

PHIL 301: Classical Chinese Philosophy

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Class time: MWF 2:30-3:50pm
Class location: SAV 166
Office hours: Th 3:00-5:00

1. Course description

In this course, we will survey the major works of classical Chinese philosophy (c. 600-200 BCE). We will focus on seven major philosophers (and their followers): Kongzi (Confucius), Mozi, Mengzi (Mencius), Zhuangzi, Laozi, Xunzi, and Han Feizi. We will use their work to consider such topics as: the nature and value of morality, the proper role of ritual in human life, whether human nature is good or bad, how one becomes a moral person, the proper role and function of government, and more. In addition to introducing students to classical Chinese thought, the course will help students develop basic philosophical skills as they develop and defend their own views on these topics. There are no prerequisites for this course, and no knowledge of Chinese is expected.

2. Required course texts

- Ivanhoe and Van Norden (eds.), *Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy*, 2nd ed., Hackett Publishing (\$35, <https://www.hackettpublishing.com/readings-in-classical-chinese-philosophy>)

This is the only required course text. It will be available through the bookstore. If you get your copies from some other source, make sure to get the **second** edition.

3. Further reading

If you wish to read further, I recommend the following secondary texts:

- A.C. Graham (1989), *Disputers of the Tao* (Open Court)
- Tao Jiang (2021), *Origins of Moral-Political Philosophy in Early China* (Oxford UP)

And the following translations of primary texts:

- Kongzi: [Slingerland](#) (Hackett, contains commentaries)
- Mozi: [Johnston](#) (Penguin)
- Mengzi: [Van Norden](#) (Hackett, contains commentaries)
- Laozi: [Ivanhoe](#) (Hackett, philosophical); [Addiss & Lombardo](#) (Hackett, poetic)
- Zhuangzi: [Ziporyn](#) (Hackett, selected w/ commentaries); [Ziporyn](#) (Hackett, complete)
- Xunzi: [Hutton](#) (Princeton University Press)
- Han Feizi: [Watson](#) (Columbia University Press)

Original Chinese texts can be found at <https://ctext.org/>

4. Grading system

Each assignment for this course will be worth a set number of points. The sum total of possible points will be 100. The total number of points you receive will be converted to a grade between 0 and 4.0 according to the following scale:

A-range:	4.0: 95+	3.5: 90
B-range:	3.0: 85	2.5: 80
C-range:	2.0: 75	1.5: 70
D-range:	1.0: 65	0.7: 60-62

Basically, for each point you gain (above 62), your final course grade will go up by 0.1 points (starting from 0.7). You must gain at least 60 points total to pass the class.

5. Assignment breakdown

Discussion questions (8 points). Nine class periods will be devoted to discussion; discussion will begin from randomly selected, student-provided questions on the week's topic. Mostly graded for completion. Due before the start of class.

Short papers (60 points; 5x12 points each). These assignments will ask you to clearly present and evaluate an argument we have discussed. You must complete FIVE total, as follows:

- **Short paper 1:** required
- **Short papers 2-4:** complete two of three
- **Short papers 5-6:** both required

Final paper (25 points). The final paper will ask you to evaluate the thought of a classical Chinese philosopher in a contemporary context: what relevance do they have for life today? Possible topics include: the value of ritual, whether human nature is good or bad, whether morality is natural or imposed, &c. Length: 2100-2400 words (≈7-8 pages).

Final paper outline (7 points). On December 07, you will turn in a final paper outline, to be used for an in-class peer-review assignment. 4 points for completion, 3 points for attending the peer review session.

6. Further grading-related policies

Disability and accommodation policy. It is my intention that this course be made accessible to all students. This means, minimally, that I will grant any accommodations required by the Disability Resources Center. However, some of you may need accommodations not formally certified by that office. If any aspect of the class poses a hardship for you, please talk to me, and we can work together to develop a plan for you to fulfill the course requirements.

Extension policy. I grant all extension requests, no questions asked. If you need one, just ask. There are no late penalties in this course. I would like to read and evaluate your best work, not work rushed to meet a semi-arbitrary deadline.

