# The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

## Subject Description Form

Please read the notes at the end of the table carefully before completing the form.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Code</th>
<th>GEC1C46</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject Title</td>
<td>Aspects of Western Philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit Value</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-requisite / Co-requisite / Exclusion</td>
<td>Exclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusion</td>
<td>GEC1C40 Invitation to Western Philosophical Thinking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Objectives

The primary focus of this subject is

- Philosophy and Religion

In this subject, the following cluster specific attributes will be emphasized:

- Develop a facility for systematic thinking;
- Cultivate moral reasoning;
- Cultivate aesthetic judgment;
- Cultivate a cultural sense; and
- Become more globally aware.

This subject explores interesting philosophical topics, whereby students’ critical thinking and creative imagination will be cultivated and enhanced. They will appreciate the special nature of the Western analytical culture through this subject, and will be equipped with the ability to apply their independent thinking as a generic skill across different disciplines.

### Intended Learning Outcomes

(1) Upon completion of the subject, students will be able to:

(a) APPLY useful skills of logical reasoning;
(b) USE productive methods of creative imagination in constructing premises, and ultimately solutions, for problem-solving;
(c) DESCRIBE the main lines of thought of selected philosophical classics characteristic of the Western philosophical tradition;
(d) IDENTIFY the recent trends of the major intellectual controversies characteristic of the Western philosophical tradition;
(e) RECOGNIZE the generic importance of intellectual curiosity in philosophical inquiries and other academic subjects.
(f) READ with greater comprehension (ER)
(g) WRITE a research paper effectively (EW)

Please explain how the stated learning outcomes relate to the following three essential features of GUR subjects: Literacy, Higher order thinking, and Life-long learning.
As a “Reading Intensive” subject (ER), students will read a book of 200 pages, guided with review questions and assessed with a quiz.

Furthermore, as a “Writing Intensive” subject (EW), students will write a term paper of 2500 words, guided with review questions and consolidated by ELC writing support activities.

Through these intensive reading and writing components, students will also be enhancing their conceptual literacy through the study and the application of philosophical arguments.

Higher-order thinking
This subject invites students to take part in the process of philosophizing by asking interesting and stimulating questions. Students will see the lecturer to demonstrate, for example, how fallacies could be avoided in answering the questions by the application of logical thinking skills. Once the students have learnt the reasonably sophisticated philosophical reasoning skills, they will be guided to solve the questions for themselves, so much so that students will proactively enter into the level of higher-order, independent thinking. [Outcomes (a), (b) and (e)]

Life-long Learning
Philosophical thinking is highly effective in broadening students’ horizon by cultivating their intellectual curiosity and their independent thinking. Students will be thrilled to learn the mastery of the philosophical tools in conceptualizing problems and constructing creative solutions. After taking this subject, students will be highly motivated to develop an effective problem-solving ability and proactively inquisitive mind, essential for their “learning to learn” across the academic disciplines and for their life-long search for the meaning of one’s own existence in the modern world.

Subject Synopsis/Indicative Syllabus

1. Methods and Branches of Philosophy
   (a) Higher-order thinking
       Critical and creative thinking skills; productive use of skepticism; rules of logical reasoning; ancient Greek paradoxes and puzzles

   (b) Nature of Philosophy
       Theoretical and practical philosophies; relationships with other disciplines; Russell’s conception of the use of philosophy

2. Philosophical Topics
   (a) Are we dreaming now?
       Theories of knowledge; reality; correspondence and coherence theories of truth; Descartes

   (b) What is a good life?
       Teleology; value and fact; material and spiritual interests; objectivity; subjectivity; Confucianism; Buddhism; Socrates; Nietzsche; Nagel

   (c) Why should I be moral?
       Morality; nihilism; egoism; altruism; self-interest; selfishness;
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching/Learning Methodology</th>
<th>Progressive pedagogy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Starting with short philosophical puzzles and paradoxes to arouse students’ interests, this course adopts a progressive methodology in inviting students to learn the basic rules of logical reasoning and creative thinking.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In introducing each philosophical topic, case-studies and stories from the daily life will be used in highlighting the relevance of philosophy to the real life. Then, central philosophical issues will be broached step by step and explored deep into the core of the questions.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In this manner, students proceed in their learning step by step, from thinking methods, to small-scale philosophical problems, up to the reading of a philosophical book (ER) for them to challenge, to reflect upon and to learn from. And their learning outcome will be assessed with two quizzes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>At the end of the subject, students will be required to submit a term paper (EW). The term paper is an important platform for them to apply their thinking skills to controversial philosophical issues.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reading and writing instructions</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In this teaching and learning process, students will have finished reading a book on their own. A quiz worth 20 marks on the designated book will be conducted, fulfilling the ER requirement. In this manner, students proceed in their learning step by step, from thinking methods, to small-scale case-studies, up to the reading of a lengthy and concrete case of a value system for them to challenge, to reflect upon and to learn from. The book is 200 pages long, indicated in the Required Reading List below. Students will be encouraged to take part in the reading support activities organized by the ELC whenever available, while that part of participation will not be assessed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For the **EW** component, students will be required to submit their first draft not later than week 10, and the revised draft not later than week 12. For the submission of their final version of 2500 words not later than week 15, they are required to attach their first draft to see their progress. ELC will provide the writing support activities (including lectures and small-group tutorials on the skills of writing a research paper in terms of the choice of diction, styles, formats and citing references), and be responsible for the marking of their language performance, worth 10 marks. The instructor of the subject will be responsible for the marking of the content of the term paper, worth 30 marks.

