

# The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

## Subject Description Form

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

<b>Subject Code</b>	APSS1CN37																	
<b>Subject Title</b>	Introduction to Western Philosophy of Religion																	
<b>Credit Value</b>	3																	
<b>Level</b>	1																	
<b>GUR Requirements Intended to Fulfill</b>	<p>This subject intends to fulfill the following requirement(s) :</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Healthy Lifestyle</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>AI and Data Analytics (AIDA)</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Innovation and Entrepreneurship (IE)</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Languages and Communication Requirement (LCR)</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Leadership Education and Development (LEAD)</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Service-Learning</b></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Cluster-Area Requirement (CAR)</b></p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Human Nature, Relations and Development [CAR A]</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Science, Technology and Environment [CAR D]</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Chinese History and Culture [CAR M]</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cultures, Organizations, Societies and Globalization [CAR N]</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>China-Study Requirement</b></p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Yes or <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Writing and Reading Requirements</b></p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> English or <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese</p>																	
<b>Pre-requisite / Co-requisite/ Exclusion</b>	Subject Exclusion : APSS1C37																	
<b>Assessment Methods</b>	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <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>Quiz</td> <td style="text-align: center;">30%</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Group Project Presentation</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">30%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Term Paper (EW)</td> <td style="text-align: center;">30%</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>ELC Writing Support Activities</td> <td style="text-align: center;">10%</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>			100% Continuous Assessment	Individual Assessment	Group Assessment	Quiz	30%		Group Project Presentation		30%	Term Paper (EW)	30%		ELC Writing Support Activities	10%	
100% Continuous Assessment	Individual Assessment	Group Assessment																
Quiz	30%																	
Group Project Presentation		30%																
Term Paper (EW)	30%																	
ELC Writing Support Activities	10%																	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The grade is calculated according to the percentage assigned;</li> <li>• The completion and submission of all component assignments are required for passing the subject; and</li> <li>• Student must pass all component(s) if he/she is to pass the subject.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Objectives</b></p>	<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><b>Intended Learning Outcomes</b></p> <p><i>(Note 1)</i></p>	<p>Upon completion of the subject, students will be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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?</li> <li>b. understand the important results of academic investigations into the aforementioned issues produced by past and contemporary Western philosophers and scientists;</li> <li>c. understand the Abrahamic theistic conception of ultimate reality in contrast with the non-theistic religious conceptions of ultimate reality in Asia;</li> <li>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</li> <li>e. apply the basic concepts and principles of critical thinking to reading and writing, and to problem solving in different areas of life.</li> </ol>

<p><b>Subject Synopsis/ Indicative Syllabus</b></p> <p><i>(Note 2)</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is Philosophy of Religion?</li> <li>2. The Theistic and Non-Theistic Religions</li> <li>3. Religious Experience and its Significance</li> <li>4. Is Religious Language Cognitively Meaningful?</li> <li>5. Are Science and Religion Compatible?</li> <li>6. The Arguments for the Existence of God</li> <li>7. The Arguments Against the Existence of God</li> <li>8. What is the Relation Between Reason and Faith?</li> <li>9. Is It Reasonable to Believe that Only One Religion is True?</li> <li>10. Life After Death: Are There Reasons for Hope?</li> <li>11. What is the Proper Role of Religion in the Public Square?</li> <li>12. Does Morality Require God as Its Basis?</li> <li>13. Religion and the Meaning of Life</li> </ol>																																																						
<p><b>Teaching/Learning Methodology</b></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><b>Assessment Methods in Alignment with Intended Learning Outcomes</b></p> <p><i>(Note 4)</i></p>	<table border="1" data-bbox="563 1238 1396 1910"> <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>e</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><b>Total</b></td> <td><b>100</b></td> <td colspan="6"></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <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>	Specific assessment methods/tasks	% weighting	Intended subject learning outcomes to be assessed (Please tick as appropriate)						a	b	c	d	e		1. Quiz	30%	✓	✓		✓			2. Group Project Presentation	30%	✓	✓	✓	✓			3. Term Paper (EW)	30%	✓	✓	✓	✓			4. ELC Writing Support Activities	10%	✓	✓	✓	✓			<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>						
Specific assessment methods/tasks	% weighting			Intended subject learning outcomes to be assessed (Please tick as appropriate)																																																			
		a	b	c	d	e																																																	
1. Quiz	30%	✓	✓		✓																																																		
2. Group Project Presentation	30%	✓	✓	✓	✓																																																		
3. Term Paper (EW)	30%	✓	✓	✓	✓																																																		
4. ELC Writing Support Activities	10%	✓	✓	✓	✓																																																		
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>																																																						

