

Chinese Philosophy and Religion
Phil 511
Syllabus

Meeting: Tu/Th 12:35 – 1:50 PM
Humanities 115

Instructor: Justin Tiwald
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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 3:30-5:30 PM
 Thursdays, 3:30-4:30 PM
(sign-up sheet outside my office)

Teaching Assistants:

Course Description:

This course is designed to introduce students to the major philosophical and religious schools of classical (pre-Buddhist) China, including the Confucian, Mohist, Daoist, and Legalist schools. Although the course is meant primarily as an introductory survey of the most important thinkers, each year we will focus our reading and discussion on a particular theme that runs through the many works. This year we will be concentrating on the issues that these thinkers raise for moral agency—that is, issues concerning how we come to understand our moral expectations and ideals and how this understanding motivates us to live according to them.

Goals and Prerequisites:

This course has two basic goals. First, as an upper level course in philosophy, it aims to cultivate our ability to think in a clear and systematic way about difficult and fundamental problems. Second, as a course devoted to classical Chinese philosophy, it aims to make us more literate in an ancient tradition that was highly intelligible to its own readers but now, more than 2000 years later, strikes most modern people as obscure. If you are not prepared to spend a great deal of time puzzling over difficult passages of ancient philosophical texts, you will have a very hard time fulfilling the requirements of the course. All texts are in translation, and the reading assignments are shortened to allow you the time to scrutinize them carefully. At least one prior course in philosophy is recommended but not required.

Assignments and Grading:

Written assignments include a midterm paper (due in stages on October 11, 16, and 23), several short response paragraphs (due on *every* day of class, except where this syllabus specifies otherwise) and a take-home final exam (due December 18).

The midterm paper will focus on the first three units of the course (Confucius, Mozi, and Mencius). It should be typed, double-spaced, and five to six pages in length. For each response paragraph you write, you must offer a brief (half page), carefully formulated argument about a portion of the day's assigned readings. These responses are not to be stream-of-consciousness thoughts about whatever happens to be on your mind, but should be devoted to understanding the assigned texts. The purpose of these response paragraphs is to help you organize your thoughts for class discussion, but on several unannounced days I will collect them for grading as well. The final will be a take-home exam will be five to six pages in length, and it will be comprehensive in nature; you are responsible for all of the readings, assignments, and class discussions prior to the exam. Both the midterm paper and the final exam will consist of essay-style answers to questions on the readings, and several possible questions will be provided the week before these assignments are due.

The midterm paper will be completed in stages, with printed copies being due at the beginning of class on October 9, 13, and 16. Anyone who is late to complete any of the work for these stages will be penalized by one gradation per day from the final paper grade. For example, a "B" paper would be reduced to a "B-" if one day late and to a "C+" if two days late. Late response paragraphs will not be accepted. Therefore it is highly recommended that you attend every class with a response paragraph in hand. Late exam answers will also not be accepted. Of course, exceptions to these late work policies will be made for verifiable emergencies.

The final grade for the course will be computed by averaging the grades on the midterm paper, final exam, and response paragraphs. These will be weighted as follows:

Midterm paper:	1/3 rd
Final exam:	1/3 rd
Response paragraphs (averaged, two lowest grades will be dropped):	1/3 rd

Required Texts:

Philip J. Ivanhoe and Bryan W. Van Norden, eds., *Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy*, (New York: Seven Bridges Press, 2000). (Hereafter, *RCCP*.)

Thornton C. Kline III and Philip J. Ivanhoe, eds., *Virtue, Nature and Moral Agency in the Xunzi*, (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 2000). (Hereafter, *VNA*.)

Various articles available on *iLearn*. (Hereafter, *iLearn*.)

