Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism: Intellectual History of China
Fall 2014

[Class location & meeting time]

Instructor: Macabe Keliher
Office Hours:
Office:
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Course website:

Course description
This course explores the inception and development of three major philosophical and religious traditions in China: Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism. The foreground theme of the course is how the major religious programs and systems of thought arose and developed in China to inform an entire society and ways of life. The background theme pries into the most fundamental questions of human existence: who we are, how we should live our lives, how society should be organized, and our relationship with the natural and metaphysical worlds.

The course will begin with a discussion of the flaws of human existence, which all philosophical and religious traditions responded to, and with which we must still grapple today. It will then look at the earliest metaphysical responses to the place of humans in the universe in ancient China in the Shang and Zhou dynasties (ca. 1600-771 BCE) in the form of naturalism, or worshiping nature and deities of the natural world, before exploring the religious revolutions that began around 500 BCE. Confucianism and Daoism were the two major philosophical and religious programs that arose out of these revolutions, each of which offered a vision of human existence to address our flaws and a program by which to live by. We will explore the key thinkers and concepts of each of these religions in depth and look at how they developed over time. The course will then look at the challenge to these traditions with the arrival of Buddhism and its spread and adaptation in China from around 100 CE. After exploring how Confucianism responded to this challenge by remaking its program, the course will conclude with a challenge to ourselves: that we must also choose a way of life and system of thought.

Course instruction will take the form of lectures and discussions. Readings will be drawn from a selection of primary and secondary materials, with an emphasis on the primary sources in English translation. The course will focus on reading and discussing primary sources of the given religious traditions in attempt to understand the program of each. Secondary readings and lectures will provide historical background and guidance to the primary readings.

Course Aims and Objectives
By the end of this course students will have an understanding of the systems of thought and practice of the three major philosophical and religious traditions of China—Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism. They will be able to articulate the basic tenants behind each religion and its program for social life, and will gain a familiarity with the major thinkers and the development of each tradition, as well as the basic historical conditions that influenced these traditions. Students will also be encouraged to develop a position of their own in response to the flaws of human existence and a program by which to live.

Course Materials
Assignments and Grading Procedures
During the semester students will write on brief paper in response to a major problem or idea discussed in the course up to that time. It should be 5-8 double-spaced pages and will each count for 25% of the final grade. In lieu of a final examination, all students will write an extended take-home examination. This final paper will provide you with an occasion to respond to a central aspect of the argument of the course. It should have a minimum of 10 and a maximum of 15 double-spaced pages. The topics will be described in class. It will count for 40% of the final grade. The remaining 35% of the final grade will be attributed to class participation.

Academic Integrity
The instructor supports the Clark code of academic integrity. It states, “Academic integrity is highly valued at Clark. Research, scholarship and teaching are possible only in an environment characterized by honesty and mutual trust. Academic integrity requires that your work be your own.” For the full policy see: https://web.clarku.edu/policies/detailpolicy.cfm?pid=43

Guidance Concerning Collaboration In Papers
Ideas are not born in a vacuum, and inspiration often arrives through interpersonal exchange. For this reason, discussion prior to the preparation of the writing assignments required of the course is allowed and encouraged. Each paper, however, should be written independently without assistance or direct input from others—with the submission of your papers, you should be able to say in good faith that it is solely the product of your own efforts and sprung from your own mind.
Course Schedule

INTRODUCTION: RELIGION AND THE FLAWS OF HUMAN EXISTENCE
Aug 26: Course introduction: major orientations to life in religion and world philosophy
Aug 28: Religion and the flaws of human existence
  Reading: Unger, ch. 1

I. NATURALISM AND THE AXIAL AGE
Sept 2: Naturalism in the Shang and Zhou
  Reading: de Barry, 6-18, 29-37
  Recommended: George Santayana, Three Philosophical Poets: Lucretius, Dante, and Goethe
  (Harvard, 1910), ch. 1 (available on Google Books)
Sept 4: The Axial Age
  Reading: Unger, appendix: “A note on the three orientations and the idea of the Axial Age”
  Karl Jaspers, The Origin and Goal of History (Routledge, 1953), 1-21

II. CONFUCIANISM
Sept 9, 11: Confucius and the Analects
  Reading: de Barry, 45-63
  Fingarette, Confucius
  Unger, ch. 3
Sept 16, 18: Mencius
  Reading: de Barry, 116-158
Sept 23, 25: Xunzi
  Reading: de Barry, 161-183
Sept 30: Dong Zhongshu
  Reading: de Barry, 295-310
Oct 2: “The Great Learning” and “The Mean”
  Reading: de Barry, 330-339

