

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

Course Outline (tentative)

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

Location: NAH 213

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

Learning activities

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

Assessment scheme

Task nature	Description	Weight
Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">In-class participation and discussion	15%
Paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Essay questions will be announced three weeks in advance.1,000 words in English or 2,000 words in Chinese, due on October 28th in class.	35%
Exam	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The exam will be arranged in the final class on Dec. 2nd.	50%

Required resources

[Textbook] James Rachels, *Problems from Philosophy*, 3rd Edition, McGraw-Hill Press, 2011
Other selected readings

Recommended resources

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (<http://plato.stanford.edu>)
J. Rachels, *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, 4th Edition, McGraw-Hill Press, 2003
A. Swift, *Political Philosophy*, 3rd Edition, Polity Press, 2014

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>
3	God (2)	Chapter 3, <i>Problems from Philosophy</i>
4	Mind (1)	Chapter 6, <i>Problems from Philosophy</i>
5	Mind (2)	Chapter 7, <i>Problems from Philosophy</i>
6	Free will (1)	Chapter 8, <i>Problems from Philosophy</i>
7	Free will (2)	Chapter 9, <i>Problems from Philosophy</i>
8	Human knowledge	Chapter 10, <i>Problems from Philosophy</i>
9	Ethics (1): Moral objectivity	Rachels, “The Challenge of Cultural Relativism”, from <i>The Elements of Moral Philosophy</i>
10	Ethics (2): Right action	Rachels, “The Debate over Utilitarianism”, from <i>The Elements of Moral Philosophy</i>

11	Politics (1): Liberty	Swift, "Liberty", from <i>Political Philosophy</i>
12	Politics (2): Equality	Swift, "Equality", from <i>Political Philosophy</i>

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.