

EARLY CHINESE PHILOSOPHY

This course introduces the foundational texts of the early Chinese philosophical tradition, from its earliest known beginnings to the systematic metaphysical speculations of early empire (c. 2nd century BCE).

Beginning with the *Analects* of Confucius, we will work through the writings that have come to comprise the early mainstream tradition, as well as those standing outside of it: the *Analects* of Confucius, *Mozǐ*, *Mencius*, *Guanzǐ*, *Xunzǐ*, *Laozǐ*, *Zhuangzǐ*, and *Han Feizǐ*. We will also study recently excavated manuscripts from the Guodian tomb, which have shed dramatic new light on the landscape of thought and moral practice in early China. The course ends with the *Huainanzǐ* (c. 140 BCE), an ambitious, encyclopedic treatise that offered a unifying, systematic vision of everything, from the moral and spiritual cultivation of human beings, to statecraft, to the structure and patterns of the terrestrial world and the cosmos.

Thematically, we will examine the distinctive concerns and approaches of each of these texts, particularly as they pertained to ethics and self-cultivation, the socio-political order, and the cosmos. We will address such questions as: What are the norms and patterns that should guide human life, and how do we come to know them? What are the means and ends of self-cultivation? What is virtue and how is it connected to the workings of the mind, body and emotions? We will also consider the early Chinese philosophical tradition in light of contemporary discussions of virtue ethics, alternative approaches to cognition, and the place of nonwestern philosophy in the study of philosophy.

No prior knowledge of Chinese, Chinese philosophy or Chinese history is required. Readings will consist of English translations (mainly from Hackett editions) of source texts, as well as scholarly articles.

Instructor

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E-mail policy

I will try to respond to e-mails within 24 hours. E-mails arriving over the weekend will be answered by the following Monday.

E-Learning

On the e-learning site you will find handouts, readings, and announcements. We will also use the website for discussions outside the classroom and for posting short assignments.

Learning outcomes

1. To achieve an understanding of the main concepts, concerns and positions of major early and medieval Chinese thinkers.
2. To understand how and why the Chinese philosophical tradition came to acquire the distinctive features that it did, and what its particular trajectory might indicate about the formation of other philosophical traditions.

3. To develop ways in which Chinese perspectives and ideas could be brought to bear on current or historical philosophical problems and issues.
4. To develop skills in the analysis and interpretation of texts and to communicate them effectively in writing and in class discussions.

Course requirements and assessment

1. Participation (25%)
2. Presentations of readings + corresponding questions for discussion (10%)
3. Final paper presentation (5%)
4. Short essay (20%)
4. Long essay (40%)

1. Participation: Attendance, preparation, and active engagement in class discussions. Students may miss up to one class without penalty. Further absences should be cleared with instructor and made up with a written synopsis and critical reflection on readings.

2. Presentations of readings: Each student will select one class meetings in which to give a short presentation (10-15 minutes). These should include

- a) a statement about major points covered in the texts and their significance
- b) highlighting of issues of particular interest/value in these texts
- c) presentation of 2-3 questions for further discussion in class

Please distribute a 1-2 pp handout at the beginning of the class covering the above.

3. Final paper presentations (8-10 mins.)

4. Short essay (1200-1500 words) on a topic of your choice, due on the e-learning site by **5 pm on Tuesday, Oct. 23 (hard copy due in class on Wednesday, Oct. 24)**. You may do a close analysis/reconstruction of a text or set of texts discussed in class, or else compare the positions of a number of texts or thinkers as responses to shared intellectual predicaments. Alternatively, your paper might try to answer an open-ended question that has come up in class, or resolve a conceptual/historical puzzle raised by your chosen text(s).

5. Long paper (2200-2500 words): Similar description as the short paper but here you are expected to go beyond the summary and reconstruction of positions articulated in the texts, and to articulate an argument that can contribute to our understanding of the texts/thinkers/views more broadly, and their larger significance. In this paper you are welcome (but not required) to engage some secondary sources as well as conduct a more full-fledged comparative analysis based on relevant issues and works you may be familiar with in western philosophy. **This is due by 5 pm on Friday, Dec. 14.**

Successful papers will contain the following elements:

1. Clear and methodical presentation
2. Thoughtful use and analysis of relevant source material
3. Persuasive and compelling argument
4. Engagement of issues of broader conceptual/historical significance
4. Correct grammar and syntax.

