The Chinese University of Hong Kong
Department of Philosophy
2013-2014

UGED 2801
Philosophy and Contemporary Problems
哲學與現代問題
Course Outline

Time: H 9-10
Venue: YIA LT7

Course overview

This course aims to introduce major areas and problems of philosophy from a critical point of view and to train students to think critically and philosophically. Topics to be discussed include the meaning of philosophy and theories of value, with special emphasis on general concepts in ethics and problems of contemporary civilization.

現代社會不論文化、資訊、政治及經濟都日趨複雜,引發我們反思道德、價值和意義的真締。本科旨在以批判觀點介紹哲學之主要領域與現代社會面臨的問題,以訓練學生獨立思考,從而提升我們對有關問題的反省能力,深化我們對文化及人文精神的瞭解和關懷。內容包括:哲學批判之意義;價值論暨倫理學之一般觀念、原理之介紹;剖析當代社會、文化、科技等問題。

Philosophy Majors and students who have taken UGED2811 cannot take this course to fulfil General Education requirements.
Prerequisite (for S6 entrants admitted in 2010-11 and thereafter)—For MB ChB: UGFH1000; for other programmes: UGFH1000 or UGFN1000
哲學主修生及已修UGED2811之學生不得選修本科作通識教育科目。
先修科目(只適用於2010-11年度或以後之中六入學學生)—內外全科醫學士課程:UGFH1000;其他課程:UGFH1000或UGFN1000

Learning outcomes

1. Identify and characterize the central ideas of major schools in philosophical traditions.

2. Illustrate how philosophical thought can be brought to bear on analyzing and understanding some of the cultural, ethical, and political issues in the contemporary world.

3. Read and interpret selected classical texts, and analyze the content and philosophical issues addressed.

Topics

(1) What is philosophy?

(2) What is modern situation?

(3) Ethical issues in modern world

(4) Globalization and our life

(5) Nature and Technology

Learning activities

In this course, you are expected to

- read and think about the assigned readings;
- attend *all* lectures to participate in discussion.

Activities and workload:

In-class (mandatory):

1. Lecture: 1.5 hours each week.

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

1. Reading: 2–3 hours on the basic and suggested readings
2. Essays: an average of 2–3 hours each week on preparing and writing essay assignments throughout the term.

Assessment scheme

Task nature	Description	Weight
Short essay (on one suggested topic, there will be three topics for you to choose)	• Essay questions will be announced three weeks in advance. You will choose one. • ~1,500 words, Times New Roman, 12pt., single-spaced, double-sided. • Provide a thesis statement ("I will argue that ...") in the first paragraph. • <u>At least</u> one third of the essay should be your own arguments. • Understanding of the topic (20%) • Quality of arguments (20%)	50%

	• Communication (5%) • Originality (5%)	
Book Review (on one suggested book, there will be three books for you to choose)	• ~1,500 words, Times New Roman, 12pt., single-spaced, double-sided. • <u>At least</u> one third of the essay should be your own comments. • Understanding of the book (20%) • Quality of comments (10%) • Communication (5%) • Originality (5%)	40%
Set two questions related to the assigned readings	• Understanding of the articles (3%) • Communication (1%) • Originality (1%)	5%+5%

Recommended learning resources

Books for review:

Fromm, Erich, *The Art of Loving* (New York : Perennial, 2000)

Huxley, Aldous, *Brave New World*(Essex : Longman, 1983)

Orwell, George, *Animal Farm* (New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2001)

References (including all book and websites from which suggested and further readings are chosen from):

Appiah, Kwame Anthony, *Thinking it through* (New York : Oxford University Press, 2003)

_____, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a world of strange* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006)

Armstrong, Chris, *Global Distributive Justice: An Introduction* (New York : Cambridge University Press, 2012)

Blackburn, Simon, *Think* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1999)

Buchanan, Allen E., *From chance to choice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

2000)

Cẻcile Fabre, *Justice in a changing World* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007)

Craig, Edward, *Philosophy: A very short introduction* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2002)

Caney, Simon, 'Climate change, energy rights, and equality,' in *The Ethics of Global Climate Change,* edited by Denis G. Arnold (Cambridge ; New York : Cambridge University Press, 2011, pp. 77-103

