THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

General Education (GE)

Course Outline Template

Course Code/Section: UGED2852	Year: 2026 Term 1
Course Title: Freedom and Destiny	
Time/Venue: TU 10:30am-12:15pm	
Lee Shau Kee Building 306	Course website: See Blackboard
Course Teacher: Gregory S. Moss	Email: gsmoss@cuhk.edu.hk
Phone: 39439875	
Office Location: Fung King Hey Building 436	Office Hours: TU 2:30-4

Course overview:

Humans always hope for freedom. But we are finite beings. Most of what happens to us is beyond our control and decision. Is our will free? Is life determined? In what sense can we make a free choice? What can and what should we do in the face of destiny? This course will deal with these significant problems and the tension between freedom and destiny, in order to stimulate students' reflection on their own lives. 人生總要面對各種不期而至的遭遇，但人又總是對自由有所希冀。「自由」與「命運」之 間，顯然存在着張力。人生是 否被命定的？人是否擁有自由意志？面對命運，我們能做 和應做甚麼？這些問題與我們如何理解和籌劃人生息息相關。 本課即旨在探討「自由」 與「命運」的相關課題，讓學員在自我理解和成長上有所深思。 Philosophy Majors 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.

Grade descriptors:

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

Learning outcomes:

1. Develop a familiarity with free will and destiny in the Western tradition.
2. Be able to identify and reconstruct arguments for different views on freedom and destiny in philosophy.
3. Be able to critically evaluate those different views.
4. Be able to apply the philosophical positions to one's own life.

Learning Activities:

Attend lectures and participate in class discussions.

Weekly Course Schedule and reading assignment:

Week	Topic	Required readings/other requirements
1. 8/9	Introduction to Free Will and Destiny	Course Outline
2. 15/9	Plato	*Free Will, An Historical and Philosophical Introduction*, pp. 35-49
3. 22/9	Aristotle	*Free Will, An Historical and Philosophical Introduction*, pp. 49-69
4. 29/9	Augustine	*Free Will, An Historical and Philosophical Introduction*, 71-89
5. 13/10	Descartes	*Free Will, An Historical and Philosophical*

		Introduction, 113-127
6. 20/10	Spinoza	*Free Will, An Historical and Philosophical Introduction*, 127-141
7. 27/10	**Mid-Term Exam**	**In Class Exam.** No Reading
8. 3/11	Hume and Kant	*Free Will, An Historical and Philosophical Introduction*, 141-163
9. 10/11	Schopenhauer and Freud	*Free Will, An Historical and Philosophical Introduction*, 165-190
10. 17/11	Fichte	*Science of Knowing* (See Blackboard)
11. 24/11	Kierkegaard and Sartre	*Concluding Unscientific Postscript* and *Sickness Unto Death* (See Blackboard), AND *Free Will, An Historical and Philosophical Introduction*, 190-206
12. 1/12	Conclusion: Human Freedom and Determinism	*Free Will, An Historical and Philosophical Introduction*, pp. 255-267

Final Exam: TBD

Required readings

Dilman, Ilham. *Free Will: An Historical and Philosophical Introduction*.
New York/London: Routledge, 1999. (See Blackboard)

Additional Miscellaneous Assigned Readings (See Blackboard)

Assessment scheme

Task nature	**Description**	**Weight**
Mid Term Exam	See Below	25%
Argument Critique	See Below	30%
Reading Reflections	See Below	20%
Final Exam	See Below	25%

Late submission policy:

Assessment task	**Late submission policy**
1. Mid Term and Final Exam	Late Submissions not accepted.
2. Argument Critique	Late Submissions accepted. *One half a letter grade will be deducted for every day the paper is tardy.
3. Reading Reflections	Late Submissions not accepted.

The Mid Term and Final Exam

The exams are cumulative and will draw upon material from the readings and the lectures. The exams give you the opportunity to synthesize the material and to think about the course on the whole. You will be asked to reconstruct the positions of the philosophers whom we have read as well as the arguments that they employ to defend their positions. Finally, you will put them into dialogue with each other, and consider potential critiques of their positions, as well as potential responses.

The Argument Critique

The Argument Critiques consist of three parts. In respect to the critique, 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 re-construct 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 in 12-point font should probably range from 3 to 6 double spaced pages in length. Each student will meet with the Professor during office hours to discuss their rough draft before submitting the final draft.

Reading Reflections

Each week you will be assigned a reading. Before class meets, write at least one half an A4 page (single space, 12-point font) on the reading assigned for the previous week. You are invited to reconstruct the arguments in key passages, comment on the arguments, raise questions about the ideas, or apply the text to your own personal experience. The reflection is due before class begins. Either submit them in hard copy or via email to the Professor. Late submissions will not be accepted.

Attendance:

Attendance is mandatory and absence will damage your grades. Two unexcused absences are permitted. For each unexcused absence beyond two, one-half a letter grade will be deducted from your final grade. In case of emergencies, either notify me of your absence ahead of time, or plan to bring some formal documentation of your absence. Without documentation, I will not accept absences as excused

AI Tools Usage Approach

The Use of All AI Tools is Prohibited.

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 are required to submit a signed declaration (attachment 1) 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.

Feedback for evaluation

a. The course and teaching evaluation survey will be conducted within the last two teaching weeks of the course. Students are reminded of their responsibility and right to give feedback to facilitate enhancement of the course.

b. Students are welcome to give feedback to the course teacher at any time in person or through emails.

Attachment 1

Declaration for written assignment

I am/we are submitting the assignment for:

□ an individual project or
□ a group project on behalf of all members of the group. It is hereby confirmed that the submission is authorized by all members of the group, and all members of the group are required to sign this declaration.

I/We declare that the assignment here submitted is original except for source material explicitly acknowledged, the piece of work, or a part of the piece of work has not been submitted for more than one purpose (i.e. to satisfy the requirements in two different courses) without declaration, and that the submitted soft copy with details listed in the <Submission Details> is identical to the hard copy(ies), if any, which has(have) been / is(are) going to be submitted. I/We also acknowledge that I am/we are aware of University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and of the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations, as contained in the University website http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/. In the case of a group project, we are aware that each student is responsible and liable to disciplinary actions should there be any plagiarized contents in the group project, irrespective of whether he/she has signed the declaration and whether he/she has contributed directly or indirectly to the plagiarized contents.

It is also understood that assignments without a properly signed declaration by the student concerned and in the case of a group project, by all members of the group concerned, will not be graded by the teacher(s).

Signature(s)	Date
Name(s)	Student ID(s)
Course code	Course title

September 2025