

Contemporary Questions in Chinese Philosophy: Confucianism

PHIL 349

Spring 2010

Course time

Course location

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Course Description

This course is a survey in contemporary questions in Chinese philosophy with a focus on Confucianism. We will introduce students to the questions, methods and approaches in learning Confucianism. We will learn Confucian *Analects*, Mencius Neo-Confucianism, and then significant body of modern discussions on Confucianism from a comparative perspective. We will examine the roots and context of Confucius and his life and writings, and then conclude with several weeks of why many people here see his work as relevant to contemporary and current-day China. We will cover contemporary debates about Confucianism, as well as the attacks during the Cultural Revolution. The student is expected to have a basic understanding of philosophy or Chinese culture.

Course Outcomes

Lectures, student presentations, discussions in classes, and paper assignments are designed to enable students to catch the unique features of Confucianism, especially how it developed through its dialogue with Western philosophies. Students will acquire knowledge of a significant body of Confucianism, exploring the questions, methods and approaches in the discipline of Confucianism. Students will systematically understand Confucianism in a process of its dialogues with contemporary issues. Furthermore, the wisdom of the various schools in Confucianism 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 Confucianism and Chinese culture.

Course Requirements and Form of Assessment

- **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.

- **Participation** (20%): 12% for attendance (coming late and leaving earlier will affect the attendance records), 8% for discussion participation.
- **First Paper** (20%): It must be on some topic related to your presentation (due middle of Oct.). Its length: 5-6 pages, 1.5-double space.
- **Final Paper** (40%): Topic options will be approved by the instructor and the paper length is 8-10 pages, 1.5-double space.

Attendance Policy

An excused absence requires a written medical excuse or written approval from the school's administration office. 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

Academic Honesty

Please refer to the following web link for policies on academic honesty:

http://www.luc.edu/cas/pdfs/CAS_Academic_Integrity_Statement_December_07.pdf

Required Texts

1. *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation (Analects)*, tr. with intro. by Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont, Jr., New York: Bollantine Books, 1998.
2. *Confucian Pragmatism as the Art of Contextualizing Personal Experience and World (CP)*, by Haiming Wen, Lexington Books, 2009.

References:

1. *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy (SB)*, tr. & compiled by Wing-tsit Chan, Princeton University Press, 1963.
2. *Manufacturing Confucianism: Chinese traditions and Universal Civilization*, by Lionel M. Jensen, Duke University Press, 1997.
3. *Confucianism and Christianity: A Comparative Study*, by Julia Ching, Konansha

International, 1977.

4. *Boston Confucianism: Portable Tradition in the Late-Modern World*, by Robert Cummings Neville, SUNY 2000
5. *Confucianism and Human Rights*, ed. By W. M. Theodore de Bary, and Tu Weiming, Columbia University Press, 1998.

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

Class Schedule

WK 1: Introduction: Confucianism and Its Modern Fate

Specific topics:

1. The distinctive features of Confucianism
2. Compare the features with Western ones.
3. Confucianism and its modern fate

Readings:

SB, introduction

WK 2: Confucius and His Commentaries on *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 (handouts):

An Introduction to Chinese Philosophy: From Ancient Philosophy to Chinese Buddhism, by Jeeloo Liu, Blackwell Publishing, 2006, pp.26-46, *Yijing: The Cosmological Foundation of Chinese Philosophy*.

SB 13 (The Philosophy of Change);

WK 3: Confucius and his *Analects*

1. The outline of Confucius' biography.
2. Basic characters of Confucius as a person and a thinker.
3. Compare Confucius with Mo Tzu.
4. Compare Confucius with Jesus and Socrates.

Readings: *Analects* Book 7, 9, 10; chapter 2.4, 3.12, 5.13, 5.26(25), 5.28, 6.3, 6.22,

6.28(26), 11.12, 14.35, 14.32, 14.38(41), 15.13, 17.5, 17.7, 18.5, 18.6, 19.24, 19.25., *RH*: Biography of Confucius. *SB* 2 (Confucius). *SB* 9.

WK 4: Arts in Confucius' Thought (I): Odes and Ritual Propriety

- 1.The roles of the *Odes* in the *Analects* and the way of Confucius' using them.
- 2.Why is ritual propriety (li) so crucial to Confucius?
- 3.The relation between the odes and the ritual propriety.
- 4.Compare Confucius' view of arts with Plato's (such as that in *Republic*).

