



The Beijing Center

北京中国学中心

Fall 2019

TBC 1500 Traditional Chinese Philosophy

Credit Hours: 3.0

Class Times and Location: TBA

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Course Description

In this course I explore the characteristics of different philosophers in Chinese history and distinguish the “Chinese philosophical sensibility” motivating their thoughts. Employing Western philosophical categories to describe significant issues in the history of philosophy, I examine Chinese political philosophy in the pre-Qin era, Chinese metaphysics from the Han to Tang Dynasties, Chinese epistemology from the Song to Ming Dynasties, and modern Chinese-Western comparative philosophy. I try to provide a clear, accessible conception of the Chinese philosophical sensibility and its evolution throughout history.

I will teach this introduction to Chinese philosophy by applying western philosophical categories – such as metaphysics, epistemology – in order to reconstruct Chinese traditional thought. In answering the question, “what is the Chinese philosophical sensibility,” I try to construct Chinese philosophical systems as solid “philosophical” counterparts of Western philosophy. We can claim that the Chinese are “philosophical” in their own way, and at the same time see that the Chinese provide different answers to familiar western philosophical issues.

Learning Outcome

Lectures, student presentations, discussions in classes, and paper assignments are designed to enable students to catch the unique features of Chinese ancient philosophical thinking, especially to comprehend its specific ways of dealing with the ultimate issues concerned by other traditions as well. Furthermore, the relations and historical developments of the various schools in ancient Chinese philosophy - Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, etc. - should be known and expressed in papers at the end of this course. With these achievements, students will attain a much more advanced position in understanding Chinese culture as a whole.

Textbook

1. *Chinese Philosophy (WCP)*, by Haiming Wen, Cambridge University Press, 2012.
2. *An Introduction to Chinese Philosophy: From Ancient Philosophy to Chinese Buddhism (ICP)*, by Jeeloo Liu, Blackwell Publishing, 2006.
3. *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*, by Fung, Yu-lan, Tianjin Social Science Publisher, 2007.

References

1. *Confucian Pragmatism as the Art of Contextualizing Personal Experience and World (CP)*, by Haiming Wen, Lexington Books, 2009.
2. *An Introduction to Chinese Philosophy*, by Karyn L. Lai, Cambridge University Press, 2008.
3. *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy (SB)*, tr. & compiled by Wing-tsit Chan, Princeton University Press, 1963.

(Almost all books listed above are available in the library of TBC)

Course Requirements

1. Attendance Policy

Only valid medical or family emergencies qualify as an absence, and documentation of the same must be presented to the professor no later than the next class meeting. All other absences are considered to be unexcused. Unexcused absences will affect your grade (see below).

Penalties for unexcused absences:

- 1 absence – class participation grade drops one full letter grade (example: A- to B-)
- 2 absences – class participation grade drops two full letter grades
- 3 absences – class participation grade drops three full letter grades
- 4 or more absences – class participation grade is a failing grade

2. Assignments and Grading

- a) Presentation (20%): You will choose a topic from the class schedule below and present your understanding of it in class and be prepared to answer questions.
- b) Participation (20%): 12% for attendance (coming late and leaving earlier will affect the attendance records), 8% for discussion participation.
- c) Midterm paper (30%): It must be on some topic related to your presentation (due middle of Oct.). Its length: 5-6 pages, 1.5-double space.
- d) Final Paper (30%): Topic options will be approved by the instructor and the paper length is 8-10 pages, 1.5-double space.

3. Academic Honesty Statement

Please click the following link to see The Beijing Center's policy on Academic Integrity: <http://thebeijingcenter.org/academic-integrity>

Course Schedule

WK 1: The *Dao* of Heaven (*tian*): An Introduction to Chinese World Views

Specific topics:

1. Three Talents (*sancai*): the cosmological order of heaven, earth and human beings.
2. Precise meanings of "heaven (*tian*)", "ancestor worship" and "virtues" in the ancient context
3. Confucianism and Daoist worldviews
4. The distinctive features of Chinese world views

5. Compare the features with Western ones

Readings:

1. *CP-WEN, Introduction: What is Chinese Philosophy?*
2. *SHCP-Fung, Chapter 1: The Spirit of Chinese Philosophy*
3. *ICP-LIU, pp.1-26, Introduction: What is Chinese Philosophy?*

WK 2: Yin-yang and cosmological order: *Yijing (I Ching): The Classic of Changes*

1. Basic structure: eight trigrams
2. A constant changing universe
3. A universe with moral attributes: the foundation for human morality
4. Moral philosophy: contextual prescriptivism
5. Philosophy of action: causal efficacy or fatalism?

