

PHIL1110B
Introduction to Philosophy 哲學概論
Fall 2016
Professor Gregory S. Moss

Lecture: W 10:30-12:15

Tutorial: W 12:30-13:15

Room: WMY505

Office: 414 Fung King Hey Building

Office Hours: Wednesday 2-4, Thursday 2-3, or By Appointment

Email: gsmoss@cuhk.edu.hk

**Expect one full business day for reply.*

Phone: 3943-9875

*This course does not presuppose any background in philosophy.

Course Overview: Method and Objective

The objective of this course is to cultivate wonder. We should evoke this attitude because it is the primary philosophical attitude. You cannot be introduced to philosophy if you are not acquainted with the attitude out of which philosophy grows. Wonder is at once an emotive and an intellectual stance. We wonder because we recognize that we do not possess knowledge. This is the intellectual orientation, but wonder is also a desire to know and this emotive stance is the motivation for the pursuit of knowledge. Because philosophy is the pursuit of knowledge, philosophy is an activity that happens within this mood. Hence, our difficulty consists in learning to learn and love learning. Because philosophy originates out of such a mood, it is not an activity that confines itself to the academic sphere. Contrary to such a view, it is a way of living; a way of being in the world. In accordance with such a view, an introduction to philosophy must affect not only your academic life but strive to affect even the non-academic. We shall begin to evoke this attitude by learning to deconstruct the categories and ideas that are at work in coloring everyday common experiences. This deconstruction assumes that i) ideas are real, and affect our lives, and ii) that there are many possible ways of categorizing our world. Merely achieving cognizance of these propositions is not easy. Philosophy is not necessarily a pleasurable experience, but if you work hard it can be very rewarding. We are intentionally making ourselves unsettled. One method that we shall employ to open up the range of possibilities that are available to world and self-interpretation is the consistent use of thought experiments that challenge us to think differently about what we have heretofore considered obvious.

Philosophy, as inquiry, is an activity and if philosophy can be taught, then there must be a skill, a *techné*, that we can employ to evaluate whether the ideas and possibilities that we explore are true. One method that we shall learn to employ toward this end is the use of elementary logic. Inquiry is the investigation into the truth of ideas and logic provides a corpus of norms for thinking, which in turn provides us with a way to engage ideas critically in respect to their consistency and their consequences. Thus, the goal of the course is to introduce you to philosophy by providing an environment in which you will be able to both explore *novel* ways of thinking and living, while at the same time explore novel ideas *critically* and according to a rigorous principle. Learning how to argue is central to learning how to apply basic principles of rational discourse. Because we are social animals, we learn more

when we discourse together. Philosophy is a skill so the more you practice the better your chances at success.

In order to help us become more intimate with philosophy, we shall appropriate a few great thinkers in the history of philosophy to aid us on our way. Learning anything from these texts will require close reading on your part. In general, I suggest that you read each text more than once and ideally I suggest three readings. As you read, the most important thing that you can do to improve your understanding of the text is to seek out the arguments the author is making for the position that he/she takes, and develop objections to the arguments presented. Thereafter you should return to the text and ask yourself how the author might respond to your objections. Learning to read actively will be essential to writing successful papers and exams. In sum, this course concerns learning how to read as much as it concerns learning how to think well.

Topics and Questions

The particular themes of the course are i) the nature of the self, ii) reason and the emotions, iii) the relation between self and world, and iv) the good life. By fixing on a theme we shall be able to hone our abilities and to think more critically about one topic. On the other hand, this theme provides a convenient theoretical positioning from which inquiries into other areas of philosophy, e.g. Metaphysics and Ethics, may be addressed. The fact that the philosophical attitude is one in which we explore and evaluate the reality of ideas readily lends itself to questions concerning the nature of the self and the good life. We often assume that we know ourselves well. After all, with who am I more acquainted than myself? The purpose of focusing on these themes is to dissolve the obviousness of the questions, and to allow philosophy to be a means of self-formation. The following is a sampling of questions that we shall raise in the investigation of selfhood: What is the method and object of philosophical discourse? Is there a self? What is the self? What distinguishes me as an individual from others? What is it to be human? What are the emotions? What is it to reason? How ought one conceive of the relation between reason to the emotions? Is the self a mind or a body? Is the self free or determined? Is the self immortal? Does God exist? If God does exist, what is the being of God? What does it mean to be at all? What is the relation of the self to other beings in the world? What is it for the self to be good or bad? How does emotive knowledge contribute to the good life? What is the nature of happiness and how can we achieve it? What is the nature of philosophy and what is its role in achieving the best life? These are a sampling of the questions which we will investigate in the run of the course. Let the great German philosopher Immanuel Kant provide us with the motto of our course: 'Have the courage to use your own understanding!' Once again, this process is not easy, but can be very rewarding. As a consequence, you might find that the knowledge that you acquire in this course might even transform you.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Develop the capacity to read primary philosophical texts and perform philosophical exegesis.
2. Acquire the ability to reconstruct philosophical arguments from philosophical texts.
3. Learn how to construct philosophical arguments on one's own through critical engagement with global philosophical traditions, philosophical issues, and concepts.

