

## PHIL 324: CLASSICAL CHINESE PHILOSOPHY

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**Pronouns:** she/her

**Class time:** MWF 1:00-2:20pm  
**Class location:** SAV 156  
**Office hours:** WF 2:25-3:25pm

### 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*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., [Hackett](#) (\$36)

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 **third** edition. All other required texts will be uploaded to Canvas.

### 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 is worth a set number of points. The total possible points is 100. This is converted to a grade between 0 and 4.0 according to the following scale:

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

#### 5. Assignment breakdown

**Discussion (5 points).** Philosophy cannot be learned in isolation; participating in discussion is essential. It will therefore contribute a small portion of your grade. So long as you are *mostly* showing up to class and contributing to small group discussions you will receive full credit.

**Discussion prep (12 points; 4 x 3 points each).** Six class periods are designated as discussion days. For each of them, I will give you a preparatory assignment to complete and bring to class. Generally, these assignments will relate to the upcoming short paper, and the discussion sections will be used, in part, to help workshop those assignments. Attendance is *required* for full credit.

**Short papers (45 points; 4 x variable).** These four papers will have specific instructions. They will scale up in complexity and point value as we go, preparing you to write your final paper. Their specific point values will be 5 points (SP1), 10 points (SP2), and 15 points (SP3 & SP4).

**Final paper (30 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 ( $\approx$ 7-8 pages).

**Final paper prep (8 points; 3 x variable).** As you work on your final paper, you will need to complete various preparatory assignments: a meeting with the instructor to discuss your paper (3 points), a topic proposal (2 points), and a paper outline (3 points). The outline will be used for an in-class workshop; attendance is *required* for full credit.

#### 6. Further grading-related policies

**Disability and accommodation policy.** I intend this course to be accessible to all students. This means, minimally, that I grant all accommodations required by the Disability Resources Center. However, some students need accommodations not formally certified by that office. If any aspect of the class poses a hardship, please talk to me, and we can work together to develop an individualized 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

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Required Readings</b> <i>due on date listed</i>	<b>Assignments</b> <i>due on date listed</i>
Week 1 Mar 25	Introduction: reading ancient texts & cultural background	<i>No reading</i>	<i>No assignments</i>
Week 1 Mar 27		Xunzi, ch. 1 <i>Great Learning &amp; Mean</i>	<i>No assignments</i>
Week 1 Mar 29	Kongzi (Confucius): the first philosopher	Kongzi, books 1-10	<i>No assignments</i>
Week 2 Apr 01		Kongzi, books 11-20	<i>No assignments</i>
Week 2 Apr 03		<i>No reading</i>	<b>Discussion prep</b>
Week 2 Apr 05	Two critiques of Confucianism: Mozi & Yang Zhu & Mengzi's response	Mozi, chs. 16, 39	<b>Short paper #1</b> (Sunday)
Week 3 Apr 08		Yangist writings "Horses Hooves" (canvas)	<i>No assignments</i>
Week 3 Apr 10		Mengzi 1A1, 3A4, 3A5, 3B9, 4A10, 4A11, 4B12, 4B19, 4B28, 7A1, 7A3, 7A15, 7A26, 7A39	<i>No assignments</i>
Week 3 Apr 12		<b>NO CLASS – INSTRUCTOR OUT OF TOWN</b>	
Week 4 Apr 15	Laozi & the <i>Daodejing</i>	Laozi book one	<i>No assignments</i>
Week 4 Apr 17		Laozi book two	<i>No assignments</i>
Week 4 Apr 19		<i>No reading</i>	<b>Discussion prep</b> <b>Short paper #2</b> (Sunday)
Week 5 Apr 22	Human nature & self-cultivation	Mengzi 1A7, 2A6 Book 6 (complete)	<i>No assignments</i>
Week 5 Apr 24	I. The intra-Ru dispute	Xunzi chs. 5, 23	<i>No assignments</i>

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Required Readings</b> <i>due on date listed</i>	<b>Assignments</b> <i>due on date listed</i>
Week 5 Apr 26	Human nature & self-cultivation  II. Against the Ru (& Xunzi's defense)	Zhuangzi chs. 1, 3, 5, 6	<i>No assignments</i>
Week 6 Apr 29		Mozi chs. 20, 25, 32 Hanfeizi chs. 7, 27	<i>No assignments</i>
Week 6 May 01		Xunzi chs. 2, 19-20	<i>No assignments</i>
Week 6 May 03		<i>No readings</i>	<b>Discussion prep</b> <b>Short paper #3</b> (Sunday)
Week 7 May 06	Language & Logic	Mohist canons (Canvas) The School of Names	<i>No assignments</i>
Week 7 May 08		Zhuangzi, ch. 2	<i>No assignments</i>
Week 7 May 10		Xunzi, ch. 22	<i>No assignments</i>
Week 8 May 13	Heaven & Earth	Mozi chs. 26, 31	<i>No assignments</i>
Week 8 May 15		Laozi chs. 5, 25 Xunzi ch. 17	<i>No assignments</i>
Week 8 May 17		<i>No readings</i>	<b>Discussion prep</b> <b>Short paper #4</b> (Sunday)
Week 9 May 20	The state	Mozi, chs. 8, 11, 17	<b>Final paper:</b> <b>meeting with Rose</b> (during the week)
Week 9 May 22		Laozi chs. 17, 19, 22, 58, 61, 75, 80 "Rifling Trunks" (Canvas) Han Feizi, chs. 5, 6, 29	
Week 9 May 24		Shen Dao Han Feizi, chs. 40, 43, 49-50	<b>Final paper:</b> <b>topic proposal</b> (Sunday)
Week 10 May 27	<b><i>NO CLASS – MEMORIAL DAY</i></b>		
Week 10 May 29	Ending reflections	<i>No readings</i>	<b>Complete course</b> <b>evaluation</b> (in class)

Date	Topic	Required Readings <i>due on date listed</i>	Assignments <i>due on date listed</i>
Week 10 May 31	Final papers	<i>No readings</i>	<b>Final paper: outline</b> (bring to class)
Week 11 EXAMS	<i>NO FINAL EXAM</i>		<b>FINAL PAPER DUE</b> <b>WED, JUN 5</b>

## 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.

**ChatGPT (&c).** In the first week of class, we will discuss the ways in which ChatGPT (and related services) might legitimately and illegitimately be used in the course, and we will jointly develop a set of rules about how it will be

**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.