

Confucian and Buddhist Philosophy

Syllabus

(modified for Neo-Confucianism.com website)

Instructor: Justin Tiwald

Course structure: seminar, 15-20 students, 3-hour meetings once per week

Course Description:

When most people think of Chinese philosophy, they think of philosophers from the “classical period” in Chinese history, which ended in the 3rd Century B.C.E. and included foundational thinkers like Kongzi (Confucius) and Zhuangzi (Chuang Tzu). But these thinkers marked only the beginning of a rich and prolific philosophical tradition that continued for well over two millennia. Our goal in this course is to become literate in the longer arc of the history of Chinese philosophy by focusing on the rise of the most influential philosophical movement in its later days: Neo-Confucianism. The Neo-Confucians were philosophers who were influenced by Daoist and Buddhist ideas and attempted to integrate them into a Confucian moral framework. Some, such as Zhu Xi, were much more Confucian than Buddhist; others, such as Wang Yangming, overlapped more substantially with the Buddhists. Although the course aims to reconstruct the rise of Neo-Confucianism, we will nevertheless spend a few weeks studying its Buddhist and classical Confucian influences. Taking our cues from the Neo-Confucians, the principal philosophical themes will be moral cultivation and moral agency, although we will have opportunities to study the philosophers’ metaphysical and epistemological views as well.

Goals:

This course has two basic goals. First, as a graduate seminar in philosophy, it should perfect our ability to think in a clear and systematic way about difficult and fundamental problems. Second, as a course devoted to Chinese philosophy, it aims to make us at home in a tradition that was highly intelligible to its own participants but now, many centuries later, strikes most people as obscure. By the time that Neo-Confucianism found its footing, Chinese philosophy had become an extraordinarily and historically self-conscious enterprise, with the major philosophers regularly engaging and elaborating upon the views of their predecessors. All texts are available in translation, and the reading assignments are shortened to allow you the time to scrutinize them carefully. The required portion of each week’s reading will be 50 pages on average.

Required Texts:

Angle, Stephen C., and Justin Tiwald, *Neo-Confucianism: A Philosophical Introduction* (Polity, 2017). (Hereafter, *Neo-Confucianism*.)

Ivanhoe, Philip J. *Confucian Moral Self Cultivation*, 2nd edition (Hackett, 2000).

Kongzi (Confucius) 孔子, *Confucius Analects: with Selections from Traditional Commentaries*, trans. Edward Slingerland (Hackett, 2003). (Hereafter, *Analects*.)

Mengzi (Mencius) 孟子, *Mengzi: with Selections from Traditional Commentaries*, trans. Bryan Van Norden (Hackett, 2008). (Hereafter, *Mengzi*.)

Tiwald, Justin and Bryan W. Van Norden, *Readings in Later Chinese Philosophy: Han to the 20th Century* (Hackett, 2014). (Hereafter, *RLCP*.)

Other required readings available on the course webpage.

Class Schedule:

Week 1 Introduction, Confucianism's first founder: Kongzi (Confucius)

Readings:

- *Confucian Moral Self Cultivation*, "Kongzi"
- *Analects*:
 - 1.1 – 1.4
 - 2.1 – 2.8
 - 3.3 – 3.4
 - 4.1 – 4.6, 4.15 – 4.17
 - 5.12 – 5.13, 5.20 – 5.27
 - 6.20, 6.30
 - 7.1 – 7.8
 - 11.12
 - 12.1
 - 13.18
 - 14.24
 - 15.21, 15.24, 15.33
 - 17.2 – 17.3
 - 20.3

Week 2 Confucianism's second founder: Mengzi (Mencius)

- *Confucian Moral Self Cultivation*, "Mengzi"
- *Mengzi*:
 - 1A7
 - 2A2, 2A6
 - 3A1
 - 3B9
 - 4A10, 4A17, 4A26 – 4A27
 - 4B12, 4B14
 - 6A1 – 6A2, 6A6 – 6A15

