

THE EDUCATION UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

Course Outline

Part I

Programme Title	: 4-yr & 5-year FT Undergraduate programmes
Programme QF Level	: 5
Course Title	: Meaning, Happiness and the Ethics of the Good Society
Course Code	: GEK1023
Department	: International Education
Credit Points	: 3
Contact Hours	: 39
Pre-requisite(s)	: Nil
Medium of Instruction	: EMI
Course Level	: 1

Part II

The University's Graduate Attributes and seven Generic Intended Learning Outcomes (GILOs) represent the attributes of ideal EdUHK graduates and their expected qualities respectively. Learning outcomes work coherently at the University (GILOs), programme (Programme Intended Learning Outcomes) and course (Course Intended Learning Outcomes) levels to achieve the goal of nurturing students with important graduate attributes.

In gist, the Graduate Attributes for Sub-degree, Undergraduate, Taught Postgraduate, Professional Doctorate and Research Postgraduate students consist of the following three domains (i.e. in short "PEER & I"):

- Professional Excellence;
- Ethical Responsibility; &
- Innovation.

The descriptors under these three domains are different for the three groups of students in order to reflect the respective level of Graduate Attributes.

The seven GILOs are:

1. Problem Solving Skills
2. Critical Thinking Skills
3. Creative Thinking Skills
- 4a. Oral Communication Skills
- 4b. Written Communication Skills

5. Social Interaction Skills
6. Ethical Decision Making
7. Global Perspectives

1. Course Synopsis

The time and space in which we live is often described in terms of a ‘globalized modernity’. The processes associated with modernity and with globalization frequently make it more difficult for people to find meaning and happiness in their lives. These processes often remove us from our primary communities and sources of happiness. Traditional sources of authority and meaning, such as religion, are increasingly challenged. Our lives are increasingly focused on consumerism – ‘getting and spending more’ – and on seemingly endless individual competition. These often fail to provide any real sense of meaning and purpose to our lives, or lasting happiness.

This course considers various philosophical approaches to finding and making meaning in life, and examines the different possible sources of meaning that are available to us as humans. It also considers various philosophical approaches to finding and generating happiness in our lives, examining the different sources of happiness that have been considered through history and across different cultural contexts.

Living a moral life as a means to finding fulfillment is one possibility explored. The course therefore considers different ethical approaches to living a worthwhile life: the ethics of happiness; the ethics of the person; and the ethics of virtue.

How we understand who we are is a further key question in the search for meaning and happiness. The liberalism underlying globalization and modernity constructs us as autonomous, independent individuals, with a primary focus on individual freedom. By contrast, more traditional and community-oriented worldviews understand us in terms of our relationships: we are who we are because of the relationships in which we exist. The course concludes with an examination of the tension between these liberal and communitarian perspectives, and the type of society each entails.

The course is thus intended as a means to enable students to find and generate their own sources of meaning and happiness within the kind of community and good society we want.

2. Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- CILO₁: Explore different philosophical approaches to finding and making meaning in life.
- CILO₂: Consider various philosophical approaches to finding and generating happiness, examining the different sources of happiness that have been considered through history and across different cultural contexts.
- CILO₃: Understand different ethical approaches to living a worthwhile life: the ethics of happiness; the ethics of the person; and the ethics of virtue.
- CILO₄: Explore how we understand who we are from liberal and communitarian perspectives.