Readings:

1. *CP-WEN Chapter I The Source of Chinese Philosophy-Zhouyi*
2. *ICP-LIU pp.26-46, Yijing: The Cosmological Foundation of Chinese Philosophy;*
3. *SHCP-Fung, Chapter 12 The yin-yang School and the Early Chinese Cosmology, Chapter 15 Confucianist metaphysics*

WK 3: Generative-generating (*shengsheng*) and cultivating virtue: Confucius and his *Analects*

1. The outline of Confucius' biography.
2. Basic characters of Confucius as a person and a thinker.
3. *Ren* (co-humanity), *li* (ritual propriety), *zhong* (loyalty), *shu* (empathy), *junzi* (exemplary persons).
4. Compare Confucius with Jesus and Socrates.

Readings:

1. *CP-WEN Chapter II Confucius and Mencius*
2. *ICP-LIU pp.47-64, Confucius in the Analects;*
3. *SHCP-Fung, Chapter 4: Confucius, the First Teacher*

WK 4: Benevolence and Appropriateness: Mencius as "Idealistic" Confucianism

1. Relation between Mencius' ideas of humanity (*ren*), righteousness and Confucius'
2. What is Mencius' view of human nature? How does it differ from Yang Zhu and Mozi's?
3. Mencius' political views (government and revolution)
4. Is Mencius democratic or not? Why?

Readings:

1. *CP-WEN Chapter II Confucius and Mencius*
2. *ICP-LIU, pp.65-85, Mencius;*
3. *SHCP-Fung, Chapter 7: The Idealistic Wing of Confucianism: Mencius*

WK 5: Ritual and Music: Mozi and Xunzi

1. Universal love vs. love with distinctions
2. Deontological rightness vs. utilitarian benefits
3. Mozi's political philosophy: pragmatic authoritarianism
4. Philosophy of religion: heaven, ghosts and spirits, fate
5. A naturalistic view of heaven
6. On human nature and social control
7. The significance of rituals and rules of propriety (*li*)

Readings:

1. *CP-WEN* Chapter II Xunzi, Mozi
2. *SHCP-Fung*, Chapter 5: Mozi, the first Opponent of Confucius; Chapter 13 The Realistic wing of Confucianism: Xunzi
3. *ICP-LIU*, pp.86-130;

WK6: Acting without Self-Interest and the Self-soing (*ziran*): Daoism: *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*

1. The meanings of Dao and its manifestations (including the political one).
2. with that of *Laozi*, reflect our contemporary life.
3. Identify the distinctive features of *Zhuangzi*'s Daoism.
4. the role of *qi* 气 with its various manifestations in *Zhuangzi*

Readings:

1. *CP-WEN* Chapter II Laozi, Zhuangzi
2. *SHCP-Fung*, Chapter 6: The First Phase of Taoism: Yang-Zhu; Chapter 9: The Second Phase of Daoism: Laozi; Chapter 10: The Third Phase of Daoism: Zhuangzi
3. *CP* pp.131-151;

WK 7: State: *The Art of Warfare* (*Sunzi*) and *Hanfeizi* (Legalism): The Ways of Leading Changes

1. The relations of Hanfeizi's Legalism to Daoism and Confucianism.
2. Find out and that of potential power (*shi* 势) in *Hanfeizi*.
3. Is there some kind of ecological ethics in Machiavellism in *Hanfeizi*?
4. With the perspective of *Sunzi*, evaluate American military experiences; How can a general, according to *Sunzi*, become undefeatable in wars? [Pay attention to the role of *shi* (positional and strategic power)]

Readings:

1. *CP-WEN* Chapter II Hanfeizi
2. *SHCP-Fung*, Chapter 14 Hanfeizi and the Legalist School
3. *ICP-LIU* pp.152-205;

WK 8: Education and Classics: Studies on Confucian Classics in the Han Dynasty: The Yin-yang School and Yin-yang Confucianism

1. The structure of yin-yang and five-agents theory and its philosophical significance.
2. Dong Zhongshu's view on the ways of relating man to heaven (nature).

3. Find out the implications of timeliness in Dong's discourses.
4. What are the consequences of having philosophical gender difference? Can you find such difference in western philosophy?

