

**Lingnan University**  
**Department of Philosophy**

<b>Course Title</b>	: Contingencies and Necessities in Life
<b>Course Code</b>	: PHI3236
<b>Recommended Study Year</b>	: 3 <sup>rd</sup> Year or 4 <sup>th</sup> Year
<b>No. of Credits/Term</b>	: 3
<b>Mode of Tuition</b>	: Lecture, tutorial and service learning
<b>Class Contact Hours</b>	: 2 hours Lecture/week; 1 hour Tutorial/week
<b>Category in Major Programme</b>	: Programme Elective - Ethics and Practical Philosophy Profile
<b>Prerequisite(s)</b>	: N/A
<b>Co-requisite(s)</b>	: N/A
<b>Exclusion(s)</b>	: N/A
<b>Exemption Requirement(s)</b>	: N/A

**Brief Course Description**

There are occurrences in life which seem accidental, such as illness. Yet illness is unavoidable. Similarly, everyone must have had parents, yet we obviously do not choose them, and the history of our conception includes many contingencies. Another example is suffering: all persons must suffer, yet people suffer in different ways, many of which are contingent in the sense of depending on complex circumstances. In order to make sense of contingencies, as well as to accommodate necessities in our lives, we should possess an attitude which helps us to face impermanence, i.e. the attitude of not clinging. This course will explore ways in which we can apply this attitude to our daily lives.

Apart from the lectures and tutorials, students will participate in experiential activities, such as serving ageing people and visiting hospitals, which will lead them to deeper reflection. Movies with related themes will be used to facilitate discussion of these issues.

**Aims**

This course aims at enabling students:

1. To see deeply into the experiences in their own lives in terms of the notions of contingency and necessity;
2. To reflect on the meanings of suffering and other inescapable happenings in their lives;
3. To build up a reflective attitude to cope with unexpected problems in their lives.

**Learning Outcomes**

By the end of the course, students are expected to be able to attribute meanings to inescapable and unexpected events (LO1). They will be more sensitive to and compassionate about other people's suffering (LO2).

**Indicative Content**

1. Introduction  
Necessities Vs. contingencies
2. Family as a resource and a constraint  
Family Structuralism  
Family Constellation
3. Love  
What does love mean to us?  
Love and attachment
4. Illness  
Illness as metaphor

- The meaning of illness
- 5. Suffering
  - The meaning of suffering
- 6. Fear
- 7. Loneliness and solitude
- 8. Ego and self

### Teaching Method

Lecture and tutorial

### Measurement of Learning Outcomes

Assessment will be based on the performance in tutorial discussion, activities participation, a term paper and the examination.

1. Students will discuss on assigned topic in the tutorials. They are expected to be able to reflect deeply on the issues mentioned in the indicative content. They are encouraged to draw on sources from their own experiences in supporting their views (LO1; LO2).
2. Students will write a term paper. They are expected to be able to integrate what they have learned in class in order to attribute meanings to inescapable and unexpected events.(LO1)
3. Examination will assess the depth of students' reflection on the special events including that bring about suffering in their own lives as well as in others' (LO1; LO2).

### Assessment

Continuous assessment: 60% (Term Paper 40%, Tutorial Performance & Assignments 20%)

Final Examination: 30%

Attendance: 10%

### Required Readings

Chodron, Pema (2002), *When Things Fall Apart: Heart Advice for Difficult Times*, Boston: Shambhala. 《當生命陷落時：與逆境共處的智慧》，胡因夢、廖世德譯，台北：心靈工坊，2001。

Sontag, Susan (1991), *Illness as Metaphor and AIDS and Its Metaphors*, London: Penguin. 《疾病的隱喻》，刁筱華譯，台北：大田出版社，2000。

薩爾瓦多·米紐慶、麥克·尼可著，劉瓊瑛、黃漢耀、魯宓、馬英譯，《回家》，台北：張老師文化，2000。

托瓦爾特·德特雷福仁著，易之新譯，《疾病的希望：身心整合的療癒力量》，台北：心靈工坊，2002。

### Supplementary Readings

Chodron, Pema, *The Wisdom of No Escape and the Path of Loving-Kindness*, Boston: Shambhala, 2001. (《不逃避的智慧》，胡因夢譯，台北：心靈工坊，2005。)

Chodron, Pema, compiled and edited by Emily Hilburn Sell, *Comfortable with Uncertainty: 108 Teachings on Cultivating Fearlessness and Compassion*, Boston: Shambhala, 2003.

Frankl, Victor E., *Man's Search for Meaning*, New York: Pocket Books, 1963.

Hellinger, Bert (1998), *Love's Hidden Symmetry*, Phoenix: Zeig Tucker & Co.

Levine, Stephen. *Meetings at the Edge*, Doubleday: Anchor Books, 1984.

Phillips, Adam 著，楊孟哲譯 (2001), 《調情—亞當·菲立普論生命中的不確定性》(*On Flirtation*)，第一章，台北：究竟。

Tich Nhat Hanh, *No Death, No Fear*, New York: Riverhead Books, 2002.

Wilber, Ken, *No Boundary: Eastern and Western Approaches to Personal Growth*, Boston: Shambhala, 2001.

Wilber, Ken, *Grace and Grit: Spirituality and Healing in the Life and Death of Treya Killam Wilber*,

Boston: Shambhala, 1991. (《恩寵與勇氣》，胡因夢、劉清彥合譯，台北: 張老師文化事業股份有限公司，1998。)

克里希那穆提，羅若蘋譯，《論恐懼》，台北: 方智出版社，1996。

克里希那穆提，羅若蘋譯，《愛與寂寞》，台北: 方智出版社，1996。

克里希那穆提，廖世德譯，《論關係》，台北: 方智出版社，1995。

薩爾瓦多·米紐慶、李維榕、喬治·賽門著，劉瓊瑛、黃漢耀譯，《學習家族治療》，台北: 心靈工坊，2003。

**Movies:**

listed on the web page: <http://www.ln.edu.hk/philoso/life/>

**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. 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/>