3. Content, CILOs and Teaching & Learning Activities

Course Content	CILOs	Suggested Teaching & Learning Activities
Philosophical approaches and theories of making meaning, happiness, and ethical approaches to living;	<i>CILO</i> _{1, 2, 3}	Lectures aided by the use of current news, and films as examples to explain the philosophical ideas and theories of making meaning, happiness, and ethical approaches to living. Reflective writing is assigned to help students critically reflect on their own ideas about the presented theories.
Historical context of happiness and sources where happiness can be found in a modern context.	<i>CILO</i> _{2, 3}	Lectures aided by group work and discussions. Dialogic pedagogy will engage students in experiencing the reasoning process guided by the theories and principles taught in the course. Students will identify sources of happiness in their own lives and explore strategies to overcome problems that they are presented with to maintain a sense of happiness.
Practising the ethics of happiness; the ethics of the person; and the ethics of virtue.	<i>CILO</i> _{1, 2, 3}	Students are assigned to research a certain theme or topic (preferably through a peer interview with someone of a different cultural background) and encouraged to appreciate the different understandings or interpretations of what meaning and happiness are to different people. Presentations will be arranged to share their new understandings and explain how their peers' perspectives are different from their own.
Exploring how we understand who we are and recognizing the role that society has played in helping to establish these ideas.	<i>CILO</i> _{3, 4}	Apart from the presentation given by the lecturer as an example of understanding who we are, students will be given the opportunity to explore how their own understanding of themselves has formed through discussions and group work. This will be the basis for the final written assessment.

4. Assessment

Assessment Tasks	Weighting (%)	CILO
(a) Students are required to write an essay of 2000 words reflecting on how <i>what they have learnt in the course</i> might help them to make meaning in life, has helped them to understand how happiness is generated, and how we understand who we are.	60%	<i>CILO</i> _{1, 2, 3, 4}
(b) Group presentation based on interviews	30%	<i>CILO</i> _{1, 2, 4}

conducted with peers. Here differences in perspectives will be considered.		
(c) Class participation in terms of students' contribution to nurturing a dialogic environment in the class. Attendance is valued as the basis for such contribution.	10%	<i>CILO</i> _{2, 3, 4}

5. Required Text(s)

Nil

6. Recommended Readings

Baggini, J. (2004). *What's it all about?: Philosophy and the meaning of life*. London: Granta Books.

Baggini, J., & Macaro, A. (2012). *The shrink and the sage: A guide to living*. London: Icon.

Bellah, Robert N. *et al.* (1992). *The Good Society*. New York: Vintage Books.

Blackburn, S. (2001). *Being good: A short introduction to ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bull, B. L., Fruehling, R. T., & Chattergy, V. (1992). *The ethics of multicultural and bilingual education*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Cahn, S. M., & Vitrano, C. (2008). *Happiness: Classic and contemporary readings in philosophy*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Eagleton, T. (2008). *The meaning of life: A very short introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ellin, J. (1995). *Morality and the meaning of life: An introduction to ethical theory*. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace.

Ford, D. (2008). *The search for meaning: A short history*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Gilbert, D. T. (2007). *Stumbling on happiness*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.

Haybron, D. M. (2013). *Happiness: A very short introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ho, L., & Wong, G. (2006). *A survey report on happiness index and determinants of happiness in Hong Kong*. (Working paper series, Lingnan University, Centre for Public Policy Studies, no. 177). Hong Kong: Centre for Public Policy Studies, Lingnan University

Ho, L. (2009). *The 'three happinesses' and the 'happiness formula': Evidence from Hong Kong*. (Working paper series, Lingnan University, Centre for Public Policy Studies, Centre for Asian Pacific Studies, no. 196). Hong Kong: Centre for Public Policy Studies, Lingnan University

Joshanloo, M. (2014). Eastern conceptualizations of happiness: Fundamental differences with western views. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 15(2), 475-493.

Sandel, M. (2009). *Justice: What's the right thing to do?* New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Verhaeghe, P. (2014). *What About Me?: The struggle for identity in a market-based economy.* London: Scribe.

Verhaeghe, P. (2017). *Says Who?: The struggle for authority in a market-based society.* London: Scribe.

Weston, A. (2011). *A practical companion to ethics.* New York: Oxford University Press.

7. Related Web Resources

The Munk Debates
Munkdebates.com

The Pursuit of Happiness
pursuit-of-happiness.org

Happiness in Chinese Culture
<https://www.jochnowitz.net/Essays/Happiness-in-Chinese-Culture.html>

8. Related Journals

Nil

9. Academic Honesty

The University upholds the principles of honesty in all areas of academic work. We expect our students to carry out all academic activities honestly and in good faith. Please refer to the *Policy on Academic Honesty, Responsibility and Integrity* (<https://www.eduhk.hk/re/uploads/docs/000000000016336798924548BbN5>). Students should familiarize themselves with the Policy.

10. Others

Nil