

Lingnan University
Department of Philosophy

Course Title	: Philosophy of History
Course Code	: PHI3282
Recommended Study Year	: 2 nd , 3 rd and 4 th Years
No. of Credits/Term	: 3
Mode of Tuition	: Lecture and Tutorial
Class Contact Hours	: 2 hour Lecture/week; 1 hour Tutorial/week
Category in Major Programme	: Programme Elective - Philosophy of Natural and Human Sciences Profile
Prerequisite(s)	: N/A
Co-requisite(s)	: N/A
Exclusion(s)	: N/A
Exemption Requirement(s)	: N/A

Brief Course Description

The philosophy of history concerns both the nature of the past and our knowledge of it, as well as the long history of philosophical reflection on historical and historiographic topics. Although many philosophers of history have concentrated exclusively on human history and historiography, this course covers topics in natural history as well.

Aims

The course aims to:

- provide students with an understanding of important philosophical issues raised by the past and its study
- present some of the historically influential discussions and arguments involved in reflection on the past and on attempts to describe and explain it
- enable students to question their own conceptions of the past and our knowledge of the past in an informed, argumentative way.
- provide students with an understanding of how issues in the philosophy of history relate to other parts of philosophy and to inquiries in other fields

Learning Outcomes

After completing this course, students will be able to:

1. identify some of the main topics, theories and approaches in the philosophy of history and historiography
2. identify and appraise some of the central claims about the nature of the past and our ways of understanding past events and processes
3. evaluate critically the claims about the epistemology of historical knowledge
4. reflect on aspects of the history of philosophical reflections about the past

Indicative Content

As the subject is enormous, what follows is an indicative list of topics from which instructors of instances of the course will make a judicious selection.

1. the ontology of historic entities: temporality, events, structures, processes, individual and group actions, institutions, 'historicity'
2. the shape or 'direction' of human history; necessity and contingency, progress, eschatology
3. historiographic natural science and the asymmetry of overdetermination
4. causation, laws, and explanation in historiography
5. counterfactuals and historiography

6. realism, objectivity, relativism and the status of historical knowledge
7. specific historiographic controversies and their resolution
8. major philosophical contributions to the philosophy of history and historiography: Augustine, Vico, Kant, Herder, Hegel, Collingwood, Croce, etc.
9. rival frameworks or approaches: phenomenology, historicisms old and new, evolutionary theory, hermeneutics, narratology, neo-Kantianism

Teaching Method

Sectional, including lectures, student presentations, class discussion, small group assignments, and essay writing.

Measurement of Learning Outcomes

1. Students are expected to write a reflective and informed essay on the issues related to the session's topic (to assess outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4).
2. Students will write a mid-term examination in which they will be expected to integrate what they have learned in class with their own readings. The examination questions will serve to assess students' understanding of the relevant philosophical debates covered in the course, and their own critical evaluation of them (to assess outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4).
3. In the classroom discussions, students will engage with the issues and with the contributions made by other students (to assess outcomes 1, 4).
4. Students will write a final examination and demonstrate that they have understood and thought about the arguments and issues central to those readings (to assess outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4).

Assessment

In-class participation: 20%

Mid-term examination: 20%

Essay assignments (the instructor will assign either 2 short essays or a longer term paper): 20%

Final examination: 40%

Required Readings

(selections from the following as well as other publications on the subject):

Burns, Robert M., and Hugh Rayment-Pickard, eds. (2000) *Philosophies of History: From Enlightenment to Postmodernity*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Gardiner, Patrick, ed. (1974) *The Philosophy of History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Roberts, Geoffrey, ed. (2001) *The History and Narrative Reader*. London: Routledge.

Supplementary Readings

Fischer, D. H. (1970) *Historians' Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought*. New York: Harper.

Lamont, William, ed. (1998) *Historical Controversies and Historians*. London: UCL Press.

Martin, Raymond (1989) *The Past Within Us: An Empirical Approach to the Philosophy of History*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Tucker, Aviezer, ed. (2009) *A Companion to the Philosophy of History and Historiography*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Stanford, Michael (1998) *An Introduction to the Philosophy of History*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

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/>