PHIL5150 / 7150
Topics in Western Philosophy: Metaphysical Grounding

Course Outline

Time：Thu 16:30-19:15	**Location：YIA 407**

Course overview (as shown on CUSIS)

This is a postgraduate seminar course devoted to examining selected issues in Western philosophy. The specific content of the course may vary from semester to semester. Students may repeat the course for credit, provided that two courses with identical course codes are not elected in the same semester.

Learning outcomes (as shown on CUSIS)

1. Demonstrate familiarity with the primary and secondary source texts on the syllabus.

2. Gain competence in explaining and evaluating the key concepts and theories addressed in the course.

3. Be able to articulate and defend a philosophical thesis of their own concerning the issues discussed in the course.

4. Demonstrate progress in their papers toward mastering the expository and critical skills for argumentative writing.

Topics

Philosophical issues about grounding

Applications of grounding

Logics of grounding

Learning activities

1. **Seminar discussion: 3 hours per week**
2. **Reading: 3-5 hours per week**

Assessment scheme (as shown on CUSIS) (revise if necessary)

Task nature	***Description***	***Weight***
Essay proposal		20%
Final essay	5000~10000 words in English; Deadline: 6 Dec 2026	80%

Remarks on Assessment Scheme (if any)

After submitting the final essay, there will be an oral exam, in which you will need to present and defend your paper. Please book a timeslot (from 7 to 18 Dec) in advance.

Grade Descriptor

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

Recommended learning resources

Course schedule

Week	***Topics***	***Required reading***	***Remarks***
10 Sep	Introduction		
17 Sep	Cases for grounding	Rosen "Metaphysical Dependence"; Audi "Grounding: Toward a Theory of In-Virtue-Of Relation"	
24 Sep	More on grounding: I	Bennett *Making Things Up* Ch.1-3	
1 Oct	No class		
8 Oct	More on grounding: II	deRosset *Fundamental Things* Ch.2	
15 Oct	Grounding and fundamentality	Bennett *Making Things Up* Ch.5; Leuenberger "The Fundamental: Ungrounded or All-Grounding?"	
22 Oct	Grounding grounding	Bennett *Making Things Up* Ch.7; Sider "Ground Grounded"	
29 Oct	Grounding and necessity	Skiles "Against Grounding Necessitarianism"; Leuenberger "Grounding and Necessity" See also Bennet *Making Things Up* Section 3.3	
5 Nov	Application: Mind	Zhong "Physicalism without Supervenience"; Rubenstein "Against Grounding Physicalism"	
12 Nov	No class		
19 Nov	Application: Morality	Bengson, Cuneo, and Shafer-Landau "The Source of Normativity"; Baysan "Essence Facts and the Source of Normativity"	
26 Nov	Application: Math	deRosset and Linnebo "Abstraction and Grounding"	
3 Dec	Grounding and logic	Krämer "A Simpler Puzzle of Ground"; Fritz "Ground and Grain"	

Details of course website

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

Teacher	
Name:	LO, Tien-chun
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TA	
Name:	
Office location:	
Telephone:	
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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.

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools in Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Use of generative AI tools
Approach 3 - Use of AI tools is allowed with explicit acknowledgement and proper citation or

There are two (and only two) cases where AI can be used in the study of this course:
First, students can us AI tools to check their grammar in the writing of the final essay, provided that explicit acknowledgement is made.
Second, students are allowed to discuss their philosophical ideas with AI tools, e.g. ChatGPT and Claude. Nevertheless, if any idea extracted from, or inspired by, or generated by the dialogue is used in the writing of the final essay, explicit acknowledgement must be made.