Course Title: In Dialogue with Humanity

Aims and Objective

In today’s Hong Kong, where competitions are keen and success is commonly defined by social status and market values, people might easily forget certain important humanistic values. This course aims to cultivate a solid foundation of humanistic values in students’ self-development.

As Socrates said, “The unexamined life is not worth living”. The present course will lead students to grasp five important values in humanity: (1) Truth, (2) Goodness, (3) Beauty, (4) Religious concerns and (5) Humaneness. Through intercultural and multi-perspective discussions, students will acquire familiarity with the wisdom of some great thinkers from both the Eastern and Western intellectual traditions; and will be encouraged to critically evaluate some common values in modern society such as fame, wealth, and material comfort. Moreover, this course will facilitate students’ self-development by introducing to them the psychology of self-development and guiding them to discuss the meaning of life, factors involved in career choice, and the application of market values.

The course has no prerequisite. Students with little or no background knowledge in art and philosophy are welcomed.

Intended Learning Outcomes of the Course

On completion of the course, students should be able to

ILO1. discuss and elaborate the five important values in humanity: Truth, Goodness, Beauty, Religious Concerns and Humaneness;
ILO2. articulate and justify the values that they consider important in their future self-development;
ILO3. develop and explain their own interpretations of art works;
ILO4 demonstrate the ability to learn through self-inquiry and work collaboratively with others.

Syllabus

Lecture Topic 1: Truth (真)
In this topic, we will discuss the major philosophical theories of truth (the correspondence theory, the coherence theory and the pragmatic theory). We will also examine the nature of analytic truth and synthetic truth; and the relationship between truth, lies, false statements and knowledge. Lastly, the virtue of honesty and the importance of trust in today’s society will be discussed.

Lecture Topic 2: Goodness (善)
In this topic, students will be introduced to some major moral theories, such as deontology, utilitarianism and virtue ethics.
As for virtue ethics, filial piety and integrity will be further explored. Students will also be invited to compare the common values and the common view of good life in today’s Hong Kong against the core values in the Eastern and Western philosophical traditions, such as ren (仁) in Confucianism and forgiveness in Christianity.
Lecture Topic 3: Beauty (美)
This topic examines the concept of beauty; the nature and function of art; and how art expresses feeling and convey meaning. Class activities will be provided to let students understand how arts can open up some new dimensions of experience in their life. Painting, music, literature and modern installation art such as the art work of Zhang Huan (張洹) and in Dashanzi (798) Art District, Beijing will be employed in our lecture discussions.

Lecture Topic 4: Religious concerns (聖)
This topic focuses on the nature of religious beliefs, and the relationship between religion and death, morality and social justice. Students will be introduced to some big religious traditions, such as Buddhism, Christianity and Islam; and will be invited to reflect upon the meaning of religious festivals in Hong Kong such as that of Ching Ming festival and Christmas.

Lecture Topic 5: humaneness (情)
Some say that the essence of being human is that humans have compassion, righteousness and propriety. The present topic explores the nature of these qualities, their importance in human society and how to cultivate them in our living habits. Class activities and video screening will be employed to substantiate students’ learning experience.

Lecture Topic 6: Self-understanding
This final topic starts with the psychology of self-development and some important ideas in Existantialism. Students will then be led to consider how to make career decisions, the moral limits of market values, and the power of habit. These discussions aim to equip students with the skills to achieve self-understanding; develop awareness of their potentials and limitations; construct their career plans; and define their long-term life goals.

Assessment

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<tr>
<th>Continuous Assessment (100%)</th>
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<tr>
<td>A One-hour Quiz (20%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group Project (40%)</td>
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<td>Two Essay Assignments (40%)</td>
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Pre-requisite(s)

Nil

Required and Recommended Reading

References:

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