The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
Hong Kong Community College

Subject Description Form

Subject Code	SHDH2013
Subject Title	Exploring Human Nature
Level	2
Credit Value	3
Medium of Instruction	English and Chinese (Cantonese)
Pre-requisite/ Co-requisite/ Exclusion	Nil
Objectives	This subject equips students with the analytical skills for the understanding of different theories of human nature. Such understanding enables students to be aware of the intellectual environment, in which they are embedded, where the holding of different sets of assumptions might often lead to the adoption of very different approaches of studies, hence might drastically change one's beliefs and the course of one's action. It also enhances students' critical thinking for inter-disciplinary studies and lifelong learning.
Intended Learning Outcomes	Upon completion of the subject, students will be able to: (a) outline major thinkers and their theories of human nature; (b) identify reasons and paradigms underlying each theory; (c) articulate the implications of these theories of human nature to different approaches of studies, and beliefs underlying one's actions; (d) discuss the strengths, weaknesses and unique contribution of different theories in examining human nature.
Subject Synopsis/ Indicative Syllabus	**Ancient and Medieval Theories** Plato: forms or ideas, divided line, theory of knowledge, nature of soul, justice; Aristotle: causation and theology, hierarchy of souls, sensation and perception, ethics and politics, concept of Good Life; Augustine: evil and free will, doctrine of love and ethics; Biblical view: sinful nature, God as Creator and Redeemer, Salvation. **Eastern Tradition** Confucianism: social discord, jen, self-discipline; Hinduism: Atman is Brahman, reincarnation; Buddhism: suffering in ignorance, Anatman self is illusory, nirvana.

<table>
<tr><td></td><td>Modern Theories
Hobbes: The State of Nature; Rousseau: The Social Contract, Schopenhauer: The World as Idea, The will to live; Kant: Categorical Imperative, Transcendental Apperception; Marx: Historical Materialist Determinism, Alienation; Freud: Id, Ego, Superego, Unconscious; Existentialism: Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Satre, existence precedes essence, Radical Freedom, Meaning of Life; Darwinian Evolution and Sociobiology; Skinner and Behaviourism.

Themes and Debates in Theories of Human Nature
Determinism vs. Libertarianism; Debates of Free Will; Consciousness; the Mind-Brain Relationship; Knowledge: a priori, a posterior; Monism, Dualism, Materialism; Telos and Destiny, Transcendent reality; Subjectivity; Intentionality; Artificial Intelligence.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Teaching/Learning Methodology</td><td>Lectures will focus on the introduction and explanation of different concepts and theories of human nature. Group discussions and activities may be arranged to stimulate students' interest or their awareness of the practical implications of some concepts. Worksheets may also be used to guide students through the reasoning behind more complex theories.

Tutorials will provide students with the opportunity to deepen their understanding and to explore further the applications of theories taught. Activities in tutorials will normally include student presentations and discussions of problem sets and case studies.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Assessment Methods in Alignment with Intended Learning Outcomes</td><td>A variety of assessment tools will be used to develop and assess students' achievement of the subject intended learning outcomes.

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Specific assessment methods/tasks</td><td rowspan="2">% weighting</td><td colspan="4">Intended subject learning outcomes to be assessed</td></tr>
<tr><td>a</td><td>b</td><td>c</td><td>d</td></tr>
<tr><td>Continuous Assessment*</td><td>100</td><td colspan="4"></td></tr>
<tr><td>▪ Test</td><td>35</td><td></td><td>✓</td><td>✓</td><td>✓</td></tr>
<tr><td>▪ Assignment 1</td><td>30</td><td></td><td>✓</td><td>✓</td><td>✓</td></tr>
<tr><td>▪ Assignment 2</td><td>25</td><td>✓</td><td>✓</td><td>✓</td><td>✓</td></tr>
<tr><td>▪ Participation</td><td>10</td><td>✓</td><td>✓</td><td>✓</td><td>✓</td></tr>
<tr><td>Total</td><td>100</td><td colspan="4"></td></tr>
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*Continuous assessment items and/or weighting may be adjusted by the subject team subject to the approval of the College Programme Committee.

To pass this subject, students are required to obtain Grade D or above in the Continuous Assessment.</td></tr>
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Student Study Effort Expected	**Class contact**	**Hours**
	▪ Lecture	26
	▪ Tutorial	13
	Other student study effort	
	▪ Self-study	46
	▪ Continuous Assessment	40
	Total student study effort	**125**

Reading List and References

References

Benatar, D (2006). *Better Never to Have Been: The Harm of Coming into Existence*. Oxford University Press.

Blackford, R and Broderick, D. (editors) (2014). *Intelligence Unbound: The Future of Uploaded and Machine Minds.* Wiley Blackwell.

Buller, D (2006). *Adapting Minds: Evolutionary Psychology and the Persistent Quest for Human Nature.* The MIT Press.

Dainton, B. (2014). *Self.* Penguin.

Gowans, C. (2003). *Philosophy of the Buddha*. Routledge.

Pinker, S. (1997). *How the Mind Works*. Norton.

Pinker, S. (2002). *The Blank Slate: The Model Denial of Human Nature*. Viking Penguin.

Richards, J. (2000). *Human Nature after Darwin*. Routledge.

Stevenson, L, Haberman, D, and Wright, P. (2013). *Twelve Theories of Human Nature*. Oxford University Press.

Wright, R. (1995). *The Moral Animal: Why We Are, the Way We Are: The New Science of Evolutionary Psychology*. Vintage.

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萊斯列. 斯蒂芬森，大衛. 哈貝曼著，施忠連譯：《世界十大人性哲學》，上海市：複旦大學出版社，2007年。