

Introduction to Chinese Philosophy

PHIL 123/223

Spring 2017

T&R 12:00-1:20pm

Location TBD

Contact information

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TA and discussion section details TBD

Course description

This course provides a survey of Classical Chinese Philosophy from the Warring States Period (pre-Qin Dynasty). Topics include: self-cultivation in Confucius; the Mohist defense of impartial caring; the debate between the Confucians Mencius and Xunzi on whether human nature is good or bad; the role of women in Confucianism; paradoxes from the School of Names; the Daoists Laozi and Zhuangzi on the “Way”; and the beginning of Buddhist thought in China. Goals of the course include: learning how to approach historical texts; recognizing and assessing philosophical arguments; and thinking about the role of individuals and government in society.

Prerequisite: at least one philosophy course. Not a prerequisite: any knowledge of Chinese.
4 units.

Resources

We will primarily be using the following books:

(1) An anthology of primary sources:

Philip Ivanhoe and Bryan Van Norden, *Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy* (Indianapolis: Hackett), 2005. ISBN-13: 978-0872207806

(2) An introductory textbook:

Bryan Van Norden, *Introduction to Classical Chinese Philosophy* (Indianapolis: Hackett), 2011. ISBN-13: 978-1603844680

Students may also wish to consult this online source of translations:

(3) Chinese Text Project: ctext.org

Additional resources will be uploaded to Canvas.

Grading

Students enrolled in 180:

- (i) Participation (7%)
- (ii) Weekly discussion questions (18%)
- (iii) Midterm exam (25%)
- (iv) Final exam (25%)
- (v) 2250-3000 word paper (25%)

Students enrolled in 280:

- (i) Participation (7%)
- (ii) Weekly discussion questions (18%)
- (iii) Midterm exam (25%)
- (iv) 4500-6000 word paper (50%)

Disability accommodation

Students who have a disability which may necessitate an academic accommodation or the use of auxiliary aids and services in a class must initiate the request with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). The OAE will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend appropriate accommodations, and prepare a verification letter dated in the current academic term in which the request is being made. Please contact the OAE as soon as possible: timely notice is needed to arrange for appropriate accommodations. The OAE's contact details are as follows.

Address: 563 Salvatierra Walk, Stanford, CA 94305

Phone: (650) 723-1066

Web address: <http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/oe>

Honor code and plagiarism policy

Students are not merely bound by Stanford University's Honor Code. It is also their responsibility to know what the Honor Code states. Students unfamiliar with the Honor Code should consult the following site:

<http://www.stanford.edu/dept/vpsa/judicialaffairs/guiding/honorcode.htm>

(Read this page and download the PDF.) Students are also responsible for knowing what constitutes plagiarism. If you are unsure about what counts as plagiarism, ask the instructor.

Schedule of topics and readings

Abbreviations:

- (i) 'Readings' for *Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy*
- (ii) 'Intro' for *Introduction to Classical Chinese Philosophy*
- (iii) 'Canvas' for readings available on Canvas.

Week 1: Introduction

Topics:

A brief history of the pre-Qin period
Sima Tan and the Six Schools
How to read ancient Chinese texts: aphorisms, allusions, and illustrations
Chinese language: modern, classical, Romanizations, pronunciation

Readings:

Intro C1, "The Historical Context"
Intro Appendix A, "Hermeneutics, or How to Read a Text"
Intro Appendix B, "The Chinese Language and Writing System"

Week 2: Confucianism

Topics:

The Four Books and Five Classics
Zhou traditions
The importance of family
Self-cultivation
Virtue ethics, consequentialism, and deontology
Humanity (*ren*), ritual (*li*), music (*yue*), propriety (*yi*)

Readings:

Readings C1, "Konzi (Confucius) 'The Analects'"
Intro C2-3, "Konzi and Confucianism"; "Konzi and Virtue Ethics"
Intro Appendix C, "Kongzi as Systematic Philosopher"
Ernest Sosa, "Confucius on Knowledge" (Canvas)

Week 3: Mohism

Topics:

The ten doctrines
Mohist consequentialism
Impartial caring
Argumentation (*bian*) in debate
The state of nature
Divine command theory and fatalism

Readings:

Readings C2, "Mozi"
Intro C4, "Mohist Consequentialism"
Hui-Chieh Loy, "On the Argument for Jian'ai" (Canvas)

Week 4: Mencius

Topics:

Criticisms of Mohism
Development of Confucianism
The goodness of human nature (*xing*)
The heart-mind (*xin*)
Vital energy (*qi*)

Readings:

Readings C3 “Mengzi (Mencius)”
Intro C6, “Menzi and Human Nature”
Eric Schwitzgebel, “Human Nature and Moral Education in Mencius, Xunzi, Hobbes, and Rousseau” (Canvas)

Week 5: Xunzi

Topics:

Confucian naturalism
The sage-craftsperson analogy
Criticisms of Mencius
The badness of human nature (*xing*)
Appropriate behavior (*li*) and standards (*fa*)
Learning by deliberate effort (*wei*)

Readings:

Readings C6, “Xunzi”
Intro C10, “Xunzi’s Confucian Naturalism”
Winnie Sung, “Yu in the Xunzi: Can Desire By Itself Motivate Action?” (Canvas)

Week 6: Women in Confucianism

Topics:

Confucian Liu Xiang on the exemplary woman (*lienu*)
Virtue (*de*), talent (*cai*), and beauty (*se*)
Four Books for Women

Readings:

Ban Zhao, “Lessons for Women” (Canvas)
Li-Hsiang Lisa Rosenlee, *Confucianism and Women* (Canvas)
Robin Wang, “Ideal Womanhood in Chinese Thought and Culture” (Canvas)

Week 7: The School of Names

Topics:

Deng Xi’s paradox
Hui Shi’s Ten Theses
Gongsun Long’s three essays
Argumentation (*pian*)
Later Mohist rationalism
Logic and language

Readings:

Intro C7, “Language and Paradox in the “School of Names””

Gongsun Long, "A White Horse is Not a Horse" (Canvas)
Chad Hansen, "Mass Nouns and "A White Horse is Not a Horse"" (Canvas)

Week 8: Laozi

Topics:

Criticisms of Confucianism and Mohism
Nonaction (*wuwei*), spontaneity (*ziran*)
Language and convention
The Way (*dao*) and potentiality (*de*)
Self-cultivation in the *Daodejing*

Readings:

Readings C4, "Laozi ("The Daodejing")"
Intro C8, "The *Daodejing* and Mysticism"
D.C. Lau, "The Treatment of Opposites in Lao-Tzu" (Canvas)

Week 9: Zhuangzi

Topics:

Antirationalism: skepticism and relativism
Detached engagement
"Inward Training" (*Nei Yeh*)
Yangist egoism
"Robber Zhi"

Readings:

Readings C5, "Zhuangzi"
Intro C9, "Zhuangzi's Therapeutic Skepticism and Relativism"
Chris Fraser, "Skepticism and Value in the Zhuangzi" (Canvas)

Week 10: Later Chinese Thought

Topics:

Chinese Buddhism

Readings:

Intro C12, "Later Chinese Thought"
Wing-tsit Chan, "Transformation of Buddhism in China" (Canvas)
Li Kang, "The Interdependence of All Things: How Huayan Buddhism and Analytic Metaphysics Can Inspire Each Other" (Canvas)