

PIA2402: INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Effective Term

Semester A 2025/26

Part I Course Overview

Course Title

Introduction to Social and Political Philosophy

Subject Code

PIA - Public and International Affairs

Course Number

2402

Academic Unit

Public and International Affairs (PIA)

College/School

College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CH)

Course Duration

One Semester

Credit Units

3

Level

B1, B2, B3, B4 - Bachelor's Degree

Medium of Instruction

English

Medium of Assessment

English

Prerequisites

Nil

Precursors

Nil

Equivalent Courses

SA2401 Introduction to Social and Political Philosophy; SA2402 Introduction to Social and Political Philosophy; SA/POL2404 Foundations in Social and Political Philosophy; POL2402 Introduction to Social and Political Philosophy

Exclusive Courses

Nil

Part II Course Details

Abstract

This course aims to introduce to entry-level college students the central ideas and concepts in major Western and Chinese social and political philosophical traditions. It also aims to help students develop an ability to philosophically evaluate some of the core ethical and political issues that have strong bearing on political life and public policy-making. It enhances students' critical thinking and analytical reasoning on the topics including the purpose of the state, justice, political legitimacy, citizenship, freedom, and equality within the nation-state as well as in the global society. Students are expected to develop their abilities to formulate reasoned arguments, organize ideas systematically, and improve their oral and written communication skills.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

CILOs		Weighting (if app.)	DEC-A1	DEC-A2	DEC-A3
1	Recognize the social, cultural and philosophical context of the ideal of good society and public policy-making		x	x	
2	Develop their own critical perspective on major philosophical debates on justice and their implications for good society and public policy-making		x	x	x
3	Understand the key ideas and concepts in major Western and Chinese traditions of social and political thought, and discover how they are relevant to public policy.		x	x	
4	Formulate independent evaluation and judgment on the rival conceptions, theories and approaches in contemporary social and political philosophy.		x	x	x
5	Construct reasoned and persuasive arguments to justify their own point of views, and apply them to critically evaluate contemporary social and political issues that have strong bearing on public policy and the question of justice.		x	x	x
6	Develop skills in applying ethical judgment and philosophical principles to guide policy formulation and make society more just.		x	x	x
7	Enhance student communication skills.		x	x	x

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 real-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.

Learning and Teaching Activities (LTAs)

LTAs	Brief Description	CILO No.	Hours/week (if applicable)
1	Lecture	Identify key problems in social and political philosophy, introduce and evaluate relevant ideas and theories, illustrate their applications with cases studies, and organize suitable and feasible student discussions.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 3 hrs per week
2	Reflection Paper	To help students develop an ability to critically reflect upon key concepts and theories covered the readings and lectures; to help them engage the readings in light of other reading materials and one' s own philosophical judgment regarding justice and public policy.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
3	Take-Home Test 1	To acquire and develop independent thinking, to critically apply ethical and political theory to real life situations with special focus on social justice and public policy, to evaluate the theories learned in light of the actual social experiences, to empower his/herself with analytical skills and moral reasoning	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
4	Take-Home Test 2	To master key concepts and theories, critically assess them by applying and in light of real political situations and institutional constraints, and discover various way to resolve ethical dilemmas in political life; help the students acquire the holistic view of the subjects learned during the entire semester	

5	Readings and Participation in class discussions	Two to three articles or book chapters per week; Students are expected to attend all lectures and actively participate in the class discussion.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	
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Assessment Tasks / Activities (ATs)

	ATs	CILO No.	Weighting (%)	Remarks ("- " for nil entry)	Allow Use of GenAI?
1	Reflection Paper	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	20	-	No
2	Take-Home Test 1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	30	-	No
3	Take-Home Test 2	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	40	-	No
4	Participation	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	10	-	Yes

Continuous Assessment (%)

100

Examination (%)

0

Assessment Rubrics (AR)**Assessment Task**

1. Reflection Paper

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

High standard of understanding, critical assessment of, self-discovery of the ethical and political implications of public policy; Excellent understanding of core philosophical arguments and critical comparison with other theories

Good (B+, B, B-)

Fairly good understanding, critical assessment of, and self-discovery of the ethical and political implications of public policy. Good understanding of core philosophical arguments and critical comparison with other theories.

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Rudimentary understanding of the ethical and political implications of public policy. Some self-discovery regarding the relation between ethics and public policy. Weak ability to discover and analyse key challenges. Basic research, writing and communication skills.

Marginal (D)

Unsatisfactory understanding of the ethical and political implications of public policy. Little self-discovery regarding the relation between ethics and public policy.

