**Undergraduate Seminar: Topics in Classical Chinese Philosophy**

**Syllabus: Fall 2021**

**Instructor:** Prof. Wenjin Liu

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**Time/Location:** TBD

**Office Hours:** TH 3-5pm, or by appointment

**Course Description**

There are perennial philosophical questions that people have been raising and trying to answer from the beginning of civilization. Such questions include, for example, what the fundamental matter of the universe consists of, what knowledge is, what a human being essentially is, and what makes one virtuous. Throughout the human history, ancient Chinese thinkers are among the first ones to ask and systematically examine these questions. This course offers an advanced survey of key topics, including virtue, knowledge, human nature in Classical Chinese Philosophy. We will read and discuss philosophical texts by leading thinkers in different philosophical schools, such as Confucius, Mencius, and Laozi.

**Course Objectives**

In this class, students will acquire a comprehensive grasp of classic texts that explore central themes in Classical Chinese Philosophy. In the spirit of these themes, students will cultivate the abilities required to read philosophical texts, to reconstruct and evaluate arguments, and to advance the philosophical conversation by developing critical responses of their own.

**Required Student Resources**

You are required to purchase or borrow the following books for this course.

Philip J. Ivanhoe and Bryan W. Van Norden, trans., *Readings in Classical Chinese   
 Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2005).

Edward G. Slingerland, trans., *Confucius: Analects, with Selections from*

*Traditional Commentaries* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2003).

Bryan W. Van Norden, *Introduction to Classical Chinese Philosophy* (Indianapolis:   
 Hackett Publishing, 2011).

Please be sure to get physical rather than electronic copies of these texts. Note that it is important that we use the same editions/translations (otherwise, we’ll have to spend a lot of time trying to coordinate references). Additional readings will be posted on this course’s Canvas site. You must print these readings out and bring them to class.

**Electronics Policy**

Laptops and tablets (provided the latter can function as a computer) are welcome and even encouraged in class so that we can better work together on activities and readings. Phones, however, are not permitted.  Learning how to resist our phones is a challenge. Everyone should silence and stow their phones for the duration of class. When you surreptitiously use your phone on your lap, flat on the desk, or furtively in your bag, both I and your classmates can see what you’re doing—it distracts all of us and will result in gentle (and, if necessary, repeatedly stern) admonishment. Failure to abide by this policy will lower your participation grade.

**Assignments**

The assignments for this course are designed with three principal objectives in mind. First, they will give you the chance to clarify your understanding of positions of the philosophical text, and to develop your own ideas. Second, they will provide the opportunity to work on key skills for philosophical writing. And third, they will help you hone your oral presentation skills.

The first component of the class assignments consists of weekly summaries of the readings. In this assignment, you are expected to reconstruct one of the main arguments from the readings that we will discuss in the coming weeks and to raise at least two preliminary challenges to the argument. You must post your weekly summary in the blog section of the course Canvas site by Sunday 11:59pm. Throughout the semester, you need to submit at least nine summaries. You are encouraged to read and comment on your classmates’ summaries. In this way, you can not only learn from one another and but also practice articulating your ideas.

The second component of the class assignments consists of two 1000-1500 words short paper. In those papers, you are expected to write a response to one of the prompts that I post on the course website one week before the deadline. These papers are due at 11:59pm on Monday, the day before our class.

The third component of the class assignments is a 3000-5000 word, final research paper. You must submit an outline of your research, along with bibliography, by 11:59pm on Nov. 8th and schedule a meeting with me in the week after. The final draft of your paper is due at 5pm on Dec. 16th

The fourth and final component of the class assignments is a 15-20-minute presentation to the class. These presentations should be accompanied by a handout, a draft of which must be submitted to me the day before the class meets, at 5pm on Monday.

**Course Grade Breakdown**

Weekly summaries --- 20% Final Paper --- 30% (outline 10%; final draft 20%)

Short papers --- 30 % Presentation --- 10 %

Participation --- 10%

**Late Policy**

Late days are intended to help you through an especially busy week, a cold, and other issues that may crop up during the semester. Each late day allows you to submit an assignment up to twenty-four hours later than the official deadline without penalty. During the semester, you have three free late days. You can use a late day, or multiple late days, *whenever you like*. You do not need to provide a reason, but you mustlet me know that this is what you intend to do. Once you have used up your late days, though, no lateness will be excused unless you are confronted with unusual physical, mental, or personal challenges and are able to submit a note that testifies to your situation from your doctor, counselor, or college advisor before the deadline. Unexcused late submission will be penalized 1/3 of a grade per day, including weekends.

**Collaboration and Academic Integrity**

Collaboration is an important component of philosophy. I encourage you to discuss your ideas with your classmates, your friends, your roommates, your professors, your family members, etc. That being said, you should cite all your sources carefully and make sure that the written works that you submit are your own. When one uses someone else’s words and ideas—whether it’s the work of a famous writer or a fellow student--without crediting the source or authorship of those words and ideas, one is plagiarizing. This course has a zero-tolerance policy for plagiarism---all violations will result in substantial grade penalties. If you have any doubts or questions about what constitutes academic misconduct, please do not hesitate to contact me.

**Accessibility Statement**

It is my goal to create an inclusive, accessible learning environment that meets the needs of all students. If you anticipate or experience any barriers to learning in this course, please feel welcome to discuss your concerns with me. If you have a disability, or think you may have a disability, you may also want to contact the Office of Disability Services ( <https://ods.princeton.edu> or 609-258-8840) for more information or an official accommodation.

