

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Subject Description Form

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

| Subject Code | APSS1A02 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|------------------|--|----------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|---------|-----|----|------------------|----|-----|---------------|-----|----|
| Subject Title | Introduction to Western Theories of Human Nature | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Credit Value | 3 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Level | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| GUR Requirements Intended to Fulfill | <p>This subject intends to fulfill the following requirement(s) :</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Healthy Lifestyle</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> AI and Data Analytics (AIDA)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Innovation and Entrepreneurship (IE)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Languages and Communication Requirement (LCR)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Leadership Education and Development (LEAD)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Service-Learning</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cluster-Area Requirement (CAR)</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;"><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Human Nature, Relations and Development [CAR A]</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Science, Technology and Environment [CAR D]</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Chinese History and Culture [CAR M]</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Cultures, Organizations, Societies and Globalization [CAR N]</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> China-Study Requirement</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Yes or <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Writing and Reading Requirements</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> English or <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese</p> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Pre-requisite / Co-requisite/ Exclusion | NIL | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Assessment Methods | <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 33%;">100% Continuous Assessment</th> <th style="width: 33%;">Individual Assessment</th> <th style="width: 33%;">Group Assessment</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1. Quiz</td> <td style="text-align: center;">30%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">--</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. Group Project</td> <td style="text-align: center;">--</td> <td style="text-align: center;">30%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3. Term Paper</td> <td style="text-align: center;">40%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">--</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The grade is calculated according to the percentage assigned; | | | 100% Continuous Assessment | Individual Assessment | Group Assessment | 1. Quiz | 30% | -- | 2. Group Project | -- | 30% | 3. Term Paper | 40% | -- |
| 100% Continuous Assessment | Individual Assessment | Group Assessment | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1. Quiz | 30% | -- | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Group Project | -- | 30% | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3. Term Paper | 40% | -- | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The completion and submission of all component assignments are required for passing the subject; and • Student must pass all component(s) if he/she is to pass the subject. |
| Objectives | This course aims to familiarize students with several prominent ideas of human nature underlying the ethical, political, spiritual, and scientific outlooks of western society. The topics introduced are chosen specifically to illuminate the conflicts of world views in contemporary society, and with a view to helping students to develop their own ideas of a good human life. |
| Intended Learning Outcomes <i>(Note 1)</i> | <p>Upon completion of the subject, students will be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Have a clear grasp of the basic questions in the philosophy of human nature; Explain the relationship between the notion of human nature and different world views in the West; Apply various theories of human nature to ethical, social, political and scientific issues in contemporary society; Develop their own views on what it is to be human. <p>Please explain how the stated learning outcomes relate to the following three essential features of GUR subjects: Literacy, Higher order thinking, and Skills for life-long learning</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) and (b) are intended to enhance students' literacy by providing them with the basic knowledge of the history of thought that an ordinary westerner is expected to possess. (c) is intended to enhance students' higher order thinking through the exercise of critical thinking over important issues in society. (d) provides a condition for life-long learning by urging students to continue to take an interest in synthesizing different branches of knowledge in answering some fundamental questions in life which concern all human beings. |
| Subject Synopsis/ Indicative Syllabus <i>(Note 2)</i> | <p>‘What is human nature?’ ‘How are we to use our knowledge of human nature to enhance life?’ These two questions have been the concerns of western philosophers from time to time. The present course aims to provide at once a historical and philosophical introduction to the ideas of human nature which form the cores of various systems of western philosophy. Special attention is given to their relationships with the ethical, political, social, and scientific outlooks of man in various stages of history, as are found in ancient Greek philosophy, Enlightenment rationalism and empiricism, Marxism, psychoanalytic theory, and Existentialism. By way of comparison, a brief examination of both classical and contemporary Confucianism is also given.</p> |

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| | <p>Syllabus:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Philosophy and Human Nature: What is the relationship between them? 2. Theories of Man in Ancient Greek Philosophy <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Plato: the tripartite theory of the soul b) Aristotle: man as a political animal 3. The Age of Reason <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Rene Descartes: reason as the foundation of human knowledge b) David Hume: reason as the slave of passion c) Immanuel Kant: synthesis of reason and experience in science and ethics 4. History and Revolution <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Karl Marx: the theory of historical materialism 5. The Challenges to Reason <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Friedrich Nietzsche: moral nihilism and the genealogy of morals b) Sigmund Freud: the theory of the unconscious mind 6. Man without Human Nature <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Jean-Paul Sartre: radical freedom as a human condition b) Albert Camus: how meaningless is life? 7. The Comparative Perspectives <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) How are the western theories of human nature different from the Chinese ones? b) Virtues and reason in Confucianism c) Neo-Confucian responses to the western ideas of man 8. Conclusion: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) What sorts of life are recommended by theorists of human nature? b) Is human nature a good guide to practical issues in life? |
| <p>Teaching/Learning Methodology</p> <p><i>(Note 3)</i></p> | <p>This course consists of a total of 39 hours' lectures, which cover 8 topics in the history of thought, marked by their radical implications for what is it to be human. Students are required to form small groups of 3 to 5 persons for the purpose of group presentation. They are encouraged to apply their favorite theories of human nature to some ethical, social, political, or scientific problems which interest them. The group presentation may form the basis of the personal views they wish to develop in their personal essays, but should not be seen as a constraint of the latter. Arguments produced in both the group presentation and personal essays should in all cases be based on accurate understanding of the theories introduced in the lectures.</p> |

