

## **BA (Hons) in Religion, Philosophy and Ethics**

The current programme "B.A. (Hons) in Religious Studies" (or RS in short) offered by the Department of Religion and Philosophy will be re-titled and restructured to an interdisciplinary programme - "B.A. (Hons) in Religion, Philosophy and Ethics" (or RPE in short) with effect from academic year 2017/18.

Students studying RPE programme will be benefited from the writing, public presentation, and critical thinking skills learnt from the programme, as well as close student-teacher relationship which is unique in our Department.

### **Programme Aims**

In order to realize the mission of the Department, the B.A. (Hons) in Religion, Philosophy and Ethics Programme emphasizes the following general aims:

1. To equip students with reasoning and analytical skills;
2. To enhance student's ability to present lucid arguments and make independent judgment;
3. To encourage students to reflect on academic issues from a cross-disciplinary perspective;
4. To provide opportunities for students to develop their creative writing and thinking;
5. To stimulate students' initiatives of self-learning;
6. To produce graduates of distinction committed to life-long learning; and
7. To create an aura in which academic discussion with one another, including teachers and students, is both valued and practiced.

### **Programme Objectives**

The main objectives of the B.A. (Hons) in Religion, Philosophy and Ethics programme are as follows:

1. To equip students with critical, analytical and interpretative skills with which they may understand religious and philosophical traditions, and schools of ethical thought in an objective way;
2. To provide students with substantial information about ideas and practices of major religious and philosophical traditions, thus building a solid foundation for their understanding and interpretation;
3. To help students develop capability in correlating religious ideas and values, philosophical traditions, and schools of ethical thought to socio-cultural problems;
4. To widen students' perspective in the understanding of both the human person and human culture through a comparative study of different religious and philosophical traditions, showing the range of human responses to life problems;
5. To prepare students for postgraduate studies in at least some major religious or philosophical traditions; and
6. To assist students in preparing for careers in education, cultural affairs and related fields.

### **Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs)**

After having completed the B.A. (Honours) in Religion, Philosophy and Ethics Programme, the students should be able to:

1. Explain the main ideas of major religious traditions, and major schools of philosophy and ethical thought;
2. Demonstrate critical, analytical and interpretative skills in their understanding of religious traditions, major philosophical problems, and crucial ethical issues;
3. Articulate the relevance of religious ideas/values, philosophical arguments and ethical analysis for socio-cultural issues;
4. Evaluate critically the arguments for and against major religious worldviews, major schools of philosophy, or various ethical theories;
5. Engage in interdisciplinary dialogue between religion, philosophy and other disciplines.

## Unique Features

### 1. First Ever RPE Programme in Asia for the World

The programme, specializing in three different but closely related disciplines of religion, philosophy and ethics, is the first-of-its-kind not only in Hong Kong, but also in Asia. RPE is a multidisciplinary programme and in fact one of the flourishing programmes in the international trend in recent decades. Examples include the RPE programme in King's College London and University of Nottingham in UK.

### 2. Four Study Areas

Foundational courses covering key areas of religion, philosophy and ethics are covered in second year. Starting from third to fourth years, students can choose major electives among the four study areas, namely Philosophical Studies, Christian Studies and Comparative Religion, The Interdisciplinary Study of Religion, as well as Ethics and Society. The multiple foci of the programme would be able to cater for the diverse interests of students. Students can choose to declare or not a concentration in one of the four study areas at the end of their second year of study.

### 3. Critical Thinking

We emphasize nurturing students' abilities in critical thinking, justifying arguments and evaluating claims, which help to enhance their reasoning and analyzing skills. These are transferable skills which are essential to many professions.

### 4. Value Analysis

We emphasize the analysis of underlying moral values, social values, political values and cultural values in current issues, which are diverse, complex and often in conflict with one another.

### 5. Excellence in Liberal Studies

Our RPE programme provides a channel for achieving the higher goals of Liberal Studies, namely, (a) the cultivation of the ability to analyze complex human problems with intellectual rigor, and (b) the

cultivation of practical wisdom for moral reasoning and impartial value analysis.

