

Lingnan University
Department of Philosophy

Course Title	: Value Theory
Course Code	: PHI4374
Recommended Study Year	: 3 rd Year
No. of Credits/Term	: 3
Mode of Tuition	: Sectional approach
Class Contact Hours	: 3 hours per week
Category in Major Programme	: Programme Elective - Ethics and Practical Philosophy Profile
Recommendation(s)	: Either PHI3103 Advanced Western Ethics or PHI3104 Western Political Philosophy (Note: This prerequisite is waived for BAPAI Senior Year students.)
Co-requisite(s)	: N/A
Exclusion(s)	: N/A
Exemption Requirement(s)	: N/A

Brief Course Description

Value theory, which is sometimes also called axiology, is concerned with the nature and status of value as well as with the differences and relations between distinctive types of value, such as intrinsic and instrumental value, and ethical, aesthetic, and economic values. This course surveys philosophical investigations into these and related topics (e.g., hedonism, theories of well-being, value pluralism).

Aims

To acquaint students with theories on the nature of value and of what makes things and/or lives valuable.

Learning Outcomes

On completion of the course, students will be able to:

- (LO1) Describe the main classical and contemporary theories on the nature of value.
- (LO2) Specify the main points of disagreement among the various conceptions of value discussed in class.
- (LO3) Evaluate the theoretical solutions proposed to the problems that various theories of value address.
- (LO4) Propose and discuss their personal views on the nature of value and on the other issues debated (e.g., whether happiness and/or pleasure are the sole intrinsic values).

Indicative Content

1. Rival conceptions of distinctions between intrinsic, extrinsic, instrumental, final, inherent, and contributive value.
2. Prominent philosophical proposals concerning what is good for its own sake. Hedonism, experientialism, etc.
3. Naturalist and non-naturalist accounts of value.
4. Response-dependence and the status of value; values, dispositions, and observers.
5. Realism, anti-realism, quasi-realism in the theory of value.
6. Disagreement and the semantics of discourse about value.
7. Value pluralism
8. Theories of well-being

Teaching Method

Lectures, presentations, and discussions

Measurement of Learning Outcomes

Students will take/write:

- Short in-class quizzes, in which they will have to answer short questions on the various concepts and theories discussed in class (to assess LO1, LO2, and LO3);
- A final exam, in which they will have to write long essay questions on the content of the course. Students will have to elaborate their views on the theories discussed in class (to assess LO1, LO2, LO3, and LO4);
- A term paper (1500-2000 words) on a topic of the course (to assess mainly LO4). The students will be provided with a list of readings related to the specific topic they choose to write about.

In addition, students are expected to participate in classroom discussions and demonstrate good preparation—for instance, they will have to demonstrate adequate knowledge of the required weekly readings when called by the lecturer (to assess LO1, LO2, LO3, and LO4).

Assessment

Participation and in-class discussion (10%)

In-class quizzes (20%)

Paper (30%)

Final exam (40%)

Required Readings

Selections from:

Hurka, Thomas. *The Best Things in Life*. Oxford University Press, 2015.

Wolf, Susan. *Meaning in Life*. Princeton University Press, 2012.

Other material (papers, lecture notes, etc.) will be available on moodle.

Supplementary Readings

Anderson, Elizabeth. *Value in Ethics and Economics*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993.

Audi, Robert. *The Good in the Right: A Theory of Intuition and Intrinsic Value*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004.

Brink, David O. *Moral Realism and the Foundations of Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Darwall, Stephen, 2002. *Welfare and Rational Care*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Korsgaard, Christine M. *Creating the Kingdom of Ends*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Lemos, Noah M. *Intrinsic Value: Concept and Warrant*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Lewis, C. I. *An Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation*. LaSalle, Ill.: Open Court, 1946.

Lewis, David. 'Dispositional theories of value'. In *Papers in Ethics and Social Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Mackie, John Leslie. *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*. Harmondsworth: Penquin, 1977.

Miller, Richard M. *Moral Differences*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.

Railton, Peter. *Facts, Values, and Norms*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Ross, W. D. *The Right and the Good*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1930.

Sinnott-Armstrong, Walter and Mark Timmons, eds. *Moral Knowledge? New Readings in Moral Epistemology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Zimmerman, Michael J. *The Nature of Intrinsic Value*. London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001.

Important Notes

- (1) Students are expected to spend a total of 9 hours (i.e. 3 hours of class contact and 6 hours of personal study) per week to achieve the course learning outcomes.
- (2) Students shall be aware of the University regulations about dishonest practice in course work, tests and examinations, and the possible consequences as stipulated in the Regulations Governing University Examinations and Course Work. In particular, plagiarism, being a kind of dishonest practice, is “the presentation of another person’s work without proper acknowledgement of the source, including exact phrases, or summarised ideas, or even footnotes/citations, whether protected by copyright or not, as the student’s own work”. Students are required to strictly follow university regulations governing academic integrity and honesty.
- (3) Students are required to submit writing assignment(s) using Turnitin.
- (4) To enhance students’ understanding of plagiarism, a mini-course “Online Tutorial on Plagiarism Awareness” is available on <https://pla.ln.edu.hk/>.
- (5) Students must adhere to the University’s guidelines and practices when using Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools. The official documents “Guidelines for Using GAI Tools at Lingnan University” and “Best Practices for Ethical and Responsible Use of GAI Tools in Course Assessments” can be found here: <https://www.ln.edu.hk/tlc/generative-artificial-intelligence/gai-guidelines-best-practices>.