PHIL3592
Topics in Modern Western Philosophy 現代西方哲學專題

Course Outline

Time: M 1:30pm-4:15pm	**Location: YIA 503**

Course overview (as shown on CUSIS)

The course aims at an in-depth study of selected works of modern Western philosophers such as the Renaissance philosophers, rationalists, empiricists as well as other modern philosophers (Hobbes, Rousseau, etc.). Offerings with different subtitles can be taken up for credit, up to a maximum of two times.

Advisory to Majors: to be taken in year 2 or above.

Course overview for 2026/27 Term 2: Spinoza has been considered an atheist and a pantheist, a force for political liberalism and for Marxism, a founder of materialism, an inspiration for romanticism, a basis for Deep Ecology, and a source for feminist philosophy. His philosophy has been associated with Buddhism and Neo-Confucianism since shortly after his death. He remains one of the European thinkers to most relentlessly think through a world with nothing super-natural: no transcendent God, no objective categories of good and evil, and no transcendent subject or free will. For Spinoza, the human condition is to be part of a whole that develops necessarily and is indifferent to human values and desires. This class will consist of a close reading of his main work, the *Ethics*, focusing on his attempt to think through a world in which human beings are not very special.

Learning outcomes (as shown on CUSIS)

1. Acquire knowledge of the selected topics of the course.

2. Have a solid grasp of the philosophical issues of the selected topics of the course.

3. Demonstrate familiarity with the primary/secondary source texts.

4. Be able to articulate and defend a philosophical thesis of their own.

Topics

We will read Spinoza's *Ethics* in its entirety, starting with issues in metaphysics and epistemology and then turning to his account of human nature and the best way to live.

Learning activities

The course will function as both a research seminar and a discussion forum. It will include formal lectures, class and small group discussions, and student presentations based on the provided reading materials.

Assessment scheme

Task nature	***Description***	***Weight***
In class writings/quizzes		30%
Class participation		20%
Presentation		10%
Formal paper		30%
Discussion of paper with instructor		10%

Remarks on Assessment Scheme (if any)

Grade Descriptor

Please refer to: http://phil.arts.cuhk.edu.hk/~phidept/UG/Grade_descriptors.pdf

Recommended learning resources

Students are required to get one book for this course: *A Spinoza Reader: The Ethics and Other Works*, edited and translated by Edwin Curley

Course schedule

Week	***Topics***	***Teaching Mode*** ***Online / in-campus***	***Required reading***	***Remarks***
11 Jan	background and purpose of Spinoza's *Ethics*	all in-campus	Spinoza's *Ethics*, Appendix to Part I	
18 Jan	the one substance		*Ethics*, Part I to P20	P = Proposition
25 Jan	determinism and necessity		*Ethics*, finish Part I	
1 Feb	mind and body		*Ethics*, Part II to P14	
15 Feb	imagination and adequate knowledge		*Ethics*, finish Part II	
22 Feb	striving and desire		*Ethics*, Part III to P12	
1 Mar	the passions		*Ethics*, finish Part III	
15 Mar	virtue and community		*Ethics*, Part IV to P37	
22 Mar	managing the passions		*Ethics*, finish Part IV	
12 Apr	freedom and adequate knowledge		*Ethics*, Part V to P20	
19 Apr	immortality and intellectual love of God		*Ethics*, finish Part V	

Details of course website

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in learning, teaching and assessment

Approach 1 – Prohibit all use of AI tools

Students are not allowed to use any AI tools in any kind of learning activity or assessment that will be counted towards students' final grade of the course, or used for evaluating students' attainment of the desired learning outcomes. Students are expected to produce their own work independently without any collaboration or use of AI tools. Such information should be spelt out clearly in the course outline or learning activity/assessment guide.

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

Teacher	
Name:	PERKINS Franklin
Office location:	Room 436c, Fung King Hey Building
Telephone:	
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TA	
Name:	
Office location:	
Telephone:	
Email:	

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.