Lingnan University
Department of Philosophy – MA in Practical Philosophy Programme

Course Title : Faces of Utopia
Course Code : PHI535
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
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 classic as well as contemporary themes of utopia in both West and East. It sets out to examine theoretic as well as practical dimensions of utopia in its complex forms of manifestation and multi-layered relations to other notions such as equality, harmony, freedom, happiness or self-realization, spontaneous order or rational design. Discourses of utopia often go beyond the image of what the ideal social life would be and become claims about what it can and should be. Utopia is then not just a dream to be enjoyed but a vision to be pursued. But the question whether utopia is not escapist nonsense or an impossible fantasy, any serious pursuit of which would lead to social and political disaster, imposes heavy burden on those devoted utopian seekers who want to change the world according to their dreams.

Aims
To acquaint students with a brief genealogy of utopian thoughts in the West and in traditional and modern China. To let them see various faces of utopia in its literary, political/economical, and cultural/religious contexts and explore possible roots for such expressions. Issues pertaining to critical evaluation of utopian visions or practices will be introduced via concrete case studies such as Mao’s cultural revolution.

Learning Outcomes
On completion of this course, students will be able to
1. get a sensible and critical conception of utopian thought and/or practice in their various forms or cultural/historical manifestations.
2. acquire some analytical perspective in making sense of such heavily value-laden phenomena in real life as utopia.
3. apply some of the notions in their own reflection or assessment on certain social and political issues.

Indicative Content
(i) Golden Age vs. Millennium; Paradise vs. Republic (Plato); Confucian, Taoist, Mohist ideal societies
(ii) Sacred and secular order (Aquinas); Reshaping order (More’s *Utopia*); Order & progress (Bacon)
(iii) Castle in the air: Marx, and utopian socialism
(v) Utopian hope (Bloch) and reclaiming the future
(vi) From the romantic utopia to the American dream: Disney land, and the transformation of the psyche (Marcuse)
(vii) A Hundred Flowers, Great Leap Forward, and Cultural Revolution: populist and ascetic values in Maoist utopianism
(viii) Decline of utopias (the case of post-Maoist China) and comparison of some contemporary societies in their utopia-related aspects
(ix) The boundaries of Utopia: form, content, function

**Teaching Method**
Lectures and discussions

**Measurement of Learning Outcomes**
1. Students’ engagement with some of the required readings will be measured by means of an exam comprising both short-answer and more substantive, reflective questions.
2. Students’ achievement in analytical perspective as well as corresponding application skill will be mainly measured by the term paper due at the end of the course.
3. Students’ progress in getting sensible or critical conception of utopian thought/practice will be continuously measured by their participation in sessions of free discussion as well as prepared presentation.

**Assessment**
Assessment of the students will focus on their active engagement with the philosophical readings and issues, and their ability to develop articulate critical responses.
Continuous assessment: 20%; examination: 40%; term paper: 40%

**Required Readings**
(Chinese translation available)
陶淵明，桃花源記，陶淵明全集，上海古藉出版社 2008。
老子，道德經(parts)，臺北：正中 1994。
周何，儒家的理想國：禮記，臺北：時報文化出版公司 1996。
Supplementary Readings
Marcuse, H. “The End of Utopia,” *Five Lectures; The Aesthetic Dimension*