7. Reading schedule

Date	Topic	Required Readings <i>due on date listed</i>	Assignments <i>due on date listed</i>
<i>Unit 1: The Major Schools – Confucianism, Mohism, Daoism</i>			
Week 1 Sep 28	Introduction Reading ancient texts Cultural background	<i>No reading</i>	<i>No assignments</i>
Week 1 Sep 30		Xunzi, ch. 1	<i>No assignments</i>
Week 2 Oct 03	Kongzi	Kongzi books 1-10	<i>No assignments</i>
Week 2 Oct 05		Kongzi books 11-20	<i>No assignments</i>
Week 2 Oct 07		<i>No reading</i>	Discussion Question
Week 3 Oct 10	Two critiques of Confucianism: Mozi and Yang Zhu & Mengzi's response	Mozi chs. 16, 26 Yangism, "Robber Zhi"	Short paper #1
Week 3 Oct 12		Mengzi 1A1, 3A4, 3A5, 3B9, 4A10, 4A11, 4B12, 4B19, 4B28, 7A1, 7A3, 7A15, 7A26, 7A39	<i>No assignments</i>
Week 3 Oct 14		<i>No reading</i>	Discussion Question
Week 4 Oct 17	Daoism: Laozi	Laozi book one	Short paper #2 (must do 2 of SP2-4)
Week 4 Oct 19		Laozi book two	<i>No assignments</i>
Week 4 Oct 21		<i>No reading</i>	Discussion Question
Week 5 Oct 24	Daoism: Zhuangzi	Zhuangzi ch. 1	Short paper #3 (must do 2 of SP2-4)
Week 5 Oct 26		Zhuangzi ch. 2	<i>No assignments</i>
Week 5 Oct 28		<i>No reading</i>	Discussion Question

Date	Topic	Required Readings <i>due on date listed</i>	Assignments <i>due on date listed</i>
<i>Unit 2: Issues in Classical Chinese Philosophy; or, Xunzi versus the World</i>			
Week 6 Oct 31	Human nature	Mengzi 1A7, 2A6 Book 6 (complete)	Short paper #4 (must do 2 of SP2-4)
Week 6 Nov 02		Xunzi chs. 5, 23	<i>No assignments</i>
Week 6 Nov 04		Zhuangzi chs. 5-6	<i>No assignments</i>
Week 7 Nov 07	Discussion	<i>No reading</i>	Discussion Question
Week 7 Nov 09	NO CLASS - INSTRUCTOR OUT OF TOWN		Short paper #5 (must do 2 of SP5-7)
Week 7 Nov 11	NO CLASS - VETERAN'S DAY		
Week 8 Nov 14	Heaven and Earth	Mozi chs. 26, 31 Laozi chs. 5, 25 Xunzi ch. 17	Discussion Question
Week 8 Nov 16	Music	Mozi ch. 32 Xunzi chs. 19-20	Discussion Question
Week 8 Nov 18	Language	Gongsun Longzi "On the White Horse"	<i>No assignments</i>
Week 9 Nov 21		Zhuangzi pp. 217-20 Xunzi, ch. 22	Short paper #6 (must do 2 of SP5-7) (due Tues, Nov 22)
Week 9 Nov 23	NO CLASS - THANKSGIVING		
Week 9 Nov 25			
Week 10 Nov 28	Legalism	Han Feizi, chs. 49-50	<i>No assignments</i>
Week 10 Nov 30		Laozi chs. 17, 19, 22, 58, 61, 75, 80 Han Feizi chs. 5-7	<i>No assignments</i>
Week 10 Dec 02		Han Feizi chs. 8, 43	<i>No assignments</i>

Date	Topic	Required Readings <i>due on date listed</i>	Assignments <i>due on date listed</i>
Week 11 Dec 05	Legalism	<i>Discussion</i>	Discussion Question Short paper #7 (must do 2 of SP5-7)
Week 11 Dec 07	Final paper discussion peer review	<i>No reading</i>	Paper outline
Week 11 Dec 09	Final wrap-up	<i>No reading</i>	<i>No assignments</i>
Week 12 EXAMS	NO FINAL EXAM		FINAL PAPER DUE WED, DEC 14

8. Further course policies

Course etiquette. Philosophy is a social endeavor, and much of our class time will be devoted to discussion. You are encouraged to disagree with each other, but must do so respectfully. We will collectively determine a set of classroom discussion norms early in the term.

Group work. Group work is permitted for all assignments in this course, so long as *the final product you turn in is your own work*. In other words, you may discuss assignments with your peers, you may compare your work and give each other feedback, and so forth. However, you must write up the final assignment yourself; failure to do so is one form of plagiarism.

Plagiarism. You are expected to turn in work reflective of your own effort. I encourage you to discuss assignments with other students, but what you turn in must ultimately be your own work. You must also cite any sources that inform your work. We will talk more about expectations for this in class, and I will work with students to correct minor violations. Major violations (such as purchasing essays online) will be reported to the school's university office.

Religious accommodation. Students are entitled to reasonable accommodation for religious holidays. Accommodation requests must be made through the Office of the University Registrar Religious Accommodations [request process](#) within the *first two weeks* of the term.

UW face covering policy. As of September 9, UW mask policy is that masks are *optional, but strongly recommended* for the first two weeks of term (09/28 to 10/11), then *optional, but recommended* thereafter. You can read the full policy [here](#).