

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	APSS1C37
Subject Title	Introduction to Western Philosophy of Religion
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"/> Freshman Seminar</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Languages and Communication Requirement (LCR)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Leadership and Intra-Personal Development</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Service-Learning</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cluster-Area Requirement (CAR)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Human Nature, Relations and Development</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Community, Organization and Globalization</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> History, Cultures and World Views</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Science, Technology and Environment</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> China-Study Requirement</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Yes or <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Writing and Reading Requirements</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> English or <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese</p>
Pre-requisite/ Co-requisite/ Exclusion	This course is open to all students, including APSS students.
Objectives	<p>The objectives of the course are to introduce students to the important philosophical questions about religious worldviews, such as their nature, their reasonableness and their relation to other branches of human knowledge, the development of the most important moral values (e.g. human rights, dignity and social justice) and politics (policy-debates and policy-making in the public square) in the contemporary world, as well as to the results of academic investigations into the above questions.</p> <p>This introductory course is designed to equip students with the techniques of logic and critical thinking to think through the aforementioned issues independently, which would enhance their problem-solving skills, personally and socially, in the contemporary world. The focus of the course will be on the Abrahamic religions (Christianity, Islam, and Judaism), which share similar conceptions of the role of God and His nature.</p>

	<p>Although the focus of the course will be on the Abrahamic religions, they will be introduced and discussed in contrast with the religious worldviews in Asia, such as Hinduism and Buddhism.</p>
<p>Intended Learning Outcomes (Note 1)</p>	<p>Upon completion of the subject, students will be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. identify the important philosophical issues concerning religious worldviews in the contemporary world: e.g. Can it still be reasonable for us to have religious beliefs in the contemporary world? Do moral values, such as human rights, require the existence of God as their basis? What is the proper role of religion in the public square in the contemporary world? b. understand the important results of academic investigations into the aforementioned issues produced by past and contemporary Western philosophers and scientists; c. understand the Abrahamic theistic conception of ultimate reality in contrast with the non-theistic religious conceptions of ultimate reality in Asia; d. apply the techniques of logic and critical thinking to evaluate the views of various philosophers and scientists, and think through the aforementioned issues about religion in a critical and independent way; and e. apply the basic concepts and principles of critical thinking to reading and writing, and to problem solving in different areas of life.
<p>Subject Synopsis/ Indicative Syllabus (Note 2)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is Philosophy of Religion? 2. The Theistic Worldview and the Concept of God <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The theistic conception vs. the non-theistic religious conceptions of ultimate reality, such as Buddhism and the non-theistic version of Hinduism b. The concept of God in the theistic worldview c. The possibility of critical comparison between different worldviews 3. Is Religious Language Cognitively Meaningful? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The challenge of logical positivism b. The talk of God and cognitive meaning c. Ineffability and mystical experience 4. The Arguments for the Existence of God <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The cosmological argument b. The teleological argument c. The ontological argument d. The moral argument e. The argument from religious experience f. The argument from miracles 5. The Arguments Against the Existence of God <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The problem of evil b. The argument from divine hiddenness c. The challenges from Psychology and Cognitive Science d. The challenges from Cosmology

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> e. The challenges from Biology 6. What is the Relation Between Reason and Faith? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Fideism b. Reformed Epistemology c. Evidentialism 7. Is It Reasonable to Believe that Only One Religion is True? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Exclusivism b. Inclusivism c. Religious Pluralism 8. Life After Death: Are There Reasons for Hope? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Substance dualism b. The no-self theory c. Pantheism d. Materialism 9. What is the Proper Role of Religion in the Public Square? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. John Rawls b. Jurgen Habermas c. Nicholas Wolterstoff 10. Does Morality Require God as Its Basis? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The Euthyphro Dilemma b. Divine Command Theory 																																																						
<p>Teaching/Learning Methodology</p> <p><i>(Note 3)</i></p>	<p>The subject will be taught via lectures. In the lectures, the instructor will introduce to students the most important results of academic investigations into the issues of Philosophy of Religion produced by Western philosophers and scientists. Class discussions will be emphasized throughout the course. Audio and video materials will be used to engage students' interest in the subject. Students are expected to pay their efforts to explore and reflect on the issues through their group projects and individual papers, as well as to participate in class discussions on assigned topics.</p>																																																						
<p>Assessment Methods in Alignment with Intended Learning Outcomes</p> <p><i>(Note 4)</i></p>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th rowspan="2">Specific assessment methods/tasks</th> <th rowspan="2">% weighting</th> <th colspan="6">Intended subject learning outcomes to be assessed (Please tick as appropriate)</th> </tr> <tr> <th>a</th> <th>b</th> <th>c</th> <th>d</th> <th></th> <th></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1. Quiz</td> <td>30%</td> <td>✓</td> <td>✓</td> <td></td> <td>✓</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. Group Project Presentation</td> <td>30%</td> <td>✓</td> <td>✓</td> <td>✓</td> <td>✓</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>3. Term Paper (EW)</td> <td>30%</td> <td>✓</td> <td>✓</td> <td>✓</td> <td>✓</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>4. ELC Writing Support Activities</td> <td>10%</td> <td>✓</td> <td>✓</td> <td>✓</td> <td>✓</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>100</td> <td colspan="6"></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	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 Presentation	30%	✓	✓	✓	✓			3. Term Paper (EW)	30%	✓	✓	✓	✓			4. ELC Writing Support Activities	10%	✓	✓	✓	✓			Total	100						
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	<p>a. The grade is calculated according to the percentage assigned;</p> <p>b. The completion and submission of all component assignments are required for passing the subject; and</p> <p>c. Student must pass the specific component(s) (standard of passing) if he/she is to pass the subject.</p> <p>Explanation of the appropriateness of the assessment methods in assessing the intended learning outcomes:</p> <p>The quiz is intended to perform two functions: (a) It is intended to test students' understanding of the required text for the course. Students are required to read a basic text in Philosophy of Religion. Since the text is highly argumentative in nature, reading the text would provide a good training in reading and critical thinking for our students, besides helping them to grasp the issues in the field. This can help students to achieve the intended outcomes (a), (b) and (d).</p> <p>(b) The quiz is also intended to test students' general knowledge of the facts and concepts concerning Philosophy of Religion, as well as the basic understanding of theories and issues, which are taught in the lectures. This will require them to fulfill the requirements set by (a), (b) and (d).</p> <p>Group projects, as well as participation in class discussions, are designed to encourage students to have critical engagement with different points of views, and to develop their own defensible views. In doing these, students need to understand the relevant issues and the important views on those issues, and to apply critical thinking to examine those views. These can help students achieve all of the intended learning outcomes.</p> <p>Students are asked to write a term paper of 2500 words. The term paper is intended to provide a student with an opportunity to study carefully and in depth the issue in which he / she is especially interested. In writing the term paper, a student is required to do research—to read extensively and carefully on a specific topic, engage critically with the important views on the topic, and to develop his / her own reasoned position. This is expected to help bring about all of the intended learning outcomes for students.</p> <p>The ELC activities can provide a step by step guidance for students in writing their term paper. These activities can help students clarify the content, ideas and logic expressed in their papers and argue tightly for their own views. So the ELC activities can help students achieve all of the intended outcomes.</p>	
Student Study Effort Expected	Class contact:	
	▪ Lectures (plus students' presentation	39 Hrs.