Class Schedule:

28 Aug. The concept of "virtue" (*de*) in early China
Introduction to Confucius
Response paragraph not required

[Confucianism: Kongzi \(Confucius\)](#)

- 30 Aug. What kind of ethics does Confucius do? (*RCCP*: 1-20)
- 4 Sept. Confucius' view of ritual (*RCCP*: 20-54)
- 6 Sept. The place of ritual tradition in Confucian ethics (*iLearn*: Shun)
- 11 Sept. Confucius' view of the self (*iLearn*: Wilson)
(Review *RCCP*: 5 [2.4] 6 [2.7, 2.8], 15 [5.13], 17 [6.11], 18 [6.20])

Mohism: Mozi

- 13 Sept. Introduction to Mozi (*RCCP*: 59-68, 105-111)
- 18 Sept. "Impartial Caring" (*RCCP*: 68-104)
- 20 Sept. Mohist political thought (<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/mohism/>, read #6 [Political Theory])
- 25 Sept. Mozi vs. Confucius on the utility of ritual (<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/mohism/>, read #7 [Ethical Theory])
(Review *RCCP*: 78-90 [chapter 20], 105-110 [chapter 32])

Confucianism: Mengzi (Mencius)

- 27 Sept. Introduction to Mengzi (Mencius) (*RCCP*: 115-129)
- 2 Oct. Mengzi on human nature (*RCCP*: 129-157)
- 4 Oct. A comparison of Confucianism and care ethics (*iLearn*: Luo)
(Review *Mengzi* 2A6 in *RCCP*: 129-130)
- 9 Oct. Mengzi on moral deliberation (*iLearn*: Hutton)
(Review *Mengzi* 6A7 in *RCCP*: 148-149)

Daoism: Laozi

- 11 Oct. Discussion of mid-term papers: thesis statement and introduction
Midterm paper: thesis statement and introductory paragraph due
Response paragraph not required
- 16 Oct. Discussion of mid-term papers: rough draft

Midterm paper: rough draft due (4 page minimum)
Response paragraph not required

18 Oct. The beginnings of Daoism (*iLearn*: Ivanhoe, “Introduction”; *RCCP*: 161-167)

Response paragraph not required

23 Oct. Non-action (*RCCP*: 167-180)

Midterm paper: final draft due (5-6 pages)
Response paragraph not required

25 Oct. Laozi on the good life (*RCCP*: 181-203, second book of the *Laozi*)

Response paragraph not required

30 Oct. Mystical interpretations of the Laozi (*iLearn*: Csikszentmihalyi)

Daoism: Zhuangzi

1 Nov. Introduction to Zhuangzi (Chuang Tzu) (*RCCP*: 207-224)

6 Nov. Zhuangzi and skepticism (*RCCP*: 224-250)

8 Nov. Zhuangzi and relativism (*iLearn*: Ivanhoe, “Was Zhuangzi a Relativist?”)
(Review *Zhuangzi* chapter two in *RCCP*: 213-224)

13 Nov. Skill and imagination (*iLearn*: Yearley)
(Review *Zhuangzi* chapter three in *RCCP*: 224-226)

Confucianism: Xunzi (Hsün Tzu)

15 Nov. Introduction to Xunzi (Hsün Tzu) (*RCCP*: 255-286)

20 Nov. Thanksgiving Recess—no class

22 Nov. Thanksgiving Recess—no class

27 Nov. Xunzi on human nature (*RCCP*: 286-307, *VNA*: 237-250, Ivanhoe)

29 Nov. Xunzi on moral agency (*VNA*: 135-154, Wong)

4 Dec. Xunzi on moral agency, compared with Mengzi (*VNA*: 103-134, Van Norden)
(Review *Mengzi* 6A10 in *RCCP*: 150-151)

Legalism: Han Feizi (Han Fei-tzu)

- 6 Dec. Rule by power vs. rule by virtue (*RCCP*: 311-339)
(Optional on *iLearn*: Watson's introduction to Han Feizi)
- 11 Dec. Han Feizi's critique of Confucianism (*RCCP*: 339-359)
Hand out take-home final
- 13 Dec. Review for final exam
Response paragraph not required
- 18 Dec. **Final Exam due by 1:15 PM**