

Lingnan University
Department of Philosophy

Course Title	: Utopia
Course Code	: PHI4324
Recommended Study Year	: 3 rd Year
No. of Credits/Term	: 3
Mode of Tuition	: Sectional approach
Class Contact Hours	: 3 hours Lecture/week
Category in Major Programme	: Programme Elective - Ethics and Practical Philosophy Profile
Recommendation(s)	: Either PHI3103 Advanced Western Ethics or PHI3104 Western Political Philosophy
Co-requisite(s)	: N/A
Exclusion(s)	: N/A
Exemption Requirement(s)	: N/A

Brief Course Description

Utopia is an image of what the good life would be. Sometimes it goes beyond that image and becomes a claim about what it could 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 utopians who seek to make their dreams come true. This course sets out to examine both the theoretical and practical dimensions of utopia in its complex forms of manifestation as well as in its multi-layered relations to other notions such as social order, ultimate freedom, romantic love. As one major case study, the utopian aspects of the Maoist mentality in contemporary Chinese communist experiments will be analyzed with an eye to its implications for the broader issues in this course.

Aims

1. Students are expected to get familiar with a brief genealogy of utopian thoughts in the west (with possible comparisons with ancient Chinese utopian ideas).
2. Students are expected to grasp possible meanings of utopia in its literary, political/economical, and cultural/religious contexts.
3. Case studies will be used to help students test certain fundamental assumptions involved in utopian thinking.

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 historical manifestations.
2. acquire some analytical perspective in making sense of such heavily value-laden phenomena in real life as utopia.

Indicative Content

1. Introduction
 - a. Actuality vs. idealization
 - b. Personal imagination vs. cultural tradition
2. Thomas More's *Utopia*
 - a. Text study: book 2
 - b. Historical background and its revolutionary impact

3. The elements of utopia
 - a. Two H's (harmony and hope)
 - b. Two D's (desire and design)
 - c. The missing element (freedom)
4. The boundaries of utopia
 - a. Its form, content and function
 - b. Its spatial and temporal dimensions
 - c. Its condition of becoming a critical tradition
5. The history, practice, and lesson/significance of utopia
 - a. A distinctive perspective to engage western (intellectual) history
 - b. A special angle to compare cultures/civilizations
 - c. A paradoxical connection between utopia and dystopia
6. Marxism and utopian socialism
 - a. Case study: Mao Ze-dong and modern China
 - b. A Hundred Flowers, Great Leap Forward, and Cultural Revolution: populist and ascetic values in Maoist utopianism

Teaching Method

The course will be taught in lecture/tutorial format. Lecturing on theoretical concepts and positions will be supplemented with diverse textual or real-life examples. Tutorials will be used for students' presentations as well as free discussions based on their independent research on a relevant topic.

Measurement of Learning Outcomes

Students' progress towards the learning outcomes will be measured in the following way:

1. The exam will test students' grasp of certain basic concepts or ideas in the required textbook readings (LO1).
2. Tutorial presentations and performance in free discussions will be used to measure students' understanding and articulation of wider range of content covered by the course (LO1 & LO2).
3. A term paper will measure students' capacity to investigate and engage particular self-chosen topics with the learnt concepts/ideas (LO1 & LO2).

Assessment

Tutorial Performance	25%
Mid-term Examination	35%
Paper	40%

Required Readings

Kumar, K. *Utopianism*, University of Minnesota Press, 1991.

Meisner, M. *Marxism, Maoism and Utopianism*, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1982.

Hume, D. "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth," in G. Claeys (ed.) *Utopias of the British Enlightenment*, Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Supplementary Readings

Levitas, R. *The Concept of Utopia*, Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1990.

Donnelly, D. F. *Patterns of Order and Utopia*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998.

Illouz, E. *Consuming the Romantic Utopia—Love and the Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, University of California Press, 1997.

陶淵明，陶淵明全集，上海：上海古籍出版社1998。

老子，道德經，台北：正中1994。

周何，儒家的理想國：禮記，台北：時報文化出版公司1996。

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/>