### Scholarships

To encourage and reward REL Major students who have worked hard and excelled in their studies, our Department offers a number of scholarships to students according to their GPA in that academic year.

- Department of Religion and Philosophy Scholarships for Major Students
- Luk Yin Memorial Scholarship
- Dr. Stephen Chan Christian Spirituality Scholarship

### Overseas Exchange Programme

Students have opportunities to study abroad in partner institutions by joining the University's Overseas Exchange Programme

Sun Meng, current year three student exchanged at Leiden University of The Netherlands in 2016-17



It was really a challenge for me to join a reading club, which was not an easy task in the busy study mode here. However, I understand more about the thoughts of European civilization. The most memorable experience is the orientation week. Students from different countries were grouped together and mingled with each other without boundaries. In The Netherlands, it is common for students to live in single room in a dormitory. Solitude could help you treasure the time of working and thinking, as well as experiencing friendship. During weekend, I travelled a lot with friends to neighbouring places. I visited over ten countries in half-year time, and now I am able to distinguish cultures and characters of different countries. What I was rewarded was more than the happiness during the trips.

### **Summer Exchange and Study Tour**

The Dunhuang-Xinjiang Study Tour is a special joint programme coorganized by the Department of Religion and Philosophy, HKBU and the School of History and Culture, Lanzhou University. The ten-day tour offers a unique opportunity through which students learn about and experience a variety of religious and intra-cultural traditions.

The Europe Study Tour, which aims to provide an excellent way for students to get first-hand information about religious issues and enjoy a unique learning experience, broadening their horizons of understanding western European countries and enriching their knowledge of different historical period of Christianity.

Besides the above summer tours, we also organize short trips outside Hong Kong during the semesters, such as Guangzhou and Macau, to explore different religious activities in the neighbouring region.

### **Summer Internship Programme**

The Department organizes Summer Internship Programme for our students since 2002 to work in NGOs (Non-governmental Organisations), social enterprises, offices of Legislative Councilors, and institutions from public and private sectors. Students can widen their exposure through

working, relate the real life with their studies, gain valuable working experience and be able to identify their career path after graduation.

**Lam Chiu Ping (Graduate, 2016)**

**Project Trainee of Soul-mate Company in Summer 2015**

I learnt a lot from the internship in Soul-mate, such as interviewing writer and assisting simple editing task. I could also help in funeral service, and even observing how a mortuary beautician applied makeup and dressed for the deceased. While witnessing colleagues in planning ceremony theme and rundown of each funeral, decorating venue and writing obituary and eulogy, it

**Career Prospects**

The programme provides high-quality training which enables students to engage in independent academic research. Graduates in RPE will be well-equipped for postgraduate studies. Graduates can also expect to find a

**Pang Hiu Yu (Graduate, 2016)**

**Summer Intern of Fair Circle in Summer 2015**

The importance of being fair and just is an old saying. Yet who can really be fair and ethical in the business world when facing interest and profit? I am very happy to work in Fair Circle, which made me have the first-hand experience to work in an NGO (Non-governmental Organisation). My understanding towards fair trade and its values behind was much deepened. The intern not only convince myself to pursue career in NGO after

career not only in the field of teaching in *Ethics and Religious Studies* and *Liberal Studies*, but also in cultural affairs, publication business, and in religion-related social service agencies, or going to the administration sector in the civil service as well as in the business sector. Recently the whole concept of the function of higher education has changed. The significant role of higher education is the training of analytical and critical thinking, creativity and flexibility, and a broad base of knowledge. Employers in Hong Kong are looking for these qualities rather than hard skills in a very narrow scope which may become obsolete in several years. Nowadays, graduate with good training in religion, philosophy and ethics can go into a wide variety of fields for career

development. According to the employment survey conducted by the Office of Student Affairs, our graduates have nearly 100% employment rate in recent years. The mean monthly salary of 2016 graduates nearly reached HK\$14,500, ranking the third among all programmes offered by the Faculty of Arts.