

## PHIL 2420 Chinese Metaphysics Spring 2008

Class time – TTH 10:40 - 11:30

Instructor – Professor Peimin Ni

Classroom – M122

Office – MB 305A

Office hours – TTH 12:30 - 2:00

E-mail – [peimin@hkucc.hku.hk](mailto:peimin@hkucc.hku.hk)

**Course Objectives:** First we will identify the philosophical topic and distinguish it (metaphysics or ontology) from religious and proto-scientific issues (cosmology and cosmogony). We will look briefly at the latter and focus on the distinctive ways Classical Chinese philosophers discussed reality and language. We will see if we can relate the distinct approaches Chinese thinkers take to these issues to differences between Classical Chinese and Indo-European languages, and see how metaphysics actually shape our modes of behavior, or ways of life.

**Readings:** The readings are listed in the course schedule. It is important that you read them before each respective class so that we may save more time for detailed discussion in class. You are encouraged to find extra relevant materials to read and to consult Chinese original sources for any of the texts being discussed and bring those into class discussion and analysis.

**Class style:** The class will combine lecture and brief debates among members of the class. We will assign a thesis-antithesis as a quiz questions over the weekend and call on volunteers to present an argument for the thesis and antithesis. Often these will be interpretive debates. This will motivate us to discuss the theory of interpretation near the beginning. Your informed participation in discussion will count toward your coursework grade. I will keep track of the number of times you volunteer--you must have at least once in the semester to pass. These brief discussions should help you with the take-home exercise and eventually help you choose and formulate your term paper.

**Tutorials:** We have been eliminating tutorials in favor of more discussion time. I may schedule some meetings for students to discuss the mid-term exercise and your final papers.

**Coursework:** 1. Class discussion. 2. A series of short argumentative papers and quizzes. 3. One-minute paper handed in at the end of each class. 4. A mid-term test, which will consist of term explanations and short essay questions. 5. The final will be a longer philosophical argument on a thesis of your own choosing and formulation drawn from the class discussions.

**Grading:** Each component of the coursework (discussion, short papers, mid-term, and final paper) will contribute 20% of the grade. Plagiarism on any component will mean a 0 for that component of the grade. On written work, the key requirement is that sentences or long clauses, turn of phrase, etc. taken from other sources (and key phrases, etc.) must be enclosed in quotation marks and the source noted (it need not be a full footnote.). On all writings exercises, answers that are excessively similar in wording or outline will be marked down severely for lack of originality. The questions and the course will be challenging but the grading will be generous and will approximate the distribution of grades in other philosophy courses.

## Chinese Metaphysics

### Lecture Schedule

(Subject to change in accordance with the actual progression of classes)

Date	Lecture Topic	Reading
15-Jan	Introduction: Mechanics and Distinctions	
17-Jan	I Ching and Yin Yang Cosmogony	262-270, 244-250, 318-321
22-Jan	I Ching and Yin Yang Cosmogony Chinese Medicine	
24-Jan	Lao Tzu	136-176, 321-325
29-Jan	Lao Tzu	
31-Jan	Chuang Tzu	177-210, 326-335
5-Feb	Chuang Tzu	
	[Spring Festival break]	
14-Feb	Huai-nan Tzu & Lieh Tzu	305-313
19-Feb	The Logicians	
21-Feb	Mencius & Hsun Tzu	49-83, 115-135
26-Feb	Mencius & Hsun Tzu	
28-Feb	Reading, Midterm exam	
	[Reading week]	
11-Mar	Zhongyong (The Doctrine of the Mean)	95-114
13-Mar	Tung Chung-shu	
18-Mar	Buddhist Middle Doctrine School	343-369
20-Mar	Buddhist Middle Doctrine School	
25-Mar	Buddhist Idealism. Consciousness-Only	370-395
27-Mar	Buddhist Tien-Tai Philosophy	
1-Apr	Buddhist Hua-Yen School	406-424
3-Apr	Neo-Confucian, Chou Tun-i	
8-Apr	Neo-Confucian, Chang Tsai	495-517
10-Apr	Neo-Confucian, Chu Hsi	
15-Apr	Neo-Confucian, Chu Hsi	
17-Apr	Neo-Confucian, Wang Yangming	654-691
22-Apr	Catch-up escape hatch	
24-Apr	Review and discuss Papers	