

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
Subject Description Form

Subject Code	CBS1A21
Subject Title	Adventures in Social and Political Philosophy: How Are We To Live?
Credit Value	3
Level	1
Pre-requisite / Co-requisite/ Exclusion	Exclusion GEC1A06 Adventures in Social and Political Philosophy: How Are We To Live?
Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To EXPLAIN the intimate relationship between individuals and society in terms of personal well-being and social justice; 2. To SHARPEN students' awareness of the philosophical implications for the stance one might take in the areas of social and political philosophy; 3. To FAMILIARIZE students with the up-to-date literature and case- studies in social and political philosophy; 4. To CULTIVATE students' ability of critical thinking in making value judgments on the moral, the social and the political issues that might directly impact on them; and 5. To ENHANCE students' literacy in effective reading and writing.
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"> 1. UNDERSTAND the key concepts and theories in social and political philosophy; 2. RECOGNIZE the diversified relationships between one's well-being, duty, right and role on the one hand, and society on the other; 3. IDENTIFY controversial issues in society that fall within the realms of social and political philosophy; 4. APPLY the critical thinking skills taught in class to reach their own evaluative judgments; and 5. ENHANCE their literacy in effective reading and writing (in collaboration with the ELC).
Subject Synopsis/ Indicative Syllabus <i>(Note 2)</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How Should We Take Care Of Ourselves? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Subjectivism b. Psychological and Ethical Egoism c. Possibility of Altruism d. Cultural Relativism and Multiculturalism e. Case-Studies, Challenge and Criticism 2. Is Society More Important Than Individuals? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Bentham, John Mill and Social Utility

- b. Maximization of Happiness for Society
- c. Distinction between Higher and Lower Happiness
- d. Utilitarianism and Consequentialism
- e. Care-Studies, Challenge and Criticism

3. Should We Have Respect For Others?

- a. Kant and Human Beings as Ends in Themselves
- b. Duty Not To Lie to Others
- c. Human Dignity and Respect for Others
- d. Reason, Sense and the Moral Law
- e. Case-Studies, Challenge and Criticism

4. Should We Be Fair To All?

- a. John Rawls and Welfare Liberalism
- b. Fairness, Equality and Justice
- c. Lives, Well-being and Capabilities
- d. Political Liberalism
- e. Case-Studies, Challenge and Criticism

5. Do We Own Ourselves?

- a. Robert Nozick and Libertarianism
- b. Personal Liberty and Free Markets
- c. Criticism of Paternalism and Legislation of Morals
- d. Criticism of Redistribution of Wealth and Social Security
- e. Case-Studies, Challenge and Criticism

6. Do We Owe Anything to Society?

- a. Hegel and Communitarianism
- b. The Common Good
- c. Constitutive Role of Social Matrices
- d. Community and Citizenship
- e. Case-Studies, Challenge and Criticism

7. Should We Be Political Animals?

- a. Aristotle and Virtue Ethics
- b. Habits, Virtue and Law
- c. Justice, Telos and Honour
- d. Politics and the Good Life
- e. Case-Studies, Challenge and Criticism

Teaching/Learning Methodology

(Note 3)

- a. Lectures/Seminars**
Interactive approaches in lectures and seminars will be adopted. Q&A sessions, in-class exercises and reviews of students’ exercises will constitute a broadly effective platform for teaching and learning.
- b. Case Studies**
Concrete case studies in social and political philosophy will be used as stimulating illustrations, whereby students, in response to the case studies, can develop their independent thinking when they apply the concepts and theories they learn from this course.
- c. Multi-media Pedagogy**
Extracts of documentaries and films will be made use of in class, whereby the diversified approaches to the social and political philosophy can effectively motivate students’ learning.
- d. Collaboration among Students for their Group Projects**
Students will explore and communicate their philosophical ideas with their group mates by taking part in teamwork, in which they will construct their own philosophical positions.
- e. Independent Critical Thinking**
Throughout the course, students’ ability for independent critical thinking will be emphasized and enhanced. The problem-based quizzes and the term paper will be adopted as the effective channels for the students to define, develop and defend their attempts at a viable philosophical position with respect to the problem-sets as assigned by the lecturer.
- f. Enhancement of Literacy in Collaboration with ELC**
To enhance students’ literacy in effective writing so as to fulfill their EW requirement, the ELC will play an active role in offering lectures and tutorials specifically designed for the EW requirement of this course. Before the beginning of the course, arrangement with the ELC will be implemented.

To enhance students’ literacy in reading so as to fulfill their ER requirement, the ELC will offer help and relevant packages aiming at enhancing the students’ ability in comprehension and in effective reading. Before the beginning of the course, arrangement with the ELC will be implemented.