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS

Class	Date	Topic	Readings
1	9/19	Course Introduction Philosophy	<p>1. J. Garfield and B.W. Van Norden, “If Philosophy Won’t Diversify, Let’s Call It What It Really Is.” <i>The Stone</i>, <i>New York Times</i>. May 11, 2016.</p> <p>2. Please read at least 5 articles (representing a variety of positions) in response to the above: http://www.bryannorden.com/new-page-5/</p>
2.	9/26	Conceptual Foundations	<p>1. Franklin Perkins, “Metaphysics in Chinese Philosophy,” <i>Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy</i> http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/chinese-metaphysics/</p> <p>2. Edward Slingerland, “Effortless Action. The Chinese Spiritual Ideal of <i>Wuwei</i>.” <i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i> 68.2: 293-327.</p>
3	10/3	Confucius	<p>Selections from Confucius, <i>Analects</i>, Ivanhoe and Van Norden. Hackett 2005: 1-57.</p> <p>Optional: Edward Slingerland, “Virtue Ethics, the <i>Analects</i>, and the Problem of Commensurability.” <i>Journal of Religions Studies</i> 29.1: 97-125.</p>
4	10/10	Mozi	<p>Selections from Mozi in Ivanhoe and Van Norden: 59-114.</p> <p>Optional: Chris Fraser, “Moism and Self-Interest.” <i>Journal of Chinese Philosophy</i> 38, no. 3 (2008): 437–54.</p>
5	10/17	Mencius (Mengzi)	Selections from Mencius in Ivanhoe and Van Norden: 115-159.
* Short essay due 5 pm on Tuesday Oct. 23 (electronic submission)*			
6	10/24	Excavated Manuscripts	<p>* Hard copy of short essay due in class *</p> <p>Selections from Scott Cook, <i>The Bamboo Texts of Guodian. A Study and Complete Translation</i>.</p> <p>Optional: Erica Brindley, “Music and ‘Seeking One’s Heart-mind’ in the ‘Xing Zi Ming Chu’.” <i>Dao</i> 5, no. 2 (Jun 2006): 247-255.</p> <p>Optional: Franklin Perkins, “Motivation and the Heart in the <i>Xing Zi Ming Chu</i>.” <i>Dao</i> 8, no. 2 (2009): 117-131.</p>
7.	10/31	Guanzi	Selections from W. A. Rickett, trans. <i>Guanzi</i> . 2 vols. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985, 1998, pp. 38-64.

- Optional: Romain Graziani, "The Subject and the Sovereign: Exploring the Self in Early Chinese Self-Cultivation. In J. Lagerwey and M. Kalinowski eds., Vol. 1. Brill: 2009: 459-517.
- 8 11/7 Laozi (*Daodejing*) Selections from D.C. Lau, trans., *Lao Tzu: Tao Te Ching*, pp. 5-58. London: Penguin Books, 1963.
- 9 11/14 Zhuangzi Selections from B. Ziporyn trans., *Zhuangzi: The Essential Writings. With Selections from Traditional Commentaries*. Hackett 2009, pp. 3-54, 68-76.
- Optional: Ivanhoe, Philip J. "Zhuangzi on Skepticism, Skill, and the Ineffable Tao." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 64, no. 4 (1993): 639-54.
- Optional: Chris Fraser, "Wandering the Way: A Eudaimonistic Approach to the Zhuangzi." *Dao* 13, no. 4 (Dec 2014): 541-565.
- 10 11/21 Xunzi Selections from E. Hutton trans., *Xunzi The Complete Text*. Princeton 2014, Chs. 4, 17-19, 21-23 (pp. 23-31, 175-217, 224-257).
- Optional articles posted on the E-learning site.
- 11 11/28 Han Feizi Selections from Han Feizi in Ivanhoe and Van Norden: 311-361.
- Optional: E.L. Harris, "Han Fei on the Problems of Morality," in P. Goldin ed., *Dao Companion to the Philosophy of Han Fei*: 107-131
- 12 12/5 Philosophy in the age of empire J. Major et al trans., *The Essential Huainanzi*. Columbia UP: 2012, Chs. 1-4, 7; Major et al trans., *The Huainanzi. A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Government in Early Han China*, Ch. 21.

*** Long essay due 5 pm on Friday, Dec. 14
(electronic submission and hard copy delivered to my department mailbox)***