Eagleton, Terry, *The Meaning of life* (Oxford, U.K. : Oxford University Press, 2007)

Frankena, W. K., *Ethics* (Prentice Hall, 1973)

Giddens, Anthony, *The consequences of modernity* (Calif. : Stanford University Press, 1990)

Harman, Gilbert, *The Nature of Morality* (New York : Oxford University Press, 1977)

Hutchings, Kimberly, *Global ethics: an introduction* (Polity Press, Cambridge, 2010)

Lovelock, James, *The Revenge of Gaia* (London ; New York : Allen Lane, 2006)

Mackie, J.L., *Ethics* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1977)

Marcuse, Herbert, *One-Dimensional Man* (Boston : Beacon Press, 1964)

Miller, David, *Political Philosophy: A very Short Introduction* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2003)

Norman, Richard, *On Humanism* (London : Routledge, 2004)

Nagel, Thomas, *The Last Word* (New York ; Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1997)

Rachels, James, 'Active and Passive Euthanasia'Rachels, in *What's Wrong: Applied Ethicists and Their Critics*, ed. David Boonin and Graham Oddie (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 46-50.

Ruse, Michael, *Evolution and Religion* (Lanham, Md. : Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008)

Singer, Peter, *Practical Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

_____, *One World: The Ethics of Globalization* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2004)

_____, 'Famine, Affluence, and Morality,' *Philosophy and Public Affairs*,

1 (1972), pp. 229-43

Thomson, Judith, 'A Defense of Abortion,' *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 1, No. 1. (Autumn, 1971), pp. 47-66.

Feedback for evaluation

1. Students are strongly encouraged to provide feedback on the course via email or meetings with professor or tutors.

2. As with all courses in Philosophy Department, students evaluate the course through a survey and written comments at the end of the term as well as via regular feedback between teacher, tutors, and students. This information is highly valued and is used to revise teaching methods, tasks, and content.

Course schedule

Week	Topics	Required reading	Remarks
1	What is philosophy? Course introduction	Simon Blackburn, *Think*, 'Introduction' Edward Craig, *Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction* , chapter 6	
2	What is modern situation? Modernity and Postmodernity	Anthony Giddens, *The consequences of modernity,* chapter 1	
3	Relativism and Universalism	J.L. Mackie, *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong,* chapter 1	Essay topics given
4	Meaning of life in secular world	Terry Eagleton, *The Meaning of Life*, chapter 1	
5	Religion in modern world: Science vs religion	Michael Ruse, *Evolution and Religion*, chapter 1	
6	Ethical issue in modern world 1: euthanasia	James Rachels, 'Active and Passive Euthanasia'	

7	Ethical issue in modern world 2 : abortion	Judith Thomson, 'A Defense of Abortion'	
8	Ethical issue in modern world 3 : cloning	Allen E. Buchanan, *From chance to choice*, Chapter 1	
9	Nation and global society	David Miller, *Political Philosophy: A very Short Introduction*, pp. 112-132	Essay due
10	Global economic order	Peter Singer, *One World*, chapter 1-2	
11	Global Poverty and inequality	Peter Singer, 'Famine, Affluence, and Morality'	
12	Global Climate change	Simon Caney, 'Climate change, energy rights, and equality'	Book Review due
13	Technology and nature: Gaia's Theory	James Lovelock, *The Revenge of Gaia,* chapter 1 and 2	

*For details on other suggested and further readings for each topic, see lecture notes on each topic.

Details of course website

Relevant announcements and course documents (e.g., lecture notes, reading/written assignments, tutorial topics and schedule, take-home examination) will be posted on CUForum.

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

Professor	
Name:	Dr. Tsang Sui Ming
Office location:	NA
Telephone:	NA
Email:	tsm24780@gmail.com

Academic honesty and plagiarism

Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy

and regulations. Details may be found at http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/

With each assignment, students will be required to submit a signed declaration that they are aware of these policies, regulations, guidelines and procedures. For group projects, all students of the same group should be asked to sign the declaration.

For assignments in the form of a computer-generated document that is principally text-based and submitted via VeriGuide, the statement, in the form of a receipt, will be issued by the system upon students' uploading of the soft copy of the assignment. Assignments without the receipt will not be graded by teachers. Only the final version of the assignment should be submitted via VeriGuide.