

Lingnan University
Department of Philosophy

Course Title	: Philosophical Writing
Course Code	: PHI4399F
Recommended Study Year	: 2 nd Year
No. of Credits/Term	: 3
Mode of Tuition	: Lecture and tutorial
Class Contact Hours	: 2 hours Lecture/week; 1 hour Tutorial/week
Category in Major Programme	: Programme Elective – Special Topics
Discipline	: N/A
Prerequisite(s)	: N/A
Co-requisite(s)	: N/A
Exclusion(s)	: N/A
Exemption Requirement(s)	: N/A

Brief Course Description

This course aims to teach writing skills. As such, the course will be writing intensive. Readings will be used as a resource for topics to write about and as models of good writing. Instructors of each course section may choose a philosophical topic, or a variety of philosophical topics, for the section.

Students will learn how to approach writing assignments, how to extract arguments from philosophical texts and present them clearly and succinctly, how to critically evaluate arguments, and how to effectively reflect on, and be critical of, texts.

Aims

This course aims to cultivate several skills necessary for success in a philosophy major (and which are useful in many other educational and employment contexts). Specifically, it aims to improve students' understanding of the writing process and writing ability, their skill at analysing arguments and developing objections, and their attention to detail.

The class will use a series of philosophical debates as test cases for students to practice using these skills, and involve extensive feedback from the instructor(s).

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students are expected to know:

- (1) how to plan for a writing assignment
- (2) how to extract and summarize an argument in a philosophical text
- (3) how to present an argument and an objection to an argument
- (4) how to structure a philosophical essay
- (5) how to critically reflect on their writing (e.g. on style) and improve the writing as a result

Indicative Content

1. Reading a philosophy text
2. Argument summary
3. Presenting objections
4. Making a paper outline
5. Writing a draft paper
6. Good stylistic practice in writing philosophy
7. Providing critical feedback

8. Editing
9. Revising a paper in response to feedback

Teaching Method

The course will use a tutorial approach, with both lecture and tutorial discussion. Students will turn in multiple written assignments, including argument summaries, sketches of objections, a paper outline, draft papers, and a final paper. Each of these assignments will receive extensive feedback from the instructor, with the aim of making improvement on future assignments or drafts. For certain key assignments, the instructor or a graduate teaching assistant will meet with students individually to discuss how their work can be improved.

Because this course will make more intensive demands for marking than a standard course, it is recommended that the course be capped at 15 students, and a graduate student be assigned as a teaching assistant to help with marking.

Measurement of Learning Outcomes

Students' progress toward meeting these learning outcomes will be measured by:

- (1) preparatory writing assignments such as outlines, argument summarizing, short sketches of objections (LO1-LO3)
- (2) first draft of essay (LO1-LO5)
- (3) second draft of essay (LO1-LO5)
- (4) first draft of final paper (LO1-5)
- (5) second draft of final paper (LO1-LO5)
- (6) in-class editing of other students' writings (LO5)

Evaluation of the essay and final paper will be based on either the Philosophy Department Standard Essay Grading Rubric (see attachment), or on a replacement rubric chosen by the instructor (and approved by the department board).

Assessment

Preparatory Assignments	25%
First draft of essay	10%
Second draft of essay	20%
First draft of final paper	15%
Second draft of final paper	30%

Required Readings

Instructors are encouraged to use as their primary text either Ted Sider and Earl Conee's *Riddles of Existence*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, or Gideon Rosen, Alex Byrne, Joshua Cohen, and Seanna Shiffrin's *Norton Introduction to Philosophy*, W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.

Supplementary Readings

Douglas Soccio, *How to Get the Most Out of Philosophy*, Cengage Learning, 2012
Hugo Bedau, *Thinking and Writing about Philosophy*, Bedford/St. Martin's, 2002
James Pryor, *Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper*, online essay
(<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>)
The Chicago Manual of Style, University of Chicago Press, 2010

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/>