

PHIL1110B
Introduction to Philosophy 哲學概論

Course Outline

Time :	W 9:30-12:15	Location :	YIA 405
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Course overview

This course will serve as an introduction to the basic problems and concepts of philosophy. Instead of providing you with a comprehensive survey of philosophical concepts, ideas, methods and disciplines on the basis of secondary literature, this course will zero in on some classical philosophical texts, both ancient and modern, that will exemplify the plurality of ways in which philosophy has conceived of its own vocation and responsibilities. The following questions will be at the center of our attention: What is ancient philosophy? What is medieval philosophy? What is rationalism? What is empiricism? What is existentialism? What is Enlightenment?

This course does not presuppose any prior knowledge of philosophy.

Learning outcomes

1. Become familiar with philosophical problems, philosophical movements, philosophical concepts and ideas.
2. Learn how to read philosophical texts (appearances to the contrary, this is not an easy task in the least!).
3. Develop critical and exegetical skills by means of reading and interpreting classical texts.
4. Acquire the skills of presenting philosophical arguments in writing.

Topics

I. Introduction

1. What is philosophy? Why study it?

II. The Nature of the Soul and the Foundations of Society (Plato)

2. What is the soul?
3. What is society?
4. What is justice?

III. The Nature of God and the Birth of Humanism

5. Does God exist (Aquinas)?
6. What is a human being (Mirandola)?

IV. Knowledge and Rationality

7. What are the foundations of scientific knowledge (Descartes)?

IV. Existence, Meaning, and Responsibility

8. What is Enlightenment (Kant and Gadamer)?
9. What is existentialism (Sartre and Camus)?

Learning activities

In this course, you are expected to

- read and think about the assigned readings;
- develop the skills mentioned in the course outcomes through philosophical discussion and writing (short essays, take home exams, and critical summaries of tutorial readings);
- attend *all* lectures/tutorials to participate in discussion.

Activities and workload:

In-class (mandatory):

1. Lecture: 2 hours each week.
2. Interactive tutorial: a 1-hour long session every week.

Out-of-class (average workload per week):

1. Reading: approximately 2-3 hours on the basic and suggested readings each week.
2. Writing assignments: an average of 2 hours each week on preparing and writing essay assignments throughout the term. You should try to design a schedule that allows you to apportion more time on writing and discussing your essay with your teacher two to three weeks before each essay is due.

Assessment scheme

Since a major aim of this course is to develop your ability to interpret, analyze, and generate philosophical arguments through discussion and writing, the assessment methods are designed to encourage participation and learning through argumentative writing.

Task nature	Description	Weight
Participation in Discussions	Discussion	10%
Two writing assignments	1-page-long critical summaries of the readings	20%
One take home exam	2-3 essay type questions	20%
Term paper	Around 2000 words	50%

Remarks:

1. Tutorial participation: Grading is based on active participation in discussions. *Absence will damage your grades.* Detailed guidelines on requirements and assessment method of tutorials will be provided in class.
2. Two writing assignments: your task to submit one single-spaced typewritten page. In these assignments, you are supposed to a) provide a 1-2 paragraph long summary of the assigned readings, b) identify what you consider to be the weakest part of the work (philosophically, with argumentation) and explain why (one paragraph), c) identify what you consider the strongest part of the work (philosophically, with argumentation) and explain why (1 paragraph), d) come up with some good questions for discussion in class. Your summaries should be approximately 500 words long.
3. Take home exam: you will need to answer 2-3 essay type questions. These questions will be placed on Blackboard. You will have one week to submit your answers.
4. The term paper: you may choose to write on any philosophical problem addressed in this course. You will be asked to submit a preliminary statement on a chosen topic three weeks before the essay is due. You will be expected to do some independent research, to formulate a central thesis as well as to develop arguments in support of it.

Recommended learning resources

Required Text:

Steven M. Cahn, ed., *Classics of Western Philosophy*, 7th Edition. Indianapolis / Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2006.

This anthology comprises most of the readings you are expected to cover in this course.