Close communication will be maintained with colleagues from ELC in order to secure effective implementation of the **ER** and the **EW** components.

### Interactive teaching and learning methods

The lecturer will engage the students with interactive Q & A sessions during the lectures, using the skills such as passing around the microphones as a game in encouraging students to express their views, in conjunction with the lecturer walking around the lecture hall to maintain a close contact with the students.

In addition, a short reflective written exercise in the end of every other lecture will be conducted, whereby each student will have the chance of practicing independent thinking and enriching their literacy in terms of writing. Samples of excellent performance and pitfalls will be distributed in the beginning of the alternate lectures for the discussion between the lecturer and the students.

As mentioned above, students are required to attend one quiz on a designated book and another quiz on the main topics and issues of the subject. Again, the lecturer will discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the students after the quizzes by discussing sample answers by students during lectures, whereby effective interaction is achieved in the process of students’ progressive learning experience.

Peer interaction between students is also promoted in their group discussion in tutorials. Students will be divided into subgroups of 4 students each, responsible for leading a discussion on philosophical questions, distributed by the lecturer in the very beginning of the subject. Peer interaction is considered as fundamental for the training of their logical reasoning and the development of their independent thinking.

### Multi-media teaching tools

Relevant film extracts and documentaries will be used as initial foci for each of the topics, inviting students to be engaged in reflecting interesting philosophical questions.

As a result, a variety of entry points (reading, writing, dialogues, self-explorations, thinking through multi-media) are provided for the students from different academic departments and backgrounds. Students will appreciate the invitation from this subject to the reflective stance that is closely connected with the implementation of philosophical ideas to their real-life situations.
Assessment Methods in Alignment with Intended Learning Outcomes (Note 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific assessment methods/tasks</th>
<th>% weighting</th>
<th>Intended subject learning outcomes to be assessed (Please tick as appropriate)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Class participation: Tutorials and in-class reflective exercises</td>
<td>20 %</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Two Quizzes: Mid-term quiz on reading (ER)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final quiz on the subject material</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Term Paper (EW):</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. ELC writing support activities</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Student Study Effort Expected

- Class contact:
  - Lecture | 26 Hrs.
  - Tutorial | 13 Hrs.

Other student study effort:

- Self Study | 40 Hrs.
- Reading and writing | 40 Hrs.

Total student study effort | 119 Hrs.

Reading List and References

Please indicate clearly in this section if the subject should have an “R” designation. If so, subject proposers should also indicate clearly which items on the Reading List constitute the expected reading requirement and include the page numbers.

Required Reading (as Additional Extensive Reading for an “ER” subject)

A study guide including reading review questions and a glossary will be provided.


Reference List (for an “EW” subject)

Potential sources for a research paper as an EW subject, and suggested
questions will be provided as a guide for the writing of the term paper.


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**Note 1: Intended Learning Outcomes**

Intended learning outcomes should state what students should be able to do or attain upon completion of the subject. Subject outcomes are expected to contribute to the attainment of the overall programme outcomes.

**Note 2: Subject Synopsis/Indicative Syllabus**

The syllabus should adequately address the intended learning outcomes. At the same time over-crowding of the syllabus should be avoided.

**Note 3: Teaching/Learning Methodology**

This section should include a brief description of the teaching and learning methods to be employed to facilitate learning, and a justification of how the methods are aligned with the intended learning outcomes of the subject.

**Note 4: Assessment Method**

This section should include the assessment method(s) to be used and its relative weighting, and indicate which of the subject intended learning outcomes that each method purports to assess. It should also provide a brief explanation of the appropriateness of the assessment methods in assessing the intended learning outcomes.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Offering Department</th>
<th>GEC/APSS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cluster Area</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Human Nature, Relations and Development</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>☐ Community, Organization and Globalisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>☑ History, Cultures and World Views</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>☐ Science, Technology and Environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medium of Instruction</td>
<td>English</td>
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<tr>
<td>Requirements intended to fulfil</td>
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<tr>
<td>☐ China-Study Requirement (CSR)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>☑ English Reading (ER) and English Writing (EW)</td>
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<tr>
<td>☐ Chinese Reading (CR) and Chinese Writing (CW)</td>
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