4. Develop the capacity to philosophize well with others both verbally and in writing.
5. Become familiar with the important ideas, systems, and arguments in the history of philosophy through reading influential primary texts in the history of philosophy.
6. Become familiar with the *philosophical* and *historical* origins of philosophical questions in the history of philosophy.
7. Understand the importance of philosophical reflection and bring it to bear on what is of importance in one's own life.

Learning Activities:

In class:

1. Attend lectures and participate in class discussions. Each lecture is approximately 2 hours.
2. Tutorials: Attend and participate in tutorials (usually held every week following the lecture.) Each tutorial is approximately 45 minutes.

Outside of Class:

1. Reading: Read each reading assignment *before* lecture. After lecture read the same assignment again whenever feasible.
2. Writing: Regarding writing, begin your argument critiques *at least two weeks* before they are due in order to give yourself time to edit, re-write, and integrate feedback from the TA and the Professor.
3. The Mid Term exam will be conducted on Blackboard.
4. Group projects (such as the Socratic Encounter) will require you to meet with other students outside of scheduled class times.

Required Texts: (specific texts)

- (1) *Plato's Phaedo*. (Focus Philosophical Library, 1998)
<http://www.hackettpublishing.com/phaedo-brann-kalkavage-sale-edition-3782>
- (2) Buddha, *Dhammapada* (Modern Library Classics, 2007)
<http://www.bookdepository.com/Dhammapad-Glenn-Wallis/9780812977271?ref=grid-view>
- (3) Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will* (Hackett, 1993)
<http://www.bookdepository.com/On-Free-Choice-of-the-Will-Edmund-O-P-Augustine-Thomas-Williams/9780872201880?ref=grid-view>
- (4) Friedrich Nietzsche *Twilight of the Idols* and *The Anti-Christ* (Penguin Books, 1990)
<http://www.bookdepository.com/Twilight-of-Idols-and-Anti-Christ-Friedrich-Wilhelm-Nietzsche-R-J-Hollingdale-Michael-Tanner/9780140445145?ref=grid-view>

*Announcements and handouts will be posted on Blackboard.

Tentative Grading Percentages:

Argument Reconstruction:	5% (20 Pts)
Argument Critique I	25% (100 Pts)
Argument Critique II	30% (120 Pts)

Mid Term Exam	10% (40 Pts)
Socratic Encounter	5% (20 Pts)
Tutorial Discussion	5% (20 Pts)
Final Exam	20% (80 Pts)

Total Points: 400 Points

Grade Criteria:

A:

The student knows the authors positions, and proves this knowledge by knowing the argument(s) supporting the theses in the text. Student evidences *self-initiated* thinking and understanding of the arguments through his/her ability to present *her own* counter-arguments and possible replies to counter-arguments. The student exhibits thorough understanding of the relations of the themes presented in the various texts.

B:

The student knows the authors positions, and generally understands the arguments supporting them. Student has difficulty developing *her own* criticisms and rebuttals to criticism. The student exhibits relatively complete understanding of the relations of the themes presented in the various texts.

C:

The student shows the ability to properly relay information about the text and the positions contained therein, but has difficulty re-constructing the arguments, presenting counter-arguments, and criticism. Student has a difficulty understanding arguments. The student shows an incomplete understanding of the relations of the themes presented in the various texts.

D:

The student cannot explicate the positions or the arguments for such positions in the text. The student exhibits seriously incomplete understanding.

