

**City University of Hong Kong  
Course Syllabus**

**offered by Department of Public Policy  
with effect from Semester B 2019/2020**

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**Part I Course Overview**

**Course Title:** Rethinking Freedom, Law, and Ethics

**Course Code:** POL3412

**Course Duration:** One Semester

**Credit Units:** 3

**Level:** 3

Arts and Humanities

**Proposed Area:**  Study of Societies, Social and Business Organisations

*(for GE courses only)*

Science and Technology

**Medium of Instruction:** English

**Medium of Assessment:** English

**Prerequisites:** None  
*(Course Code and Title)*

**Precursors:** None  
*(Course Code and Title)*

**Equivalent Courses:** None  
*(Course Code and Title)*

**Exclusive Courses:** None  
*(Course Code and Title)*

## Part II Course Details

### 1. Abstract

(A 150-word description about the course)

Why is freedom valuable? Under what conditions should the law interfere with our freedom? Should the law be used to prohibit or discourage those activities that many people consider as unethical, worthless, or harmful to oneself? This course engages students to rethink the value of freedom and the role of the law. A variety of controversial topics will be discussed. They include: the limits of the freedom of speech, the use of recreational drugs, the right to die, and prostitution. It is expected that by studying the course, students will be able to make their own arguments about the use of law in limiting personal freedom and in regulating social interaction.

### 2. Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

(CILOs state what the student is expected to be able to do at the end of the course according to a given standard of performance.)

No.	CILOs <sup>#</sup>	Weighting* (if applicable)	Discovery-enriched curriculum related learning outcomes (please tick where appropriate)		
			A1	A2	A3
1.	Rethink the value of freedom and the function of the law from a variety of theoretical perspectives (e.g. legal paternalism and legal moralism).		✓	✓	
2.	Critically examine some of the criticisms of the unconditional value of personal freedom (e.g. by comparing Joseph Raz's view with Joel Feinberg's view).		✓	✓	
3.	Seek to understand the importance of the freedom of speech for any contemporary society.		✓	✓	
4.	Acquire the basic analytical skills to assess the relevant arguments about the proper limits of the law.		✓	✓	
5.	Students are expected to formulate their own views on a wide range of ethical, social, and political issues related to the value of freedom and the function of the law.		✓	✓	✓

\* If weighting is assigned to CILOs, they should add up to 100%.

100%

<sup>#</sup> Please specify the alignment of CILOs to the Gateway Education Programme Intended Learning outcomes (PILOs) in Section A of Annex.

A1: Attitude

Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.

A2: Ability

Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to self-life problems.

A3: Accomplishments

Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.

### 3. Teaching and Learning Activities (TLAs)

(TLAs designed to facilitate students' achievement of the CILOs.)

TLA	Brief Description	CILO No.						Hours/week (if applicable)
		1	2	3	4	5		
Lectures	<p>a) Acquire a basic understanding of the key concepts and arguments about the value of freedom and the function of the law.</p> <p>b) Seek to understand the importance of freedom and human dignity.</p>	v	v	v	v			
In-class discussions and debates	<p>a) Discuss and examine the key concepts and arguments about the value of freedom and the role of the law.</p> <p>b) Acquire analytical skills for deliberating and debating about the function and the limits of the law.</p>	v	v	v	v	v		
Short essay (800-1000 words)	Students are expected to demonstrate their own understanding of the central issues studied in the course; they should not only summarize what they have learned from the course.	v	v	v	v	v		
Final essay (2000-2500 words)	Students are expected to demonstrate their own understanding of the central issues studied in the course; they should not only summarize what they have learned from the course.	v	v	v	v	v		

#### 4. Assessment Tasks/Activities (ATs)

(ATs are designed to assess how well the students achieve the CILOs.)

Assessment Tasks/Activities	CILO No.					Weighting *	Remarks
	1	2	3	4	5		
Continuous Assessment: <u>100</u> %							
In-class discussion and debate	v	v	v	v	v	20%	Students are expected to attend all lectures and participate in discussion and debate in class. From the second lecture onwards, students will be asked to respond to 1 to 2 in-class discussion questions. They are expected to discuss or debate actively.
Short essay (800-1000 words)	v	v	v	v	v	30%	Students should demonstrate their own understanding of the central issues studied in the course; they should not only summarize what they have learned from the course.
Final essay (2000-2500 words)	v	v	v	v	v	50%	Students should demonstrate their own understanding of the central issues studied in the course; they should not only summarize what they have learned from the course.
Examination: _____%							
Examination Duration: _____ hours							
* The weightings should add up to 100%.						100%	