7A1 – 7A4, 7A15, 7A17
7B31 – 7B35

- Week 3** Other early Confucian texts
- Online: *Xunzi*
 - Ch. 21, “Undoing Fixation”
 - Ch. 23, “Human Nature is Bad”
 - Online: “The Great Learning” and “The Mean”
 - *RLCP*, Ban Zhao, *Lessons for Women* (55-63)
- Week 4** Chinese Buddhism
- *RLCP*, Introduction to Part II (69-74)
 - *RLCP*, Fazang, “The Rafter Dialogue” (80-86)
 - *RLCP*, Fazang, “Essay on the Golden Lion” (86-91)
 - *RLCP*, Huineng, “Platform Sutra” (91-98)
 - *RLCP*, Zongmi, “On Humanity” (98-106)
 - *RLCP*, “Selected Kōans” (106-11)
- Week 5** The debate between Buddhists and Confucians
- Online: Tiwald, “The Neo-Confucian Critique of Buddhism”
 - *RLCP*, Huiyuan, “Why Buddhist Monks Do Not Bow Before Kings” (75-80)
 - Online: Zhu and Lü, *Reflections on Things at Hand* (selections on “heretical views”)
 - *RLCP*, Lu Xiangshan, “Letter to Wang Shunbo” (257-60)
 - *RLCP*, Han Yu, “A Memorandum on a Bone of the Buddha” (123-26)
 - *RLCP*, Han Yu, “On the Way” (126-30)
- Week 6** Overview of the major Neo-Confucian philosophers
- *Introduction*, chapter 1 (“Introduction”)
 - *Confucian Moral Self Cultivation*, chapters 4, 5, 7
 - *RLCP*, Zhu Xi, *Collected Commentaries on the Analects* (194-204)
 - *RLCP*, Zhu Xi, *Collected Commentaries on the Mengzi* (204-20)
- Week 7** Neo-Confucian Metaphysics and Cosmology
- *Introduction*, chapter 2 (“Pattern and Vital Stuff”)
 - *RLCP*, Zhou Dunyi, “Explanation of the Diagram of the Great Ultimate” (136-39)
 - *RLCP*, Zhu Xi, *Categorized Conversations*
 - o selections on metaphysics (168-77)
 - o selections on the Great Ultimate (a.k.a. Supreme Pivot) (181-83)
 - *RLCP*, Dai Zhen, *Evidential Commentary*, selections on Li (Pattern) (318-27)
- Week 8** (Human) nature
- *Introduction*, chapter 3 (“Nature”)

- *RLCP*, Cheng Hao, *Selected Sayings* (143-52)
- *RLCP*, Cheng Yi, *Selected Sayings* (158-67)
- *RLCP*, Dai Zhen, *Evidential Commentary*, selections on human nature (327-37)

Week 9 Moral psychology: heartmind and the emotions

- *Introduction*, chapter 4 (“Heartmind”)
- *Introduction*, chapter 5 (“Emotions”)
- *RLCP*, Wang Yangming, *A Record for Practice* (261-79)

Week 10 Knowledge and agency

- *Introduction*, chapter 6 (“Knowing”)
- *RLCP*, Zhu Xi, *Categorized Conversations*, selections on ethics, knowledge, action, etc. (177-81, 183-84)
- *RLCP*, Zhu Xi, *Collected Commentaries on the Great Learning* (184-94)
- *RLCP*, Wang Yangming, “Questions on the *Great Learning*” (238-50)

Week 11 Self Cultivation: mental discipline

- *Introduction*, chapter 7 (“Self Cultivation”)
- *RLCP*, Cheng Hao, “Letter on Calming the Nature” (142-43)
- Online: Zhu Xi, *Categorized Conversations*, selections on reading and reverential attention
- Online: Zhu Xi, “Letter to the Gentlemen from Hunan”

Week 12 Self Cultivation: family relationships, daily life

- *Introduction*, “Women and Virtue” section of chapter 8 (“Virtues,” 170-79)
- *RLCP*, Cheng Yi, “Biographies of My Parents” (290-92)
- *RLCP*, Zhu Xi, “The Way of the Family” (292-96)
- *RLCP*, Luo Rufang, “Essay on the Hall of Motherly Affection...” (297-99)
- *RLCP*, Li Zhi, “A Letter in Response to the Claim that Women Cannot Understand the Way...” (300-04)
- *RLCP*, Li Zhi, “On the Child-like Mind” (304-07)

Week 13 Virtues

- *Introduction*, the rest of chapter 8 (“Virtues,” 158-170)
- Online: Zhu and Lü, *Reflections on Things at Hand*, selections on sages and worthies
- *RLCP*, Cheng Hao, “Letter on Understanding Benevolence” (140-41)
- *RLCP*, Zhu Xi, *Collected Commentaries on the Mean* (220-30)
- Online: Tiwald, “The Confucian Virtues”
- Online: Tiwald, “Wholeheartedness”

Week 14 Governance

- *Introduction*, chapter 9 (“Governance”)
- Online: *Xunzi*, Ch. 12 (“The Way of the Ruler”)
- Online: Zhu and Lü, *Reflections on Things at Hand*, selections on

- governing the state
- *RLCP*, Huang Zongxi, “On Law” (315-18)

Week 15

- Conclusion: Confucianism in the 20th and 21st centuries
- *Introduction*, chapter 10 (“The Enduring Significance of Neo-Confucianism”)
- *RLCP*, Liu Shaoqi, “On the Ethical Cultivation of Communist Party Members” (370-73)
- *RLCP*, Mou Zongsan, “The Principles of Authority and Governance” (385-96)
- **Term Paper due**