| Assessment Methods in Alignment with Intended Learning Outcomes (Note 4) | Specific assessment methods/tasks | % weighting | Intended subject learning outcomes to be assessed (Please tick as appropriate) | | | | | |
|---|---|-------------|--|---|---|---|----------|--|
| | | | a | b | c | d | | |
| | 1. Quiz | 30% | ✓ | ✓ | | | | |
| 2. Group Project | 30% | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | |
| 3. Term Paper | 40% | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | |
| Total | 100 % | | | | | | | |
| <p>Explanation of the appropriateness of the assessment methods in assessing the intended learning outcomes:</p> <p>The quiz is intended to test students' general knowledge of the facts and concepts concerning human nature, as well the basic understanding of the theories. This will require them to fulfill the literacy requirements set by (a) and (b).</p> <p>The term paper is intended to provide students with an opportunity to study carefully various theories of human nature, and on that basis develop their original views of human nature. This is expected to bring about both (a), (b), (c) and (d), as far as the students' personal views on the issues are concerned.</p> <p>Students may also want to test people's general attitudes towards the studies theories through discussion and collaboration with others. For this purpose, the group presentation and project are designed to let students apply the theories of human nature to issues in contemporary western society, which enhances both (a), (b) and (c).</p> | | | | | | | | |
| Student Study Effort Expected | Class contact: | | | | | | | |
| | ▪ Lecture | | | | | | 39 Hrs. | |
| | Other student study effort: | | | | | | | |
| | ▪ Personal Essay | | | | | | 15 Hrs. | |
| | ▪ Group Project | | | | | | 15 Hrs. | |
| | ▪ Quiz Preparation | | | | | | 10 Hrs. | |
| | ▪ Self-studies | | | | | | 33 Hrs. | |
| | Total student study effort | | | | | | 112 Hrs. | |
| Reading List and References | Annas, Julia. (2000). <i>Ancient Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction</i> . Oxford: Oxford University Press. | | | | | | | |

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| | <p>Barash, David P. (1998). <i>Ideas of Human Nature: From the Bhagavad Gita to Sociobiology</i>. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall.</p> <p>Bigger, Charles P. & Cornay, David B. (1976). <i>Eros and Nihilism</i>. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company.</p> <p>Cottingham, John. (1984). <i>Rationalism</i>. London: Paladin.</p> <p>Cottingham, John. (1998). <i>Philosophy and the Good Life: Reason and the Passions in Greek, Cartesian and Psychoanalytic Ethics</i>. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.</p> <p>De Botton, Alain (2000). <i>The Consolations of Philosophy</i>. London : Pantheon Books.</p> <p>Law, Stephen (2009). <i>The Great Philosophers: the Lives and Ideas of History's Greatest Thinkers</i>, London: Quercus.</p> <p>Lear, Jonathan. (2005). <i>Freud</i>. New York, London: Routledge.</p> <p>Magee, Bryan. (1998). <i>The Story of Philosophy</i>. New York: Dorling Kindersley.</p> <p>Robinson, Dave & Grove, Judy. (1998). <i>Philosophy for Beginners</i>, Cambridge: Icon Books.</p> <p>Stevenson, Leslie. (2000). <i>The Study of Human Nature: A Reader</i>. New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press.</p> <p>Stevenson, Leslie. (2012). <i>Open to New Light: Quaker Spirituality in Historical and Philosophical Context</i>. Exeter: Imprint Academic.</p> <p>Stevenson, Leslie, Haberman, David L., & Wright, Peter Matthews (2018). <i>Thirteen Theories of Human Nature</i>. New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press.</p> <p>Tu, Weiming. (1985). <i>Confucian Thought: Selfhood As Creative Transformation</i>. Albany: State University of New York Press.</p> <p>Trigg, Roger. (1988). <i>Ideas of Human Nature: A Historical Introduction</i>. Oxford; New York: Basil Blackwell.</p> <p>Warnock, Mary. (1967). <i>Existential Ethics</i>. London: Macmillan; New York: St. Martin's Press.</p> <p>Wolff, Jonathan. (2002). <i>Why Read Marx Today?</i> New York: Oxford University Press.</p> |
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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.