Readings: *Analects* 7.1, 7.6, **8.8**; On the odes (songs): **1.15**, **2.2**, **3.8**, 3.20, 8.3, 8.15, 9.15, 9.31, 11.6, 12.10, 13.5, **16.13**, 17.9, 17.10: On the ritual propriety: **1.12**, 1.13, 1.15, 2.3, **2.5** (17.21), 2.23, 3.1, 3.3, 3.4, 3.8, 3.15, 3.17, 3.19, 3.22, 3.26, 6.27(1.2), 7.31, **8.2**, 9.3, 9.11, 11.1, **12.1**, 13.3, 13.4, 14.41, 15.33, 16.2, 17.11.

WK5: Arts in Confucius' Thought (II): Music, Enjoyment, Language, Refinement (wen, culture) and exemplary person (junzi)

- 1.Connection between music and enjoyment (happiness). Its philosophical significance.
- 2.What role does language play for Confucius?
- 3.The relation between refinement (wen, culture) and exemplary person?
- 4.Do you want to become an exemplary person? Why?

Readings: *Analects*: Music: 3.23, 7.14, 9.15, **11.26**, 15.11, 16.2, 17.11(3.3), 17.18, 18.4. Enjoyment: 1.1, 3.20, 4.2, 6.11, 6.20, **6.23**, 7.10, **7.14**, 7.19, 7.32, 16.5, 17.21. Language: 1.13, 4.22, 4.24, 12.3, 13.3, 13.27, 14.27, 16.13, 17.17, 17.19. Refinement: 3.14, 5.13, 7.25, 8.19, 9.5, 12.8, 16.1. Exemplary person: **6.18**, 6.27, 1.2, 2.12, 4.5, 4.11, 9.6, 11.1, 12.4, 12.5, 12.19, **12.24**, 13.23, **14.6**, 15.2, **15.37**, 16.8, 19.9

CP Chapter IV

WK 6: Ren (jen, authoritative conduct), the Man of Ren, and the Politics of Ren (Dao)

- 1.What are the most prominent features of ren (or the man of ren) that distinguish it from other virtues?
- 2.What are the essential connections between ren and arts?
- 3.What does a state look like if it is run by ren?
- 4.Can you find any companion of ren in western tradition?

Readings: *Analects*: Ren and the Man of Ren: 1.2, 1.3, 3.3, 4.1, 4.2, 4.5, 4.15, 5.8, 5.19, 6.7, 6.22, 6.23, 6.30, 7.30, 8.7, 9.1, 12.1, 12.2, 12.3, 12.22, 13.27, 14.1, 14.4, 14.6, 15.9, 17.8, 17.21, etc. The politics of Ren: 1.5, **2.1**, 2.3, 2.23, 7.5,

12.11, 12.17, 12.19, 13.1-13.3, 13.10, 13.11, 13.12, 13.18, 14.16, 14.17, **15.5**,
15.11, 16.1-16.3, **20.1**

CP Chapter V

WK 7: Mencius: “Idealistic” Confucianism

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

Readings: SB 3;

WK 8: 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:

SB 28,

CP Chapter VI

WK 9: 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 Chu Xi with Lu and Wang.
4. How far is the Neo-Confucianism from the original Confucianism in the *Analects*?

Readings:

SB 33; SB 35.

CP Chapter VII

WK 10: Contemporary Debates about Confucianism: May 4 Movement and Cultural Revolution

1. Modern Confucianism as a discipline
2. The challenge of Western philosophy
3. Attacks on Confucianism in the Cultural Revolution

4. Confucian Pragmatism and Sino-US Cultural Exchange

Readings: *SB* 36, 39, 42, 43, 44.

Manufacturing Confucianism: Chinese traditions and Universal Civilization, by Lionel M. Jensen, Duke University Press, 1997.

WK 11: Confucianism and Christianity

1. The problem of mean
2. The problem of God
3. The problem of self-transcendence
4. The problem of political relevance

Readings:

Confucianism and Christianity: A Comparative Study, by Julia Ching, Konansha International, 1977.

WK 12: Confucianism in the Contemporary Situation

1. Historical background
2. Tu, Weiming
3. Roger Ames and David Hall
4. Cheng, Chung-ying

Readings:

Boston Confucianism: Portable Tradition in the Late-Modern World, by Robert Cummings Neville, SUNY 2000

Confucianism and Modern Family

Confucianism and Women

WK 13: Confucianism and World Politics

1. Confucianism and Modernization
2. Confucianism and Human Rights
3. Confucianism and Democracy
4. Confucianism and Globalization

Readings:

Confucianism and Human Rights, ed. By W. M. Theodore de Bary, and Tu Weiming, Columbia University Press, 1998.

CP Chapter VIII

WK 14 Finishing Final Papers and Presentations