III. DAOISM
Oct 7, 9: Laozi
  Reading: de Barry, 79-94
  Moeller, Daoism Explained, 1-43
  Recommended: Moeller, Daoism Explained, pt. II: Issues
Oct 14: Fall break: no classes
Oct 16: Zhuangzi
  Reading: de Barry, 96-111
  Moeller, Daoism Explained, 43-67
Oct 21, 23: Legalism: Lord Shang and Han Feizi
  Reading: de Barry, 193-198, 199-206, 206-212
  Moeller, Daoism Explained, 67-73
Oct 27: Mid-term paper due

Oct 28: Daoism (cont.)
   Reading: continued from above

IV. BUDDHISM

Oct 30: Buddhism in China
   Reading: Keown, Buddhism
           Unger, ch. 2

Nov 4, 6: Buddhism in China (cont.)
   Reading: de Barry, 421-432
           Wright, Buddhism in Chinese History, 21-65

Nov 11: Buddhism: Lotus and in the Tang
   Reading: de Barry, 433-36, 444-471, 476-480
           Wright, ch. 4

Nov 13: Buddhism: Pure Land, Chan, and Guanyin
   Reading: de Barry, 481-491, 491-514, 531-536

V. NEO-CONFUCIANISM

Nov 18: Han Yu and Ouyang Xiu
   Reading: de Barry, “Liu Zongyuan: Essay on enfeoffment,” 559-564
            “Han Yu: Essentials of the moral way,” 568-573
            “Han Yu: Memorial on the bone of the Buddha,” 583-585
            “Ouyang Xiu: Essay on fundamentals,” 590-595
            “Ouyang Xiu: On parties,” 595-596

Nov 20: Cheng Yi and Cheng Hao
   Reading: de Barry, “Cheng Yi: Memorial,” 598-600
            “Zhang Zai: Enfeoffment system,” 605-606
            “The Cheng brothers,” 689-697

Nov 25: Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming
   Reading: de Barry, “Synthesis,” 697-714
            de Barry, “Zhu Xi’s Neo-Confucian program,” 720-754
            “Wang Yangming’s new learning,” 842-855

Nov 27: Thanksgiving break

CONCLUSIONS

Dec 2: A third orientation: religions of salvation
   Reading: Unger, ch. 4
            Recommended: Erich Auerbach, Dante: Poet of the Secular World, ch. 1

Dec 4: How to choose? You must decide.
   Reading: Plato, The Republic, Book X, 614-621 (the story of Er)

Dec 15: Final papers due
Course Policies and Expectations

ATTENDANCE
Students are expected to attend all classes and prepare all assigned readings in advance of the scheduled class. It is particularly important that students arrive on time, as in-class assignments will be issued at the very beginning of class.

EXPECTATIONS
Come to class inspired to debate, ask questions, and engage, but do so in turn and to the point. Bring the week’s readings and refer to them in discussion. Raise questions, concerns, contradictions, new ideas, and generally contribute to and participate in class discussion.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES
Laptops are permitted for the taking of notes only. Please do not distract yourself and others by checking email or opening your gchat or other social media. No other electronic devices are to be used during class. Students found abusing this policy will be asked to leave for the remainder of the class session and forfeit their participation grade for that day.

GRADING
1. Your participation grade will be determined based on your weekly attendance and participation. If you attend each class and are prepared, thoughtful, and engaged you will receive maximum points. If you miss a class your grade will be impacted.
2. In-class assignments are designed to be simple exercises based on the assigned reading. They are graded pass-fail. If you have done the reading, these assignments will pose no problem.
3. Writing assignments are graded on originality, argument, and clarity. (More on this when paper topics assigned.)
4. Total course grade is based on participation and quizzes, term papers, and the final exam.

MAKE-UPS
Make-ups for missed classes and in-class assignments will be permitted only for documented medical emergencies, religious observances, or participation in university events (e.g. varsity sports). Any such excuse requires prior notification by the student to the instructor; medical excuses must be supported by a doctor’s note.

RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS
Students may be excused from class for observed religious holidays. The student must notify the instructor of the holiday observed by email by the second week of the class.

LATE WORK
All assignments are due by the date and time stated on the syllabus. Papers turned in after the due date will be penalized one third of a letter grade (i.e. a plus or minus letter grade) for each day after the due date. All assignments turned in seven minutes after the stated time will count as being one day late.

COURSE ADJUSTMENTS
The instructor retains the right to revise readings or assignments over the course of the class. Any changes will be announced in class and sent out in an email to all students.