	<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 1,500 - 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>	
<p><b>Student Study Effort Expected</b></p>	<p>Class contact:</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lecture (plus students' presentation of their group projects)</li> </ul>	<p>39 Hrs.</p>
	<p>Other student study effort:</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Term Paper</li> </ul>	20 Hrs.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Group Project</li> </ul>	10 Hrs.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Quiz Preparation</li> </ul>	10 Hrs.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Self Studies</li> </ul>	33 Hrs.
	Total student study effort	112 Hrs.
<b>Reading List and References</b>	<p><b>The Required Text:</b></p> <p>Davies, Brian. (2021). <i>An Introduction to Philosophy of Religion</i> 4<sup>th</sup> edition. New York: Oxford University Press.</p> <p><b>References</b></p> <p>Adams, M. &amp; Adams, R. (ed.) (1991). <i>The Problem of Evil</i>. Oxford: Oxford University Press.</p> <p>Barbour, I. (2000). <i>When Science Meets Religion</i>. New York: Harper.</p> <p>Butler, J., Habermas, J., Taylor, C., &amp; West, C. (2011). <i>The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere</i>, ed. Mendieta, E. &amp; Vanantwerpen, J. New York: Columbia University press.</p> <p>Cottingham, J. (2005). <i>The Spiritual Dimension: Religion, Philosophy and Human Value</i>. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.</p> <p>Cottingham, J. (2014). <i>Philosophy of Religion: Towards a More Humane Approach</i>. Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press.</p> <p>Eshleman, Andrew. eds. (2008). <i>Readings in the Philosophy of Religion: East Meets West</i>. MA: Blackwell Publishing.</p> <p>Griffioen, A. (2021). <i>Religious Experience</i>. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.</p> <p>James, W. (1982). <i>The Varieties of Religious Experience</i>. New York: Penguin.</p> <p>Mawson, T.J. (2016). <i>God and the Meanings of Life: What God Could and Couldn't Do to Make Our Lives More Meaningful</i>. London: Bloomsbury.</p> <p>Metz, T. (2019). <i>God, Soul, and the Meaning of Life</i>. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.</p>	

Plantinga, Alvin. (1967). *God and Other Minds: A Study of the Rational Justification of Belief in God*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Plantinga, Alvin. (2011). *Where the Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion, and Naturalism*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Plantinga, Alvin. (1977). *God, Freedom, and Evil*. Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

Peterson, Michael, William Hasker, Bruce Reichenbach, and David Basinger. eds. (2014). *Philosophy of Religion: Selected Readings*. 5<sup>th</sup> edition. New York: Oxford University Press.

Peterson, Michael, William Hasker, Bruce Reichenbach, and David Basinger. (2012). *Reason and Religious Belief*. 5<sup>th</sup> edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Polkinghorne, J. (2003). *Belief in God in an Age of Science*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Rea, M. (2021). *The Hiddenness of God*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ruse, M. (2010). *Science and Spirituality: Making Room for Faith in the Age of Science*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Schilbrack, K. (2014). *Philosophy and the Study of Religions: A Manifesto*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.

Stump, E. (2012). *Wandering in Darkness: Narrative and the Problem of Suffering*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Swinburne, Richard. (2010). *Is There a God*. Revised edition. New York: Oxford University Press.

Taliaferro, Charles. (2013). *The Golden Cord: A Short Book on the Secular and the Sacred*. Notre Dame: The University of Notre Dame Press.

Taylor, C. (2007). *A Secular Age*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Tooley, M. (2019). *The Problem of Evil*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Vainio, O. (2020). *Religious Language*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

	<p>Weidner, V. (2021). <i>Divine Hiddenness</i>. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.</p> <p>Yandell, Keith. (2016) <i>Philosophy of Religion: A Contemporary Introduction</i>. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. New York: Routledge.</p> <p>Zagzebski, Linda. and Timothy Miller. eds. (2009). <i>Readings in Philosophy of Religion: Ancient to Contemporary</i>. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.</p>
--	---

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.