	of their group projects)	
	Other student study effort:	
	▪ Term Paper	20 Hrs.
	▪ Group Project	10 Hrs.
	▪ Quiz Preparation	10 Hrs.
	▪ Self Studies	33 Hrs.
	Total student study effort	112 Hrs.
Reading List and References	<p>The Required Text:</p> <p>Davies, Brian. (2004). <i>An Introduction to Philosophy of Religion</i> 3rd edition. New York: Oxford University Press.</p> <p>References</p> <p>Runzo, Joseph. (2001). <i>Global Philosophy of Religion: A Short Introduction</i>. New York: Oneworld Publications.</p> <p>Eshleman, Andrew. eds. (2008). <i>Readings in the Philosophy of Religion: East Meets West</i>. MA: Blackwell Publishing.</p> <p>Yandell, Keith. (2016) <i>Philosophy of Religion: A Contemporary Introduction</i>. 2nd edition. New York: Routledge.</p> <p>Peterson, Michael, William Hasker, Bruce Reichenbach, and David Basinger. (2012). <i>Reason and Religious Belief</i>. 5th edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.</p> <p>Peterson, Michael, William Hasker, Bruce Reichenbach, and David Basinger. eds. (2014). <i>Philosophy of Religion: Selected Readings</i>. 5th edition. New York: Oxford University Press.</p> <p>Taliaferro, Charles. (2018). <i>Philosophy of Religion: A Beginner's Guide</i>. Oxford: Oneworld.</p> <p>Murray, Michael, and Michael Rea. (2008). <i>An Introduction to Philosophy of Religion</i>. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.</p> <p>Davies, Brian. (2004). <i>An Introduction to Philosophy of Religion</i> 3rd edition. New York: Oxford University Press</p> <p>Taliaferro, Charles, Paul Draper, and Philip L. Quinn. (2010) <i>A Companion to Philosophy of Religion</i>. 2nd edition. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-</p>	

	<p>Blackwell.</p> <p>Plantinga, Alvin. (1967). <i>God and Other Minds: A Study of the Rational Justification of Belief in God</i>. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.</p> <p>Plantinga, Alvin. (2011). <i>Where the Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion, and Naturalism</i>. New York: Oxford University Press.</p> <p>Plantinga, Alvin. (1977). <i>God, Freedom, and Evil</i>. Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.</p> <p>Swinburne, Richard. (2010). <i>Is There a God</i>. Revised edition. New York: Oxford University Press.</p> <p>Manson, Neil. eds. (2003). <i>God and Design: The teleological argument and modern science</i>. London: Routledge.</p> <p>Peterson, Michael. eds. (2016). <i>The Problem of Evil: Selected Readings</i>. 2nd edition. University of Notre Dame Press.</p> <p>Hick, John. (1990). <i>Philosophy of Religion</i>. 4th edition, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.</p> <p>Craig, William Lane and J. P. Moreland. eds. (2009) <i>The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology</i> Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.</p> <p>Zagzebski, Linda. and Timothy Miller. eds. (2009). <i>Readings in Philosophy of Religion: Ancient to Contemporary</i>. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.</p> <p>Peterson, Michael and R. VanArragon. eds. (2019). <i>Contemporary Debates in Philosophy of Religion</i>. 2nd edition. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.</p> <p>Hawking, Stephen. (1988). <i>A Brief History of Time</i>. New York: Bantam Books.</p> <p>Hawking, Stephen, and Leonard Mlodinow. (2010). <i>The Grand Design</i>. New York: Bantam Books.</p> <p>Carrol, Sean. (2016). <i>The Big Picture</i>. New York: Dutton.</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 subject completion. 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, overcrowding 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 is intended to assess. It should also provide a brief explanation of the appropriateness of the assessment methods in assessing the intended learning outcomes.