**Code of Academic Conduct**

The honor code, or the Code of Academic Conduct, applies to all undergraduate students, full-time and part-time, at Princeton University. Princeton University expects and requires behavior compatible with its high standards of scholarship. By accepting admission to the university, a student accepts its regulations and acknowledges the right of the university to take disciplinary action, including suspension or expulsion, for conduct judged unsatisfactory or disruptive.

**What you can expect from me**

I will be available at least 2 hours per week for office hours, and I will return all substantive written assignments within a week after I receive them from you. While I will not read the whole drafts of your papers before you turn them in officially, I will be happy to read outlines and discuss philosophical ideas with you during my office hours.

**Schedule of Readings and Assignments**

**Classical Chinese Philosophy: An Introduction**

**2/9/2021 The Historical Context**

Bryan W. Van Norden, *Introduction to Classical Chinese Philosophy* [*ICCP*], ch.1.

Philip J. Ivanhoe and Bryan W. Van Norden, trans., *Readings in Classical Chinese   
 Philosophy*, 2nd ed. [*RCCP*], introduction.

**7/9/2021 Methodology**

*ICCP*, Appendixes A & B

**Confucianism**

**9/9/2021 An Introduction to Kongzi and Confucianism**

*ICCP*, ch. 2

Edward G. Slingerland, trans., *Confucius: Analects, with Selections from*

*Traditional Commentaries* [*Analects*], books 1-12.

**14/9/2021 Five Themes of Confucianism**

*Analects*, books 13-20.

**16/9/2021 Confucius on Virtue and Living Well**

*ICCP*, ch. 3 & Appendix C.

**21/9/2021 Confucius on Ethical Cultivation**

Jeffrey L. Richey, ‘Master and Disciple in the Analects’, in David Jones, ed.,   
 *Confucius Now: Contemporary Encounters with the* Analects.

**23/9/2021 Mengzi and the Revival of Confucianism**

*RCCP*, ch. 3.

*27/9/2021 First short paper due at 11:59pm*

**28/9/2021 Mengzi on Virtues and Ethical Cultivation**

*ICCP*, ch. 6.

*David S. Nivision, The Ways of Confucianism*, ch. 2-4.

**30/9/2021 Xunzi vs. Mengzi on Human Nature and the Origin of Morality**

*RCCP*, ch. 6.

**5/10/2021 Xunzi’s Confucian Naturalism**

ICCP, ch. 10.

Eric L. Hutton, ‘Does Xunzi Have a Consistent Theory of Human Nature?’ *Virtue,   
 Nature, and Moral Agency in the*Xunzi, T.C. Kline III and Philip J. Ivanhoe   
 (eds), Indianapolis, IN and Cambridge, MA: Hackett (2000), 220–36.

**Daoism**

**7/10/2021 An Introduction to Daoism**

Wang Bi*,* ‘Outline Introduction to the *Laozi*’, in Richard John Lynn (trans)., *The   
 Classic of the Way and Virtue.*

**14/10/2021 Laozi on ‘the Way’**

*RCCP*, ch. 4.

**19/10/2021 Laozi’s Mythism**

*ICCP*, ch. 8

Livia Kohn, ‘The Lao-tzu Myth’ in *Lao-tzu and the Tao-te-ching*, edited by Livia   
 Kohn and Michael LaFargue, Albany: State University of New York Press,

41–62.

**21/10/2021 Zhuangzi’s Skepticism and Relativism**

*RCCP*, ch. 5

*25/10/2021 Second short paper due at 11:59 pm*

**26/10/2021 Nonaction**

*ICCP*, ch. 9

Alan Fox, ‘Reflex and Reflectivity: Wuwei in the Zhuangzi’, *Asian Philosophy*.   
 (1996) 6, 59–72.

**Mohism**

**28/10/2021 Mozi and Consequentialism**

*RCCP*, ch. 2

*ICCP*, ch. 4

**3/11/2021 Care**

Dan Robins, ‘Mohist Care’, *Philosophy East and West*, 62(1): 60–91.

**Yang Zhu and Egoism**

**4/11/2021 Yang Zhu on Nature**

*RCCP*, supplementary texts ‘Yangism “Robber Zhi”’

*8/11/2021 Outline of the final paper due at 11:59 pm*

**9/11/2021 Egoism**

*ICCP*, ch. 5

**Language and Gender in Classical Chinese Philosophy**

**11/11/2021 The Chinese Language and Philosophy**

*ICCP*, Appendix B.

*RCCP*, supplementary texts ‘on the White Horses’

**16/11/2021 Language and Paradox in the ‘School of Names’**

*ICCP,* ch. 7

**18/11/2021 Women and Gender in Chinese Thought**

Robin Wang (ed.), *Images of Women in Chinese Thought and Culture* (Indianapolis:   
 Hackett Publishing).

Sections: Oracle Bone Inscriptions on Women, Selections from the *Odes*, Baosi   
 and King You of Zhou, Gongfu Wenbo's Mother

**Legalism and Han Feizi**

**23/11/2021 Han Feizi’s Critique of Confucianism**

*RCCP*, ch. 7

**30/11/2021 Han Feizi’s Theory of Government and the Question of Amoralism**

*ICCP*, ch. 11

Paul Goldin, ‘Persistent Misconceptions about Chinese “Legalism”’ *Journal of   
 Chinese* Philosophy, (2011) 38, 64–80.

**Later Developments**

**2/12/2021 Later Chinese Thought**

*ICCP*, ch. 12

*16/12/2021 Final paper due at 5pm*