

## Professor Joseph CHAN Cho Wai

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Professor Joseph CHAN began teaching at this University in 1990. He received his first teaching award in 1992 from Social Sciences students, who elected him as one of the Faculty's best teachers. After more than 25 years, Joseph's enthusiasm for teaching has not waned but has continued to grow.

Joseph regards teaching as a noble vocation, one that shapes the character, calibre, and future of an individual. He teaches with a sense of mission and dedication, with the ultimate aspiration to teach not only a subject but also a person.

His subject is political theory, which students generally find difficult, with a strong philosophical orientation. As a teacher, he strives to make political theory accessible and interesting, while also maintaining high intellectual quality. His goals, however, are not just to impart knowledge, but also to help students think critically and independently and develop a genuine desire for learning. He encourages his students to relate knowledge and value to their lives, and to practise whatever value they endorse after critical reflection. Above all, he wants to help his students take life seriously and grow.

Joseph's goals guide his practice in several ways. He tries to present philosophical arguments and theories in the clearest way possible. He actively engages and interacts with students in class discussion. He urges students to critically reflect on their personal lives and on the societies in which they live, in light of the concerns and values they learn from theories and arguments. He designs assessment methods to reinforce the effects of these classroom practices. He conducts learning activities outside the classroom and cultivates a personal, mentoring relationship with students who show an interest in doing so.

Joseph calls his approach to teaching Socratic and Confucian. Internationally known as a leading scholar in Confucian and comparative political philosophy, Joseph has been deeply inspired by the two giant thinker-teachers in the West and the East – Socrates and Confucius. He practises the Socratic method by fostering critical thinking, dialogue, and an unceasing effort to seek truth. He practises the Confucian method by cultivating relationships with students that nurture their personal

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and intellectual growth. He held two semester-long informal discussion groups in 2011 and 2013, which discussed topics as varied as economic inequality in Hong Kong, the welfare systems of Nordic countries, happiness, love, and the meaning of life.

Not satisfied with occasional opportunities in lectures to help students reflect on their lives, however, in 2014 Joseph decided to offer an innovative, first-of-its-kind Common Core course, 'The Best Things In Life: A Philosophical Exploration', which aims to help students address the difficult issues raised by the question "What makes a good life?". The course offers a precious opportunity for students to think about a wide range of things that fundamentally affect how well our lives go: pleasure, happiness, authenticity, personal autonomy, love, virtue, political participation, the meaning of life, and the puzzle of death.

Joseph's commitment to teaching led him to become actively involved in the development of the Common Core Curriculum, the flagship component of the University's new four-year undergraduate curriculum. He has served as Deputy Chairman and Chairman of the Common Core Curriculum Committee for eight years, and is one of the few Faculty members who has seen through the entire development of the curriculum from conception and implementation, through to the current consolidation stage. As the centerpiece of the University's undergraduate curriculum, the Common Core has succeeded admirably and received praise from external examiners, affirmations from the UGC, and positive reports from leading international educators. Joseph has played, over the last eight years, an active part in the leadership team and thus has made a tremendous contribution to the undergraduate curriculum of the University.

Joseph is therefore not only a gifted teacher, but also a dedicated administrator of teaching and learning. He is deeply deserving of a University Distinguished Teaching Award.

