

City University of Hong Kong
Course Syllabus

offered by Department of Public Policy
with effect from Semester A 2017/18

Part I Course Overview

Course Title:	Philosophy and Life: A Dialogue
Course Code:	GE2106
Course Duration:	One Semester
Credit Units:	3
Level:	B2
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Arts and Humanities
	<input type="checkbox"/> Study of Societies, Social and Business Organisations
	<input type="checkbox"/> Science and Technology
Medium of Instruction:	English
Medium of Assessment:	English
Prerequisites: (<i>Course Code and Title</i>)	Nil
Precursors: (<i>Course Code and Title</i>)	Nil
Equivalent Courses: (<i>Course Code and Title</i>)	Nil
Exclusive Courses: (<i>Course Code and Title</i>)	SA/POL3405 Philosophy of Life

Part II Course Details

1. Abstract

(A 150-word description about the course)

What is the meaning of human life? Is death the end? What are friends for? What is the nature of love and sex? These are difficult philosophical questions that are highly relevant to our lives. To deal with such matters, you need to be able to think philosophically. On this course, students will become acquainted with methods that underpin philosophical thinking and get to know the views of major thinkers. What we study together will be useful for helping all participants to develop their own positions on these questions and issues. We emphasize the importance of participation in class with the aid of films and other media. Students will be assessed by their performance in these sessions as well as by group presentation, writing short essays and a short quiz.

Course Aims

This course aims to introduce to students the method of philosophy, to explore the nature of human existence, and to articulate a deepened understanding of human life in all its richness and contradictions. It seeks to develop in students an appreciation of some of the most important problems and approaches of philosophical ethics in both the Eastern and the Western traditions. The course will foster their skills and sensitivity in applying these philosophical approaches to reflect on and to analyse concrete day-to-day problems arising from questions about the human condition, human values, and what it means to be human. The goal is to cultivate students' moral sensibility and analytic skills to support the development of a philosophical outlook on life based on respect for oneself, for fellow human beings, and for the natural environment.

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 [#]	Weighting* (if applicable)	Discovery-enriched curriculum related learning outcomes (please tick where appropriate)		
			A1	A2	A3
1.	Give an account of philosophy as an intellectual discipline and explain the major features of the method of philosophical analysis.		x	x	
2.	Identify, articulate and explain some of the central issues and questions arising from philosophical reflections on the human condition and the nature of human existence. Interpret how an understanding of the greater natural world inevitably is part of people's views of themselves. Evaluate how an understanding of human evolution has shaped and informed our orientation and values.		x	x	
3.	Enumerate and interpret several major schools and traditions of philosophic ethics in both the West and the East.		x		
4.	Apply Western and Eastern philosophical approaches and perspectives to analyse and address central issues and		x	x	x

	questions about human values, the meaning of life, and the nature of human existence. Nurture and demonstrate a sympathetic understanding of the views of a range of peoples and cultures and manifest a greater sense of how common problems have been addressed in sophisticated yet different ways.				
5.	Develop an open mind, moral sensibility, and multiple points of view and construct philosophical arguments based on critical thinking, rational argument, and fair judgment. Assume greater individual and social responsibility and develop a capacity for lifelong learning		x	x	x

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

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	Introduction of basic concepts, theories, ideas, and arguments; examination of philosophical issues arising from reflections on the human condition and the nature of human existence.	x	x	x	x		
Class discussion and debate	An opportunity for students to clarify and evaluate key concepts and arguments through exchange and interaction with others and offering and receiving peer review; an exercise for students to listen to and appreciate alternative views and arguments.	x	x	x		x	
Film screening and the use of multi-media aids (music, documentaries, images, online resources, etc.)	A means to provide narrative examples to enhance moral sensibility, stimulate imaginative thinking and critical reflection on philosophical and ethical issues. Students will be provided with a short introduction on the philosophical and cultural background of the film in advance. A list of discussion questions will be given to students to help them to identify the key philosophical concepts. Class discussion and the presentation of individual interpretations and assessments of films will follow each viewing to allow students a chance to argue for their own positions.	x	x	x	x	x	
Short quiz	Designed to test student's grasp of basic concepts and arguments. (Students will be given a number of short philosophical dialogues and they are required to critically comment on one dialogue and argue for their own views.)	x	x		x	x	

Group presentation	Offers students a chance to work out well-argued and defensible positions of their own through a process of collaboration.				x	x	
Individual essays (response papers)	Short, focused papers requiring students to concentrate on the systematic presentation of key ideas and sharp arguments based on their independent analysis.	x	x	x	x		

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: 100%							
Participation in in-class discussions and debates.	x	x	x	x	x	10%	
Short quiz	x	x	x	x	x	30%	
Individual essay	x	x	x	x	x	30%	
Group presentation	x	x	x	x	x	30%	
Examination: ____ % (duration: _____ , if applicable)						100%	

* The weightings should add up to 100%.