Readings:

1. *CP-WEN* Chapter III Chinese Metaphysics: Chinese Cosmology in Han Dynasty; The Ontology of Being and Nothingness in Wei-Jin Dynasties
2. *SHCP-Fung*, Chapter 17 The Theorizer of the Han Empire: Dong Zhongshu; Chapter 18 The Ascendancy of Confucianism and Revival of Daoism
3. *CP*, Chapter 6, Chinese Metaphysical Creativity

WK 9: The Heavens and Earth are not Benevolent: Neo-Daoism and Chinese Buddhism (I): Hua-yen & Tian-tai

1. How does Neo-Daoism differ from traditional Daoism?
2. Tian-tai inherit and develop the Buddhist doctrine of Middle Path;
3. What philosophical reasons can be found in the two schools that account for the Buddhist success in China?
4. The features of Hua-yen School. Are nowadays sciences going toward a Hua-yen dimension?

Readings:

1. *CP-WEN* Chapter III Chinese Metaphysics: Buddhism in Sui and Tang Dynasties
2. *SHCP-Fung*, Chapter 21 The Foundation of Chinese Buddhism
3. *ICP-LIU* pp.209-219, pp.248-303;
4. *SB* 24, 21, 22, 25,

WK 10: Self-soing: Chinese Buddhism (II): The Consciousness-Only (*Weishi*) School and the Chan School (Zen Buddhism)

1. How did Chan understand "meditation" (*dhyana, chan, zen*) in its own terms?
2. The role of language in Chan.
3. Identify the explicit and implicit indebtedness of Chan to ancient Chinese thoughts.
4. Do you feel that Chan is useful in dealing with the dilemmas in human life?

Readings:

1. *CP-WEN* Chapter III Chinese Metaphysics: Buddhism in Sui and Tang Dynasties
2. *SHCP-Fung*, Chapter 22 Chan Buddhism: the Philosophy of Silence
3. *ICP-LIU* pp.220-247; pp.304-331;
4. *SB* 26,

WK 11: Family in the Neo-Confucianism (I): Zhou Dun-yi and Zhu Xi

1. Identify the pre-Qin Confucian, Han Confucian and certain new elements in Zhou Dun-yi's works.
2. What are Zhu Xi's views on principle (*li*) and material force (*qi*)?
3. Is Zhu Xi's philosophical thinking dualistic or not?
4. Can you find Daoist or Buddhist impacts on these two thinkers?

Readings:

1. *CP-WEN* Chapter IV Chinese Epistemology: Zhou Dunyi and Zhu Xi
2. *SHCP-Fung*, Chapter 23 Neo-Confucianism: the Cosmologists; Chapter 24 Neo-Confucianism: The Beginning of the Two Schools; Chapter 25 Neo-Confucianism: The School of Platonic Ideas
3. *SB* 28, 34
4. *CP*, Chapter 4, Feelings (*Qing* 情) and the Importance of History, Particularity, and Emergence in Context

WK 12: The Individual in the Neo-Confucianism (II): Lu Xiang-shan & Wang Yang-ming

1. Lu Xiang-shan's views on mind and principle.
2. What is "the extension of the innate knowledge of the good (*zhi liang-zhi*)" for Wang Yang-ming?
3. Compare Zhu Xi with Lu and Wang.
4. How far is the Neo-Confucianism from the original Confucianism in the *Analects*?

Readings:

1. *CP-WEN* Chapter IV Chinese Epistemology: Lu Jiuyuan and Wang Yangming
2. *SHCP-Fung*, Chapter 26 Neo-Confucianism: The School of Universal Mind
3. *SB* 33; *SB* 35.
4. *CP*, Chapter 7, Chinese Epistemological Creativity

WK 13: All Under Heaven in Modern Chinese Philosophy and Chinese Philosophical Sensibility in A Comparative Context: Its History and Direction

1. The *dao* of Chinese philosophy
2. Modern Chinese philosophy as a discipline
3. The challenge of Western philosophy
4. Confucian Pragmatism and Sino-US Cultural Exchange

Readings:

1. *CP-WEN* Chapter V The *Dao* of Chinese Philosophy; Chapter VI Modern Chinese Philosophy
2. *SHCP-Fung*, Chapter 27 The Introduction of Western Philosophy; Chapter 28 Chinese Philosophy in the Modern World
3. *SB* 36, 39, 42, 43, 44.
4. *CP*, Chapter 8, Confucian Pragmatism as a Post-modern Comparative Philosophy

WK 14 Finishing Final Papers and Presentations