976
3. Ang Lee: Lust, Caution (色戒), 2007

There will be THREE tutorials at the second half of the semester
(Tutorial papers to be announced in due course)

Assessment:

2 term papers

1. A shorter paper on a philosophical reflection on any one of the films
   Due date: 1st week of November, 2010  40%
2. A final term paper on the topics discussed in the course.
   Due date: 3rd week of December, 2010  60%
**Primary Texts:**


唐君毅：《人生之體驗續篇》1961

**Major References:**

1. **Love / Eros**


Morgan, Douglas. *Love: Plato, the Bible and Freud*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall,
1964.

2. Sex / Lust


3. Death

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Lecture Outline 1

1. Introduction: Between Birth and Death – Mortality Vs Immortality
   1.1 Condito humana
   1.1.1 The Phenomenon of life
   1.1.2 The Problem of Human Existence
   1.1.3 Philosophy Begins with Wonder and Anxiety

1.2 Death
   1.2.1 The Fear of Death
   1.2.2 The Uncertain Certainty of Death
   1.2.3 Radical Individualization of Myself
   1.2.4 Why Should I Die?
   1.2.5 The Unnecessary Necessity of Birth
   1.2.6 What is Death?
   Death of Body / Death of Self?

1.3 Eros / Love
   1.3.1 Love as Eros-philia-agape
   1.3.2 The Answer of Life and Death
   1.3.4 The Pursuit of the Ideal and the Good
   1.3.5 Love as “Spiritual” activity

1.4 Lust
   1.4.1 Desire and Lust
   1.4.2 Natural Drive and Physical Pleasure
   1.4.3 Materialistic Universe
   1.4.4 Somatic Function: Procreation
   1.4.5 Sex and Sexuality; Erotic and Eroticism

1.5 Transcendence
   1.5.1 The Finitude and Contingency of Human Existence
   1.5.2 The components of Life: soma/psyche/spiritus
   1.5.3 The Telos of Philosophy and Religion: Immortality
   1.5.4 Metaphysics and Phenomenology of Life

Readings