5. Assessment Rubrics

(Grading of student achievements is based on student performance in assessment tasks/activities with the following rubrics.)

Assessment Task	Criterion	Excellent (A+, A, A-)	Good (B+, B, B-)	Fair (C+, C, C-)	Marginal (D)	Failure (F)
1. Participation in in-class discussions and debates.	Knowledge (50%); Critical analysis (50%)	Strong evidence of original thinking; good organisation, capacity to analyse and synthesise; superior grasp of subject matter; evidence of extensive knowledge base.	Evidence of grasp of subject, some evidence of critical capacity and analytic ability; reasonable understanding of issues; evidence of familiarity with literature.	Student who is profiting from the university experience; understanding of the subject; ability to develop solutions to simple problems in the material.	Sufficient familiarity with the subject matter to enable the student to progress without repeating the course.	Little evidence of familiarity with the subject matter; weakness in critical and analytic skills; limited or irrelevant use of literature.
2. Short essay and short quiz	Knowledge (50%); Critical analysis (50%)	Ability to respond to questions directly, creatively and precisely; strong evidence of original thinking; good organization, capacity to analyse and synthesize; superior grasp of subject matter; evidence of extensive knowledge base.	Evidence of grasp of subject, some evidence of critical capacity and analytic ability, reasonable understanding of issues; evidence of familiarity with literature.	Adequate understanding of the subject; ability to respond to simple problems.	Sufficient familiarity with the subject matter to enable the student to progress without failing.	Little evidence of familiarity with the subject matter; weakness in critical and analytic skills; limited, or irrelevant use of literature.
3. Group presentation	Knowledge (50%); Critical analysis (50%)	The ability to delineate materials; the use of relevant and stimulating materials; good and creative organization of materials; ability	The use of materials largely relevant to the topic; indications of good grasp of subject; some evidence of critical capacity and analytic	Basic and adequate understanding of the subject; ability to respond to simple problems during discussion.	An acceptable level of familiarity with the subject matter and grasps of materials.	Little evidence of familiarity with the subject matter; weakness in critical and analytic skills; limited, or irrelevant use of literature.

		<p>to conduct in-class discussion; capability in responding to questions derived from alternative perspectives; clear evidence of superior critical analysis and synthesis; excellent grasp of subject matter; evidence of in-depth knowledge.</p>	<p>ability, reasonable understanding of issues; evidence of familiarity with literature; good ability to initiate dialogues with other students.</p>		
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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.)

1. Philosophy
 - What is philosophy?
 - What is the relationship between philosophy and human life?
 - How to think philosophically?
 - What are the core ideas of major philosophical ethics in the East and West, including “consequence-based” ethics, “duty-based” ethics and “virtue-based” ethics?
2. Human relationships
 - What are friends for?
 - What does it mean to love another person?
 - Is sex without love right or wrong?
 - Is the family essential for human flourishing?
3. Life and death
 - Is death the end?
 - Should we have designer babies?
 - Is abortion morally wrong?
 - Should we allow euthanasia?
4. Questions about morality
 - Is morality relative?
 - Can there be morality without religion?
 - Is a life of pleasure a meaningful life?
 - What is the good life?
5. Philosophy, science, and human nature
 - What can evolutionary biology tell us about how to live?
 - Does determinism show that we are not free?
 - Can biotechnology alter human nature?
 - Does science have a monopoly of truths and knowledge?
6. The meaning of human life and our existence
 - Is life absurd?
 - How is a human life different from an animal’s life?
 - What is the relationship between work and leisure?
 - What is the value of nature?

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. Irwin, Terence (trans.) (1985), *Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics*, Indianapolis: Hackett.
2. Nehamas, Alexander and Woodruff, Paul (trans.) (1989), *Plato: Symposium*, Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett.
3. Blackburn, Simon (1999), *Think: A Compelling Introduction to Philosophy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
4. Cooper, David, E. (2003), *World Philosophies: A Historical Introduction*, 2nd edition, Oxford: Blackwell.