Failure (F)

Complete failure to understand the ethical and political implications of public policy. No demonstrated self-discovery regarding the relation between ethics and public policy

Assessment Task

2. Take-Home Test 1

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

High standard of understanding, critical assessment of, self-discovery of the ethical and political implications of public policy; Excellent ability to make a philosophically reasoned argument in writing; a clear demonstration of the excellent self-discovery with regard to the relation between ethics and public policy and its profound implications for the people's public life.

Good (B+, B, B-)

Fairly good understanding of understanding, critical assessment of, self-discovery of the ethical and political implications of public policy; good ability to make a philosophically reasoned argument in writing; a clear demonstration of the good level of self-discovery with regard to the relation between ethics and public policy and its profound implications for the people's public life.

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Rudimentary understanding of understanding, critical assessment of, self-discovery of the ethical and political implications of public policy; an acceptable demonstration of an ability to make a philosophically reasoned argument in writing; occasional demonstration of self-discovery with regard to the relation between ethics and public policy and its profound implications for the people's public life.

Marginal (D)

Rudimentary understanding of understanding, critical assessment of, self-discovery of the ethical and political implications of public policy; limited demonstration of an ability to make a philosophically reasoned argument in writing; occasional demonstration of self-discovery with regard to the relation between ethics and public policy and its profound implications for the people's public life.

Failure (F)

Complete failure to understand key concepts and theories; complete failure to understand and address the ethical dimension of public policy and their implications of the people's collective social life. Complete failure to develop an ability to identify key challenges. Inadequate research, writing and communication skills.

Assessment Task

3. Take-Home Test 2

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

High standard of understanding, critical assessment of, self-discovery of the ethical and political implications of public policy; Excellent ability to make a philosophically reasoned argument in writing; a clear demonstration of the excellent self-discovery with regard to the relation between ethics and public policy and its profound implications for the people's public life.

Good (B+, B, B-)

Fairly good understanding of understanding, critical assessment of, self-discovery of the ethical and political implications of public policy; good ability to make a philosophically reasoned argument in writing; a clear demonstration of the good level of self-discovery with regard to the relation between ethics and public policy and its profound implications for the people's public life.

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Rudimentary understanding of understanding, critical assessment of, self-discovery of the ethical and political implications of public policy; an acceptable demonstration of an ability to make a philosophically reasoned argument in writing; occasional demonstration of self-discovery with regard to the relation between ethics and public policy and its profound implications for the people's public life.

Marginal (D)

Rudimentary understanding of understanding, critical assessment of, self-discovery of the ethical and political implications of public policy; limited demonstration of an ability to make a philosophically reasoned argument in writing; occasional demonstration of self-discovery with regard to the relation between ethics and public policy and its profound implications for the people's public life.

Failure (F)

Complete failure to understand key concepts and theories; complete failure to understand and address the ethical dimension of public policy and their implications of the people's collective social life. Complete failure to develop an ability to identify key challenges. Inadequate research, writing and communication skills. Complete failure to develop an ability to identify key challenges. Inadequate research, writing and communication skills.

Assessment Task

4. Readings and Participation

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

Active participation during lectures and class discussions based to prior readings of the reading materials and some additional research

Good (B+, B, B-)

Active participation during lectures and class discussions; little evidence of the prior readings of the reading materials and some additional research

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Occasional participation in class discussions; little evidence of the prior reading of the assigned reading materials

Marginal (D)

Rare participation in class discussions; no evidence of the prior reading of the assigned reading materials

Failure (F)

Complete lack of participation; no evidence of the prior reading of the assigned reading materials

Part III Other Information**Keyword Syllabus**

The Nature of Philosophy. Social Philosophy. Political Philosophy. Philosophical Method. Individual and the State. Natural Law. Natural Rights. Social Contract. Rights. Virtues. Liberty. Freedom. Justice. Equality. Community. Benevolent Government. Individual Liberty. Rule of Law. Rule of Virtue. Liberal Philosophy. Confucian philosophy. Confucius. Mencius. Locke. Mill, Rawls. Nozick.

Reading List**Compulsory Readings**

Title	
1	John Rawls, A Theory of Justice
2	Michael Walzer, Spheres of Justice
3	Charles Beitz, Political Theory and International Relations
4	David Miller, National Responsibility and Global Justice
5	Milton Friedman, Capitalism and Freedom
6	Daniel A. Bell, Confucian Political Ethics

Additional Readings

Title	
1	Robert Nozick, Anarchy, State and Utopia
2	John Rawls, Justice as Fairness: A Restatement Political

3	Daniel A. Bell, Beyond Liberal Democracy: Political Thinking for an East Asian Context
4	Joseph Carnes, The Ethics of Immigration