## 5. Assessment Rubrics

Assessment task	Criterion	Excellent (A+, A, A-)	Good (B+, B, B-)	Fair (C+, C, C-)	Marginal (D)	Failure (F)
1. In-class discussion and debate	Attendance (or to take part in the discussion); understanding of the lecture; willingness to discuss/debate.	Active participation. Excellent understanding of the value of freedom and the function of the law. Excellent critical reasoning skills and communication skills.	A normal level of participation. Fairly good understanding of the value of freedom and the function of the law. Fairly good critical reasoning skills and communication skills.	Insufficient participation. Rudimentary understanding of the value of freedom and the function of the law. Rudimentary critical reasoning skills and communication skills.	Very insufficient participation. Weak understanding of the value of freedom and the function of the law. Weak critical reasoning skills and communication skills.	No participation or almost no participation. Very poor understanding of the value of freedom and the function of the law. Very poor critical reasoning skills and communication skills.
2. Short essay	Accurate and critical understanding of the readings; originality of ideas; clarity and organization of ideas.	Excellent understanding of the value of freedom and the function of the law. Great familiarity with the relevant readings. Excellent critical reasoning skills and writing skills.	Fairly good understanding of the value of freedom and the function of the law. Satisfactory familiarity with the relevant readings. Fairly good critical reasoning skills and writing skills.	Rudimentary understanding of the value of freedom and the function of the law. Rather limited familiarity with the relevant readings. Rudimentary critical reasoning skills and writing skills.	Poor understanding of the value of freedom and the function of the law. Very limited familiarity with the relevant readings. Poor critical reasoning skills and writing skills.	No submission, or: Very poor understanding of the value of freedom and the function of the law. Little or no familiarity with the relevant readings. Very poor critical reasoning skills and writing skills.
3. Final essay	Accurate and critical understanding of the readings; originality of ideas; clarity and organization of ideas.	Excellent understanding of the value of freedom and the function of the law. Great familiarity with the relevant readings. Excellent critical reasoning skills and writing skills.	Fairly good understanding of the value of freedom and the function of the law. Satisfactory familiarity with the relevant readings. Fairly good critical reasoning skills and writing skills.	Rudimentary understanding of the value of freedom and the function of the law. Rather limited familiarity with the relevant readings. Rudimentary critical reasoning skills and writing skills.	Poor understanding of the value of freedom and the function of the law. Very limited familiarity with the relevant readings. Poor critical reasoning skills and writing skills.	No submission, or: Very poor understanding of the value of freedom and the function of the law. Little or no familiarity with the relevant readings. Very poor critical reasoning skills and writing skills.

**Part III Other Information** (more details can be provided separately in the teaching plan)

**1. Keyword Syllabus**

(An indication of the key topics of the course.)

Freedom. Autonomy. Value. Morality. The good life. Freedom of speech. Dignity. Respect. Law. Political power. Coercion. Paternalism. Legal moralism. Penalty. Punishment. Taxation. Drug use. Smoking. Prostitution. The right to die. Consequentialism. J.S. Mill. Kant. Joseph Raz. Joel Feinberg.

**2. Reading List**

**2.1 Compulsory Readings**

(Compulsory readings can include books, book chapters, or journal/magazine articles. There are also collections of e-books, e-journals available from the CityU Library.)

1.	J.S. Mill (1859), <i>On Liberty</i> , Chapters 1-3. (Many versions, such as the free version at Online Library of Liberty, are acceptable.)
2.	Gerald Dworkin (1989). "The Concept of Autonomy." In John Christman ed., <i>The Inner Citadel</i> (Oxford University Press), Chapter 3.
2.	Joseph Raz (1986). <i>The Morality of Freedom</i> (Clarendon Press), Chapter 14.

**2.2 Additional Readings**

(Additional references for students to learn to expand their knowledge about the subject.)

1.	Joel Feinberg (1986). <i>Harm to Self: The Moral Limits of the Criminal Law</i> (Oxford University Press), Chapter 19.
2.	J. David Velleman (1999). "A Right of Self-Termination?" <i>Ethics</i> , 109: 606–628.
3.	Joel Feinberg (1990), <i>Harmless Wrong-doing: The Moral Limits of the Criminal Law</i> (Oxford University Press), Chapter 30, pp. 124-133 only.
4.	Jeremy Waldron (1993). <i>Liberal Rights</i> (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), Chapter 5, "Mill and the value of moral distress."