

PHIL 301: Classical Chinese Philosophy

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Pronouns: she/her

Class time: MW 2:30-4:20
Class location: SAV 132
Office hours: Th 1:00-3:00

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. Course texts

- [REQUIRED] Ivanhoe and Van Norden (eds.), *Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy*, 2nd ed., Hackett Publishing (\$35, <https://www.hackettpublishing.com/readings-in-classical-chinese-philosophy>) (abbreviated as *RCCP* in the reading schedule)
- [OPTIONAL] Van Norden, *Introduction to Classical Chinese Philosophy*, Hackett Publishing (\$20, <https://www.hackettpublishing.com/introduction-to-classical-chinese-philosophy>) (abbreviated as *ICCP* in the reading schedule)

Both texts will be available through the bookstore. If you get your copies from some other source, make sure to get the **second** edition of the Ivanhoe and Van Norden volume. Any additional readings will be made available through the course Canvas page.

3. Recommended translations

If you are interested in exploring any of the authors we read further, I recommend the following translations:

- 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)

For most of what we'll read, the 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

Short papers (66 points). Each week (weeks 2-9), there will be a short paper assignment, asking you to evaluate a position and argument discussed that week (topics and guidelines will be provided). These short papers will demonstrate both (a) your understanding of the authors' central views and (b) your ability to evaluate those views for yourself. The point value of these assignments will increase over the course of the term. These will be due on *Fridays*. You will be required to complete FIVE total of these papers, as follows:

- **Short papers 1-3 (11 points each):** complete TWO
- **Short papers 4-6 (14 points each):** complete TWO
- **Short papers 7-8 (16 points each):** complete ONE

Final paper (27 points). Instead of a final exam, you will write a single long (\approx 2000 words) paper. In these papers, you will draw on the work of the philosophers we have read to defending your own position on one of the topics they discussed. Possible topics will include: the value of ritual, whether human nature is good or bad, whether morality is natural or imposed, and others.

Final paper outline (7 points). On June 1, you will turn in a final paper outline. Detailed instructions will be provided; the assignment will be graded for completion.

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. I only request that you let me know *before* the assignment is due. There are no late penalties in this course.

7. Reading Schedule

Date	Topic	Required Readings <i>due on date listed from RCCP unless marked [E]</i>	Assignments <i>due on Fridays</i>
Week 1 March 28	Introduction Reading ancient texts Cultural background	<i>No reading</i>	<i>No assignments</i>
Week 1 March 30		[E] ICCP, ch. 1, appendix A	<i>No assignments</i>
<i>Unit 1: Confucianism, Mohism, Daoism</i>			
Week 2 April 04	Kongzi	Kongzi books 1-10	<i>No assignments</i>
Week 2 April 06		Kongzi books 11-20	Short paper #1 (must do 2 of first 3)
Week 3 April 11	Two critiques of Confucianism: Mozi and Yang Zhu & Mengzi's response	Mozi, chs. 16, 20, 25, 26, 32 Mengzi, books 3-5	<i>No assignments</i>
Week 3 April 13		Mozi, chs. 8, 11, 17, 31 <i>Yangism</i> , Robber Zhi Mengzi, book 7	Short paper #2 (must do 2 of first 3)
Week 4 April 18	Daoism: Laozi	Laozi book one	<i>No assignments</i>
Week 4 April 20		Laozi book two	Short paper #3 (must do 2 of first 3)
Week 5 April 25	Daoism: Zhuangzi	Zhuangzi chs. 1-2	<i>No assignments</i>
Week 5 April 27		Zhuangzi chs. 3-7	Short paper #4 (must do 2 of second 3)

Date	Topic	Required Readings <i>due on date listed from RCCP unless marked [E]</i>	Assignments <i>due on Fridays</i>
<i>Unit 2: Issues in Classical Chinese Philosophy</i>			
Week 6 May 02	Human nature	Mengzi, books 1-2, book 6 Zhuangzi, pp. 221-22 [E] Ivanhoe, "Mengzi"	<i>No assignments</i>
Week 6 May 04		Mozi, ch. 16 Xunzi, ch. 23 [E] Ivanhoe, "Xunzi"	Short paper #5 (must do 2 of second 3)
Week 7 May 09	Heaven and earth	Mozi, chs. 26, 31 (pp. 90-104) Xunzi ch. 5, 17	<i>No assignments</i>
Week 7 May 11		Zhuangzi, chs. 12-32 (pp. 243-50) Laozi, chs. 1-7, 25-27, 32-37	Short paper #6 (must do 2 of second 3)
Week 8 May 16	Music	Mozi, ch. 32 Xunzi, chs. 19-20	<i>No assignments</i>
Week 8 May 18	Language	Gongsun Long, "White Horse" Zhuangzi, ch. 2 Xunzi, ch. 22	Short paper #7 (must do 1 of last 2)
<i>Unit 3: Legalism</i>			
Week 9 May 23	Legalism	Laozi, chs. 60-70 Han Feizi, pp. 315-35	<i>No assignments</i>
Week 9 May 25		Han Feizi, pp. 335-59	Short paper #8 (must do 1 of last 2)
Week 10 May 30	NO CLASS - UNIVERSITY HOLIDAY		
Week 10 June 01	Final wrap-up Paper discussion	<i>No reading</i>	Paper outline
Week 11 EXAMS	<i>NO FINAL EXAM</i>		FINAL PAPER DUE WED, JUNE 08

8. Further course policies

In-class etiquette. Philosophy is a social endeavor. People engaged in philosophy do not simply think in solitude, but rather engage in discussion with others. That will be true in this class as well: you will be encouraged to discuss the topics we cover with your fellow students. You are even encouraged to disagree with them. It is therefore imperative that you understand how to do so respectfully. We will discuss this early on in the semester and collectively agree on standards for discussion to which we will hold ourselves. Here are some ground rules:

- Think of those with whom you disagree not as opponents but as fellow seekers of the truth. Even if you disagree, you are *collaborating*.
- Acknowledge the person you are responding to, by name if possible.
- Address your comments to the arguments that have been offered. Never attack the intelligence or character of the person who argued for them.
- On some issues, you may have strongly held opinions. That is ok, but it is important to recognize that people who disagree with you are doing so in *good faith*. Before getting angry with or dismissive of another person, try to understand why they think the way they do.

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. In this course, 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 March 28, the UW mask policy is that masks are optional indoors, but strongly recommended for the first two weeks of term (due to the large number of people returning from travel). We will follow this policy as a class: *you are strongly encouraged to wear your mask for the first two weeks of the term*. You can read the full policy here: <https://www.ehs.washington.edu/covid-19-prevention-and-response/face-covering-requirements>