Lingnan University  
Department of Philosophy – MA in Practical Philosophy Programme

**Course Title**: Contemporary Political Ideologies  
**Course Code**: PHI504  
**Recommended Study Year**: -  
**No. of Credits/Term**: 3  
**Mode of Tuition**: Lecture and Tutorial  
**Class Contact Hours**: 2 hours lecture per week  
1 hour tutorial per week  
**Category in Major Programme**: Value Philosophy  
**Prerequisite(s)**: -  
**Co-requisite(s)**: -  
**Exclusion(s)**: -  
**Exemption Requirement(s)**: -

**Brief Course Description**  
This course explores a cross section of political philosophies and the issues that surround them, including utilitarianism, egalitarianism, libertarianism, and communitarianism. The course will consider issues such as how utilitarian thought has come to dominate philosophical debate as well as the views of those who are opposed to it. The course will also consider Rawls’ theory of justice as well as Nozick’s response to it. Finally the course will deal with issues relating to communitarianism and the question of how this view has shaped the debate about contemporary political ideology.

**Aims**  
The course aims at providing a critical appraisal of the major schools of thought which dominate contemporary debates in political philosophy.

**Learning Outcomes**  
1. Understand the main theories of contemporary political philosophy;  
2. Grasp the core debates among contemporary political philosophers;  
3. Think philosophically in political matters.

**Indicative Content**  
What is the relation between a person and a government? How should we balance the importance of an individual’s autonomy and that of a greater good for society? How should we understand the idea of desert? Should an agent be entitled to all the benefits he derived from the exercise of his talent?  
What is the proper sphere of politics? Should a government be responsible for the promotion of the people’s virtues? Or should the government remain neutral in regard to a variety of comprehensive conceptions of good life?  
What would be involved in the idea of respecting individual’s rational autonomy? Will it provide justification for a greater scale of governmental intervention into people’s lives? Or will it limit the function of the government to a minimal sphere? Should a government coerce its people to attain a greater realization of their liberty?

**Teaching Method**  
Lecture and Tutorial

**Measurement of Learning Outcomes**  
1. Students will give oral presentations on assigned readings. They are expected to summarize, paraphrase and respond critically to the arguments in these texts.
2. Students will write a philosophical essay, the topics of which correspond to the contents of the lectures. They are expected to present their interpretations and criticisms effectively.

**Assessment**

50% Continuous Assessment
50% Final Examination

**Required Readings**

Texts:

Modern Classics:

**Supplementary Readings**

Secondary References:

The Keele Guide to Political Thought and Ideology on the Internet: [http://www.keele.ac.uk/depts/por/ptbase.htm](http://www.keele.ac.uk/depts/por/ptbase.htm)