

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

<b>Course Title</b>	: Theories of Justice
<b>Course Code</b>	: PHI4372
<b>Recommended Study Year</b>	: 3 <sup>rd</sup> Year
<b>No. of Credits/Term</b>	: 3
<b>Mode of Tuition</b>	: Lecture and tutorial
<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>Recommendation(s)</b>	: PHI1003 Ethics: East and West
<b>Co-requisite(s)</b>	: N/A
<b>Exclusion(s)</b>	: N/A
<b>Exemption Requirement(s)</b>	: N/A

**Brief Course Description**

Justice and its discourse are primarily concerned with the ethics of who in society ought to receive what benefit or suffer which burden. Plato tries to answer this question with the view that justice is about giving people what is due them. How this issue is to be addressed has been a problem for philosophers from the ancient Greece until the present day. The idea of the social contract, utilitarian, laissez-faire and socialist political philosophies have all addressed themselves to the problem of justice. This course seeks to examine several views of justice and evaluate the historical important theories of justice.

**Aims**

On completion of this course students are expected to have a mastery of various theories of justice and of how these theories may apply to relevant social issues.

**Learning Outcomes**

On successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. summarize and explain the main philosophical disagreement of social justice
2. describe the underlying principles governing various theories of justice
3. evaluate critically various theories of justice
4. apply those theories of justice to relevant social issues

**Indicative Content**

1. Introduction  
Plato's *Republic*
2. Justice and equality
3. Issues surrounding procedural justice
4. Nozick's theory of entitlement
5. Rawls; justice as fairness
6. Political liberalism and the 'well-ordered society'
7. Socialist and communitarian ideas of justice

**Teaching Method**

Lecture and tutorial

**Measurement of Learning Outcomes**

Students' progress toward the desired learning outcomes will be assessed as follows:

1. Students are expected to demonstrate an ability to summarize, paraphrase and respond critically to the arguments found in texts. Refers to Learning Outcome 1.
2. Students will demonstrate their ability to set out in writing a well-constructed thesis statement and then construct arguments that support it using relevant and properly cited sources. Refers to Learning Outcomes 1-4
3. Students will demonstrate (both in class and in written assignments) a knowledge of relevant theories of social justice and related social issues. Refers to Learning Outcomes 1-4.
4. Instead of writing a research paper, students may opt to volunteer for a service-learning component. In the service-learning component, students will devote a total of 30 hours contact during the academic semester at a pre-selected service-learning agency within the community. They shall also keep regular entries in a journal and submit an essay at the end of the semester. The optional Service-Learning practicum, presentation and reflective essay will reflect the students' ability to apply the theories learned in class to contemporary issues pertaining to applications of justice theories. Students are expected to be able to use the theories, supplemented with basic research about their service area, in order to discuss the human rights issues they encountered during service. Refers to Learning Outcomes 3 and 4.

### **Assessment**

Term Paper/Service Learning Option: 30%

Class Participation: 25%

Final Examination: 45%

### **Required Readings**

Solomon, Robert, C., *What is Justice?* ed., 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

### **Supplementary Readings**

Feinberg, Joel, *Social Philosophy*, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1973.

MacIntyre, Alasdair, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, London: Duckworth, 1988.

Nozick, Robert, *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, New York: Basic Books, 1974.

Plato, *The Republic*, Trans., Francis MacDonald Cornford, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967.

Rawls, John, *A Theory of Justice*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972.

Rawls, John, *Political Liberalism*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.

Rawls, John, "Justice as Fairness: A Restatement", Harvard, 2001.

Sandel, Michael, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.

Taylor, Charles, *Philosophical Arguments*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995.

Walzer, Michael, *Spheres of Justice*, New York: Basic Books, 1983.

### **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/>