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	e	
1. Class Exercises	20%	✓		✓	✓		
2. Quizzes	20%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
3. Group Project	20%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
4. Term Paper	30%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
5. EW Requirement	10%					✓	

	Total	100 %	
	<p>Explanation of the appropriateness of the assessment methods in assessing the intended learning outcomes:</p> <p>a. <u>In-class Exercises</u></p> <p>The in-class exercises aim at assessing students’ preliminary understanding of the course materials discussed in class. Samples of the exercises will be discussed in the class so that students can effectively monitor the pace of their performance in comparison with their fellow students, motivating them to make improvement in an on-going manner.</p> <p>b. <u>Quizzes</u></p> <p>There will be two quizzes. They are to test students’ ability to familiarize themselves with the concepts and theories of social and political philosophy, and to synthesize and to apply the skills of critical thinking in a problem-solving setting. The quizzes are effective tools for assessing students’ ability to synthesize different sets of concepts, theories and critical thinking skills in formulating their own position.</p> <p>c. <u>Group Project</u></p> <p>This is a dynamic opportunity for the students to communicate, collaborate and even challenge the creative ideas among their group mates. Students are assessed in terms of the soundness of their critical analyses and the cogency of their philosophical arguments. The assessment here considers the students’ identification of problems as equally important as their construction of solutions. More importantly, samples of students’ projects will be reviewed by the lecturer in class with the students, which will not only deepen their understanding of the issues tackled by their fellow students but also consolidate their grasp of the issues discussed.</p> <p>d. <u>Term Paper (1,500 – 2,500 words) and the EW Requirement</u></p> <p>The final assessment of this course is done through an individual term paper. The students reaching this stage will have mastered the effective conceptual tools (concepts, theories and techniques of creativity), cultivated valuable learning experience through the previous assessment components as well as knowledge, acquired in class, requisite for the construction of a convincing philosophical perspective. This assessment is based on a 1,500 – 2,500 words term paper. This is also to serve as the fulfillment of the English Writing (EW) Requirement in collaboration with the ELC, which is to provide students with lectures and tutorials on effective writing for a research paper. In order to pass this subject, students must pass the writing component, i.e., attain a minimum grade “D” in the writing component.</p>		
Student Study Effort Expected	Class contact:		
	▪ Lectures		26 Hrs.
	▪ Tutorials/Seminars		13 Hrs.
	Other student study effort:		
	▪ Self-study		20 Hrs.
▪ Group Project		25 Hrs.	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Research and Term Paper 	30 Hrs.
	Total student study effort	114 Hrs.
Reading List and References	<p><u>Text for ER Requirement</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sandel, Michael J., <i>Justice: what's the right thing to do?</i> Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010. (269 pp) [Relevant chapters and extracts will be selected up to approximately 100,000 words or 200 pages.] <p><u>Reading List</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Singer, Peter, <i>How are we to live? Ethics in an age of self-interest.</i> Oxford and New York: OUP, 1997. 2. Sen, Amartya, <i>The idea of justice</i>, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009. 3. Rawls, John, <i>A Theory of justice</i>, Universal Law Publishing Co Ltd., 2005. <p><u>References</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Arthur, John, <i>Morality and moral controversies: readings in moral, social and political philosophy</i>, 8th edition, Prentice Hall, 2008. 2. Avineri, Shlomo et.al., <i>Communitarianism and Individualism (Oxford Readings in Politics and Government)</i>, OUP, 1992. 3. Bell, Daniel, <i>Communitarianism and Its Critics</i>, OUP, 1993. 4. Christiano, Thomas, <i>Contemporary Debates in Political Philosophy</i>, Wiley-Blackwell, 2009. 5. Etzioni, Amitai, <i>The Communitarian Reader: Beyond the Essentials (Rights and Responsibilities)</i>, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2004. 6. Frazer, Elizabeth, <i>The Problems of Communitarian Politics: Unity and Conflict</i>, OUP, 2000. 7. Kant, Immanuel, <i>Critique of Practical Reason</i>, trans. Werner S. Pluhar, Indianapolis, Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2002. 8. Kymlicka, Will, <i>Contemporary political philosophy</i>, 2nd edition, Oxford University Press, 2001. 	

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.

Subject Offering Department	CBS
Cluster Area	<p>Please check the box(es) below to indicate the cluster area(s) the subject contributes in a major way:</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Human Nature, Relations and Development [CAR(A)]</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Science, Technology and Environment [CAR(D)]</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Chinese History and Culture [CAR(M)]</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Cultures, Organisations, Societies and Globalisation [CAR(N)]</p>
Medium of Instruction	English
Requirements intended to fulfil	<p><input type="checkbox"/> China-Study Requirement (CSR)</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> English Reading (ER) and English Writing (EW)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Chinese Reading (CR) and Chinese Writing (CW)</p>