References:

1. Blackburn, Simon, *Think: A Compelling Introduction to Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, 1999.
2. Berlin, Isaiah, *Concepts and Categories: Philosophical Essays*, Berlin, Isaiah, Hogarth Press, 1978.
3. Copelston, Frededrick. *A History of Philosophy*. Vol. I-IX. New York: An Image Book. 1993.
4. Descartes, Rene. *Meditations on First Philosophy*, With Selections from Objections and Replies. Ed. by John Cottingham, trans. by John Cottingham. Cambridge University Press, 1996.
5. Descartes, Rene. *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*. Vol. I-III. Cambridge University Press. 1985.
6. Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Praise of Theory: Speeches and Essays*. Yale University Press, 1999.
7. Gaukroger, Stephen. *Descartes: An Intellectual Biography*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
8. Haddot, Pierre. *What is Ancient Philoosphy?* Trans. by Michael Chase. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004.
9. Hume, David. *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding, and Other Writings*. Ed. by Stepehn Buckle. Cambridge University Press, 2007.
10. Hume, David. *Selected Essays*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.
11. James, William. *Pragmatism and Other Essays*. Ed. by Giles Gunn. New York: Penguin Books, 2000.
12. James, William. *The Principles of Psychology*. Vol. 1 & 2. Digireads.com Publishing. 2012.
13. Jaspers, Karl. *Way to Wisdom: An Introduction to Philosophy*. Trans. by Ralph Manheim. Yale University Press, 2003.
14. Kant, Immanuel. *An Answer to the Question, What is Enlightenment?* Trans. by H.B. Nisbet. New York: Penguin Books, 2010.
15. Kant, Immanuel. *Political Writings*. Ed. by H.S. Reiss. Trans. by H.B. Nisbet. Cambridge University Press, 1991.
16. Marino, Gordo, ed. *Basic Writings of Existentialism*. Modern Library Paperback Edition, 2004.
17. Plato, *Republic*. Trans. by G.M.A. Grube. Revised by C.D.C. Reeve. Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. 1992.
18. Russell, Bertrand. *The History of Western Philosophy*. Simon and Schuster, Inc. 1967.
19. Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Existentialism is a Humanism*. Yale University Press, 2007.
20. Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Basic Writings*. Ed. by Stephen Priest. Routledge, 2001.

Feedback for evaluation

1. You are strongly encouraged to provide feedback on the course via email or meetings with professor or tutors.
2. Midway through the term, you will also be asked to provide feedback via a brief questionnaire on the course.
3. As with all courses in Philosophy Department, you will evaluate the course through a survey and written comments at the end of the term as well as via regular feedback that you will be able to provide to your teacher. This information is highly valued and is used to revise teaching methods, tasks, and content.

Course schedule

<i>Week</i>	<i>Topics</i>	<i>Required reading</i>	<i>Tutorials</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
1	What is philosophy?		Tutorial 1: Formal Introduction	
2	Justice, Selfhood, Society	Plato, <i>The Republic</i> , Book I	Tutorial 2: Plato, <i>The Republic</i> , Book I (Discussion)	
3	Justice, Selfhood, Society	Plato, <i>The Republic</i> , Book II	Tutorial 3: Plato, <i>The Republic</i> , Book II (Discussion)	
4	Justice, Selfhood, Society	Plato, <i>The Republic</i> , Book IV	Tutorial 4: Plato, <i>The Republic</i> , Book IV (Discussion)	
5	The Existence of God	Aquinas, "The Existence of God" (Summa Theologica Ia2)	Tutorial 5: Mirandola, "Oration on the Dignity of Man" (Discussion)	
6	The Foundations of Knowledge	Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> I and II	Tutorial 6: Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> I and II (Discussion)	Take home exam
7	The Foundations of Knowledge	Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> II and III	Tutorial 7: How to Write Philosophical Papers? Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> II and III (Discussion)	
8	Pragmatism	James, "What is Pragmatism?"	Tutorial 8: James, "What is Pragmatism?" (Discussion)	Submit topic statement for the term paper
9	Enlightenment	Kant, "An Answer to the Question, What is Enlightenment?"	Tutorial 9: Gadamer, "Science as an Instrument of Enlightenment" (Discussion)	
10	Human Existence	Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism"	Tutorial 10: Camus, <i>The Myth of Sisyphus</i> (Discussion)	
11	Human Existence	Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism"	Tutorial 11: Camus, <i>The Myth of Sisyphus</i> (Discussion)	Final paper due before the beginning of class

* This course schedule is tentative and it might be modified with the aim of adapting it to your intellectual interests and needs.

Details of course website

Relevant announcements and course documents will be posted on Blackboard.

Contact details for teacher(s) or TA(s)

Professor	
Name:	GENIUSAS Saulius
Office location:	432 FKH
Telephone:	39437147
Email:	geniusas@cuhk.edu.hk