

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

Course Outline (Preliminary)

Time: W 3:30pm-5:15pm

Location: NAH 123

Course overview

This course aims to introduce major areas and problems of philosophy that are highly relevant to the contemporary world and to train students to think critically and philosophically. Topics to be discussed include God, free will, mind, human knowledge, moral objectivity, right action, liberty, and equality.

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 UGFNI000.

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. Arguments for and against God
2. Free will
3. Mind
4. Human knowledge
5. Moral objectivity
6. Right action
7. Liberty
8. Equality

Learning activities

Learning activities include lectures, readings, discussions, and writings:

1. Lecture: one 2-hour session every week.
2. Reading: 20-30 pages of required reading every week.
3. Writing: midterm paper and final paper.

Assessment scheme

Task nature	Description	Weight
Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">In-class participation and discussion	20%
Midterm paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Essay questions will be announced <u>three</u> weeks in advance.<u>1,000</u> words, due on <u>October 29th</u> in class.	30%
Final Paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Essay questions will be announced <u>four</u> weeks in advance.<u>1,500</u> words, due on <u>November 30th</u>.	50%

Classroom policy

- Attendance is *mandatory* in my course.
- Everyone has the obligation to *actively participate* in the class. Class participation includes paying close attention, raising relevant questions, discussing philosophical issues, and making responses.
- Behavior that interferes with classroom activities is *strictly forbidden*. Such behavior includes: (a) constant late arrivals; (b) chatting with others (or more rarely, with yourself); and (c) doing things unrelated to the course, such as playing with your electronic devices.

Required resources

J. Rachels and S. Rachels, *Problems from Philosophy*, 3rd Edition, McGraw-Hill Press, 2011
蒂特爾，《圖利的貓：史上最著名的 116 個思想實驗》，李思逸譯，重慶大學出版社，2012
Other selected readings

Recommended resources

P. Tittle, *What If...Collected Thought Experiments in Philosophy*, Pearson Press, 2004
J. Rachels, *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, 4th Edition, McGraw-Hill Press, 2003
A. Swift, *Political Philosophy*, 3rd Edition, Polity Press, 2014
Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (<http://plato.stanford.edu>)

Course schedule

Week	Topics	Required reading
1	Introduction	“Appendix: How to Evaluate Arguments”, <i>Problems from Philosophy</i>
2	God (1)	Chapter 2, <i>Problems from Philosophy</i> 《思想實驗》，pp. 27-29; pp. 22-24.
3	God (2)	Chapter 3, <i>Problems from Philosophy</i> 《思想實驗》，pp. 26-27; pp. 33-35.

4	Mind (1)	Chapter 6, <i>Problems from Philosophy</i> 《思想實驗》, pp. 43-45; pp. 53-54.
5	Mind (2)	Chapter 7, <i>Problems from Philosophy</i> 《思想實驗》, pp. 41-42; pp. 49-51; pp. 45-47.
6	Free will (1)	Chapter 8, <i>Problems from Philosophy</i> 《思想實驗》, pp. 16-17; pp. 13-14.
7	Free will (2)	Chapter 9, <i>Problems from Philosophy</i> 《思想實驗》, pp. 19-20; pp. 20-22.
8	Human knowledge	Chapter 10, <i>Problems from Philosophy</i> 《思想實驗》, pp. 102-103; pp. 107-108; pp. 89-91.
9	Morality (1): Moral objectivity	Rachels, "The Challenge of Cultural Relativism", from <i>The Elements of Moral Philosophy</i>
10	Morality (2): Right action	Rachels, "The Debate over Utilitarianism", from <i>The Elements of Moral Philosophy</i> 《思想實驗》, pp. 130-132; pp. 138-140; pp. 129-130.
11	Politics (1): Liberty	Swift, "Liberty", from <i>Political Philosophy</i>
12	Politics (2): Equality	Swift, "Equality", from <i>Political Philosophy</i> 《思想實驗》, pp. 168-169; pp. 169-171

Details of course website

This course uses Blackboard for announcements and discussions. Reading materials, assignments, and lecture notes will be put in a Dropbox folder (the link to this folder is posted on Blackboard).

Contact details for teacher(s)

Teacher	
Name:	Zhong Lei
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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.