5. de Botton, Alain (2000), *The Consolations of Philosophy*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.
6. Halberstam, Joshua (1993), *Everyday Ethics: Inspired Solutions to Real-life Dilemmas*, New York: Viking,
7. Deutsch, Eliot and Bontekoe, Ronald (eds.) (1997), *A Companion to World Philosophies*, Oxford: Blackwell.
8. Hsu, Fu-kuan (徐復觀) (1962) *The History of the Chinese Philosophy of Human Nature: The Pre-Chin period*, Taiwan: Commercial Press.
9. Philip J. Ivanhoe and Bryan W. Van Norden (eds.) (2006) *Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy*, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company. <Translations of original texts.>
10. Law, Stephen (2000), *The Philosophy Files*, London: Orion.
11. Palmer, Donald (2002), *Does the Centre Hold? An Introduction to Western Philosophy*, 3rd edition, Boston: McGraw Hill.
12. Rachels, James (1999), *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, third edition, McGraw-Hill.
13. Tao, Julia and Yan, Hektor K. T. (eds.) (2006), *Meaning of Life*, Singapore: McGraw-Hill Education (Asia).
14. Tu Weiming and Tucker, Mary Evelyn (eds.), *Confucian Spirituality: Volume I*, New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, pp. 220-32.
15. Warburton, Nigel (2004), *Philosophy: The Basic*, 4th edition, London Routledge.

2.2 Additional Readings

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

www.philosophersnet.com [The website of *The Philosophers' Magazine*]

- A. Please specify the Gateway Education Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) that the course is aligned to and relate them to the CILOs stated in Part II, Section 2 of this form:

GE PILO	Please indicate which CILO(s) is/are related to this PILO, if any <i>(can be more than one CILOs in each PILO)</i>
PILO 1: Demonstrate the capacity for self-directed learning	CILOs 1-5 plus, in-class discussions, group presentations and essay writing.
PILO 2: Explain the basic methodologies and techniques of inquiry of the arts and humanities, social sciences, business, and science and technology	CILOs 1-5: This course takes a philosophical approach in the examination of fundamental issues regarding the nature of human existence.
PILO 3: Demonstrate critical thinking skills	CILOs 1-5: Philosophical reflection and ethical reasoning involve critical thinking
PILO 4: Interpret information and numerical data	CILOs 1-5: The course's emphasis on critical thinking requires interpretation of and critical reflection on texts and other phenomena (such as movies, narratives and mass media).
PILO 5: Produce structured, well-organised and fluent text	
PILO 6: Demonstrate effective oral communication skills	
PILO 7: Demonstrate an ability to work effectively in a team	
PILO 8: Recognise important characteristics of their own culture(s) and at least one other culture, and their impact on global issues	CILOs 1-5: This course enables students to understand how philosophical thoughts impact on how cultures perceive the nature of human existence; it also lays emphasis on the study of Western and non-Western traditions of thoughts.
PILO 9: Value ethical and socially responsible actions	CILOs 1-5: By exposing students to influential philosophical schools of thought, it is foreseen that students can get to value ethical and socially responsible actions.
PILO 10: Demonstrate the attitude and/or ability to accomplish discovery and/or innovation	CILOs 1-5: Students make original discoveries about themselves through a critical examination of the relationship between philosophical ideas and human life. By application the philosophical concepts they have learned from this course, students can also look at existing cultural phenomena and artefacts in an innovative way.

GE course leaders should cover the mandatory PILOs for the GE area (Area 1: Arts and Humanities; Area 2: Study of Societies, Social and Business Organisations; Area 3: Science and Technology) for which they have classified their course; for quality assurance purposes, they are advised to carefully consider if it is beneficial to claim any coverage of additional PILOs. General advice would be to restrict PILOs to only the essential ones. (Please refer to the curricular mapping of GE programme: http://www.cityu.edu.hk/edge/ge/faculty/curricular_mapping.htm.)

- B. Please select an assessment task for collecting evidence of student achievement for quality assurance purposes. Please retain at least one sample of student achievement across a period of three years.

Selected Assessment Task
Individual essays (response papers): Short, focused papers requiring students to concentrate on the systematic presentation of key ideas and sharp arguments based on their independent analysis.