

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

<b>Course Title</b>	: The Nature of Truth
<b>Course Code</b>	: PHI4399P
<b>Recommended Study Year</b>	: 2-4 Years
<b>No. of Credits/Term</b>	: 3
<b>Mode of Tuition</b>	: Sectional
<b>Class Contact Hours</b>	: 3 hours lecture/week
<b>Category in Major Programme</b>	: Program Elective – Special Topics
<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**

What is the nature of truth? What do we mean when we say that something is true? Is truth something absolute and objective, or subjective and relative? This course will explore these basic questions about truth. We'll begin by examining a number of philosophical theories of truth (such as the correspondence theory, coherence theory, and pragmatism), and the metaphysical and epistemological issues related to them. Next we'll discuss how issues about truth impact other areas of philosophy, such as philosophy of language and philosophy of logic. We'll finish the course by thinking about truth and objectivity, and whether truth is better understood as an absolute or relative notion.

### **Aims**

1. To expose students to classical and contemporary philosophical approaches to thinking about truth.
2. To show students how issues about truth interact with other topics in philosophy.
3. To develop students' ability to reflectively and critically examine their own thoughts on truth.
4. To improve students' ability to distinguish metaphysical and epistemological issues, especially those related to truth and objectivity.

### **Learning Outcomes**

1. Students should be familiar with several traditional and contemporary theories of the nature of truth, and the philosophical dialectic between them.
2. Students should be able to formulate and understand the implications of the semantic paradoxes.
3. Students should be able to draw appropriate connections between theories of truth and theories of meaning.
4. Students should be prepared to articulate and defend their own views about the nature of truth and whether it is absolute or relative.

### **Indicative Content**

1. Introduction to course topics
2. Theories of truth
  - a. Correspondence theory
  - b. Coherence theory
  - c. Pragmatism
  - d. Epistemic theories
  - e. Tarskian theories
  - f. Deflationism

- g. Primitivism
- 3. Truth and meaning
  - a. Truth-conditional theories
  - b. Use theories
- 4. Truth and paradox
  - a. Introduction to the liar paradox
  - b. Deflationism and the liar paradox
  - c. Other views and paradox
- 5. Truth and objectivity
  - a. Objectivity and subjectivity
  - b. Absolute vs. relative truth

### **Teaching Method**

The course will be taught in seminar format, involving interactive lecturing and group discussion.

### **Measurement of Learning Outcomes**

Students' progress towards the learning outcomes will be measured by

1. participation in class discussion and performance in quizzes (LOs 1-3).
2. tutorial presentation (LO1 and LO3).
3. mid-term and final exams (LOs 1-4).

### **Assessment**

15% class participation.  
15% tutorial presentation  
30% mid-term exam  
40% Final exam

### **Required Readings**

Select articles that will be made available on-line.

*The Nature of Truth*, ed. Michael Lynch, MIT Press, 2001.

### **Supplementary Readings**

N/A

### **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/>