

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

<b>Course Title</b>	: Existence and Being
<b>Course Code</b>	: PHI4399A
<b>Recommended Study Year</b>	: Year 3
<b>No. of Credits/Term</b>	: 3
<b>Mode of Tuition</b>	: Lecture and tutorial
<b>Class Contact Hours</b>	: 2 hours Lecture/week; 2 hours Tutorial/fortnight
<b>Category in Major Programme</b>	: Programme 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**

This course will address a number of topics that have been prominent in contemporary ontology, such as whether there are any holes, properties, numbers, possible worlds, non-existent objects, non-present objects, complex objects, and works of art. As well as addressing these topics, the course will also address a number of meta-ontological issues, such as what is the best way to determine whether there are any of the above kinds of entities, and whether questions about whether there are such entities make sense or have determinate answers.

**Aims**

The aim of this course is to

1. provide students an in depth understanding of a number of contemporary debates in in ontology and meta-ontology,
2. enhance the abilities of students to understand and evaluate views and arguments in contemporary analytic philosophy, and
3. enhance the verbal, writing, critical thinking, problem solving, and argument construction skills.

**Learning Outcomes**

Students who complete this course are expected to:

1. understand a number of the most important problems in contemporary ontology and existing responses to these problems,
2. critically evaluate these responses,
3. articulate their own views about what the correct responses to these problems are, and
4. defend these views by developing arguments defending them.

**Indicative Content**

1. Introduction
2. Holes
3. Properties
4. Numbers
5. Possible Worlds
6. Time
7. Mereology
8. Statues
9. Musical Works

## Teaching Method

Lectures and tutorials

## Measurement of Learning Outcomes

1. Reading quizzes: corresponding to LO1.  
Students will regularly do in class quizzes to test their understanding of the relevant assigned reading.
2. Class participation: corresponding to LO1, LO2, LO3, LO4.  
Students will be assessed on the degree of participation they make to discussion in class.
3. Powerpoint presentations: corresponding to LO1, LO2, LO3, LO4.  
Each student will do one powerpoint presentation (or a short essay) on one of the problems or debates discussed in class.
4. Essay writing: corresponding to LO1, LO2, LO3, LO4.  
Each student will write two major essays, one of which will be for the final exam.

Evaluation of any essay or essay like assessment in this course will be based on either the Philosophy Department Standard Essay Grading Rubric (see attachment), or on a replacement rubric chosen by the instructor.

## Assessment

1. Quizzes on readings (20%)
2. Class participation (10%)
3. Powerpoint presentation (or short essay) (10%)
4. Mid-semester major essay (30%)
5. Final Exam (30%)

## Required Readings

Effingham, N. (2013). *An Introduction to Ontology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

## Supplementary Readings

- Cameron, R. (2008). There are No Things that are Musical Works. *British Journal of Aesthetics* 48: 295–314.
- Connee, E. (2005). Universals. In E. Connee & T. Sider, *Riddles of Existence: A Guided Tour of Metaphysics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Dodd, J. (2008). Musical Works: Ontology and Meta-Ontology. *Philosophy Compass*. 3(6): 1113–34.
- Dorr, C. (2005). What We Disagree about When We Disagree about Ontology. In M. E. Kalderon (ed.), *Fictionalism in Metaphysics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Dorr, C. (2008). There are no abstract objects. In T. Sider, John Hawthorne & D. W. Zimmerman (eds.), *Contemporary Debates in Metaphysics*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Hirsch, E. (2005). Physical-Object Ontology, Verbal Disputes, and Common Sense. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 70: 67–97.
- Jackson, F. (1977). Statements about Universals. *Mind* 86: 427–9.
- Korman, D. (2010). The Argument from Vagueness. *Philosophy Compass* 5(10): 891–901.
- Lewis, David K. (1973). *Counterfactuals*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Lewis, D. (1986). *On the Plurality of Worlds*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Lewis, D. and Lewis, S. (1970). Holes. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 48: 206–12.
- Markosian, N. (2007). Restricted Composition. In T. Sider, J. Hawthorne and D. W. Zimmerman (eds), *Contemporary Debates in Metaphysics*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Melia, J. (1995). On What There's Not. *Analysis* 55: 223–29.
- Melia, J. (2003). *Modality*. Chesham: Acumen.

- Nolan, D. (2011). Modal Fictionalism. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, at <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2011/entries/fictionalism-modal>.
- Quine, W. (1948). On What There Is. *Review of Metaphysics* 2: 21– 38; reprinted in Loux (ed.), *Metaphysics: Contemporary Readings*, London: Routledge.
- Quine, W. V. O. (2008). Nominalism. *Oxford Studies in Metaphysics: Volume 4* 4:1.
- Rosen, G. (1990). Modal Fictionalism. *Mind* 99: 327– 54.
- Sider, T. (2007). Temporal Parts. In Theodore Sider, John Hawthorne & Dean W. Zimmerman (eds.), *Contemporary Debates in Metaphysics*. Oxford: Blackwell. 241– 262
- Sider, T. (2013). Against Parthood. *Oxford Studies in Metaphysics* 8:237–293.
- Stalnaker, R. C. (1976). Possible worlds. *Noûs* 10 (1):65-75.
- Thomasson, A. (2010). The Controversy over the Existence of Ordinary Objects. *Philosophy Compass* 5(7): 591– 601.
- van Cleve, J. (1994). Predication without Universals? A Fling with Ostrich Nominalism. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 54: 577– 90.
- van Inwagen, P. (1998). Meta-Ontology. *Erkenntnis* 48: 233– 50.
- van Inwagen, P. (2008). Quine's 1946 Lecture on Nominalism. *Oxford Studies in Metaphysics: Volume 4* 4:125.

### **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/>