F:

The student exhibits all the failures mentioned under 'D'. The student earns an F by having a blatant disregard for the great masters of the global philosophical traditions by not reading and not attending lectures.

Grade Scale:

A: 87-100
A-: 80-86
B+: 77-79
B: 71-77
B-: 68-70
C+: 65-67%
C: 59-64%
C-: 56-58%
D+: 53-55%
D: 50-52%
F: < 50

Remarks

Argument Critiques

The Argument Critiques consist of three parts. In respect to the papers, I shall provide you with passages from the texts which we are reading, and I will ask you to choose one passage to work on. You will **formulate the argument** contained in that passage, and **formulate a critique** of that passage. The last stage consists in formulating a **reply to the criticism** that you raise. I encourage you to utilize the texts that we are reading in formulating the criticisms; you are encouraged to employ the philosophers against each other. Argument Critiques should be **3-4 double spaced pages** in length. Students are encouraged to visit the Professor and/or the TA during office hours for comments on rough drafts *before* they turn in the final draft.

Exams

The Exams contain two sections. One section will consist of **short answer questions**, in which you will be asked to provide arguments for particular conclusions elicited from the texts. You will not be asked to provide arguments for any conclusions except those which are discussed in the lectures and tutorials. The second section will consist of **long-essay questions** in which you will re-construct the position and the arguments of a philosopher(s) on a particular theme, e.g. 'moral responsibility'. You will also be asked to critique these arguments and relate them to other philosophers and texts that we have discussed.

Socratic Encounters

Socratic Encounters require you to engage other persons inside of class in a Socratic conversation. The assignment teaches the student how to ask questions, and to construct arguments by asking questions. These conversations shall be highly regulated, and the rules pertaining to which shall be given in handouts.

Participation and Discussion

Attendance and participation in both lecture and tutorial is mandatory. Two unexcused absences are allowed. For every unexcused absence after the second, **one letter grade** will be deducted from the final grade. Illness and family emergencies usually count as excused absences, as long as documentation is submitted. Whether an absence counts as excused is subject to the professor's discretion. *Each student is required to participate in the discussion in at least every other tutorial meeting.

Technology

Technology is allowed in this course, but only for the purpose of note-taking and other class-specific activities. Once class has begun, please refrain from distracting yourself and other students by playing on the internet, using social media, etc. Persons found violating this technology policy will be counted absent.

Tutorials

Every week the TA shall lead a tutorial on the subject matter from the previous week's reading or lecture material. The purpose of the tutorial is to allow students to further discuss various philosophical problems that arise in the material with their peers in class and in small groups. In addition, the tutorials will serve as an opportunity for students to practice reconstructing and critiquing arguments with the guidance of the TA and engage in peer review of assignments. Finally, the Socratic Encounter assignment will be performed during the tutorial sessions.

Late Work/Make-Ups:

Late assignments will be penalized **one-half a letter grade** for **each day** the paper is tardy. If you would like a grade changed, you must provide me with a detailed written argument for why you think it should be changed, otherwise I will not consider it.

Assignments: Read and study each assignment on the day it is assigned. To maximally benefit from these readings, I recommend **three** readings, but suggest a minimum of *two* readings: First, read the assigned text. After participating in lecture and the tutorial, read the text once more.

Consider the following schedule *tentative*.

September:

7 What is Philosophy? *No Readings*

14 Plato, *Apology*

21 Plato, *Phaedo*

Argument Reconstruction Due

28 Plato, *Phaedo*

October:

5 Plato, *Phaedo*

12 Buddha, *Dhammapada*

19 Buddha, *Dhammapada*

Argument Critique I Due

26 Augustine, *Free Choice of the Will*

November:

2 Augustine, *Free Choice of the Will*

Mid Term Exam Due

9 Augustine, *Free Choice of the Will*

16 Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*

(Tutorial: Socratic Encounter Practice)

23 Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*

Socratic Encounter Due

30 Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*

Argument Critique II Due

Final Exam: TBD: December 7-23

Academic Integrity

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/academic_honesty/

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.

TA Contact Information: (George) Zhang Wenjun

Email: zwjgeorge@gmail.com

Telephone: 51285566

Office Location: 412

Office Hours: TBD