

Philosophy 140: Chinese Philosophy

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Office Hours: M 3:00-4:00pm
& by appointment

Office Hours: MW 1:30-2:30pm

Course Goals:

Welcome to Chinese Philosophy 140! I'm looking forward to being your instructor this semester and getting to know each of you as the class unfolds.

Ancient Chinese philosophy was and remains deeply influential in Chinese and global life, culture, and politics. In the pre-Qin period, philosophers served as advisors to kings and other political leaders on matters of governance, trade, war, and beyond. The philosopher Confucius ruled China for over two millennia, his work undergirding state ideology and the Chinese education system from the time of his death until the present age.

Chinese philosophy has had a significant but underrecognized influence on contemporary Western philosophy. Buddhist philosophy arguably influenced the work of David Hume, who is perhaps the most influential philosopher in the entire Western canon. Even where there is no clear line of influence, we can see striking convergences and divergences between the questions that Chinese philosophers wrestled with in the ancient period, and the answers they gave, and those that Western philosophers have wrestled with from the modern period to the present day. Studying early Chinese philosophy shines a light on ancient and contemporary life and politics, the universality or particularity of philosophical insight, and the path-dependency of philosophical inquiry, all while offering many novel and under-appreciated philosophical insights.

Toward the end of getting the most we can out of such rich resources, this is going to be a course in *comparative* Chinese philosophy. We'll be looking at some ancient Chinese texts, examining their arguments, and putting them into conversation with allies and critics historical and contemporary, East and West. The goal will be to use contemporary texts to illuminate historical texts and vice versa so that we can get clear about what arguments are being made and whether they are good ones. The course is predominantly organized by subject matter rather than by philosopher to help us focus in closely on the philosophical questions asked by ancient Chinese and contemporary thinkers.

Course Structure:

One great thing about introductory classes is that all of you are going to be coming from different majors and backgrounds and have different bodies of knowledge and experience to bring to the table. In part for that reason, this class is going to involve a lot of discussion and minimal lecturing. But, of course, our success in pursuing a discussion-

based class format will depend in part on your involvement. To that end, it will be important for you to have read and thought a bit about the readings before class time. I'll have some main ideas and themes that I want to draw out of the reading, and some arguments that I want us to discuss, but a lot of the class is going to depend on and be driven by your questions, comments, and objections on our assigned readings.

Textbook: Chris Fraser, *The Philosophy of the Mozi: The First Consequentialists*
All other readings will be posted on our course Sakai site.

Course Requirements:

Attendance and Participation:

Show up to class prepared and ready to contribute to class discussions. The class will be small and largely discussion-based, and I expect everyone to contribute in whatever way they are best equipped.

Reading and responses:

Before each session *on which there is no required forum post* (see below), you'll post a short response to the reading on Sakai. For your responses, raise one issue from the reading that you are confused or uncertain about, or a substantive point of disagreement. You'll get one (1) free pass if you forget to or aren't able to write a reflection. Reflections are graded pass/fail. If you make a sincere effort at the assignment, you'll pass. Otherwise, you'll fail. Try to use these reflections to think about issues that you'd like to raise in discussion during class time. Reading responses should be posted by 2pm on class day.

Forum Posts:

Over the course of the semester there will be eight (8) weekly Sakai forum assignments. Your job will be to both (1) post an answer to the forum prompt (see syllabus below) and (2) comment on someone else's forum post by 2pm on the required class day. Posts should be at least a thoughtful paragraph, but feel free to write more if you're inspired. Replies must substantively engage with the top level post or another comment on the thread. Forum posts and comments are graded pass/fail. If they are substantive and civil, you'll pass. Otherwise, you'll fail. As with reading responses, you have one (1) free pass during the semester. Posts should serve as useful springboards for your three papers.

Papers:

There will be three (3) required 1,500 word papers, each on a major topic discussed in this course. See the schedule below for due dates and paper topics.

Grading:

I'd like to minimize your amount of stress around grades and formal assignments and maximize how much you actually take away from this course, so I aim to give you as much control over your final grades in this class as possible, within reason.

Here's how grading will work.

Papers: 65%

Your best paper grade will be worth 35%

Your second best grade will be worth 20%

Your worst grade will be worth 10%

Forum Contributions: 15%

Reading Responses: 10%

Attendance: 10%

There will also be optional assignments available (argument reconstructions, case studies in the news, attending relevant events). These will contribute extra points that will be added to your final total.

Grade Breakdown

A: 93 - 100

B+: 87 - 92

B: 80 - 86

C+: 72 - 79

C: 65 - 71

D: 57 - 64

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity:

You are expected to be familiar with and adhere to the Rutgers University policies on plagiarism and academic integrity. Penalties for violations of these policies can be severe, including an automatic failing grade for the course and worse. This document provides a comprehensive overview of those policies:

https://slwordpress.rutgers.edu/academicintegrity/wpcontent/uploads/sites/41/2014/11/AI_Policy_2013.pdf

Guidelines for Civil, Inclusive Discourse:

Productive intellectual inquiry requires respectful, constructive discussion that enables all parties to participate fully. Philosophy has an especially vital role to play in facilitating such inquiry, because philosophers have been developing and honing practices of critical discussion over many centuries: techniques for uncovering, justifying, and assessing assumptions lurking behind any claim, from the most obvious to the most controversial. Philosophy is thus a valuable tool for self-reflection and for communal debate. But like any tool, it must be used well in order to do its job. In our community we expect all participants to observe basic norms of civility and respect. This means stating your own views directly and substantively: focusing on reasons, assumptions and consequences rather than on who is offering them, or how. And it means engaging other's views in the same terms. No topic or claim is too obvious or controversial to be discussed; but claims and opinions have a place in the discussion only when they are presented in a respectful, collegial, and constructive way. There will be no tolerance for abuse, harassment, and

disrespect. Students who have concerns about another student's conduct in class should email me directly at tyler.john@rutgers.edu so that we can find a satisfactory solution.

Accessibility:

I'd like this class to be a great experience for all of you, and all of you are entitled to equal access to educational opportunities at Rutgers. Disabled students are encouraged to speak with me if that would be helpful and to avail themselves of the services provided by the Office of Disability Services: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/>

Student-Wellness Services

Just In Case Web App

<http://codu.co/cee05e>

Access helpful mental health information and resources for yourself or a friend in a mental health crisis on your smartphone or tablet and easily contact CAPS or RUPD.

Counseling, ADAP & Psychiatric Services (CAPS):

(848) 932-7884 / 17 Senior Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901/

www.rhscaps.rutgers.edu/

CAPS is a University mental health support service that includes counseling, alcohol and other drug assistance, and psychiatric services staffed by a team of professional within Rutgers Health services to support students' efforts to succeed at Rutgers University. CAPS offers a variety of services that include: individual therapy, group therapy and workshops, crisis intervention, referral to specialists in the community and consultation and collaboration with campus partners.

Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance (VPVA):

(848) 932-1181 / 3 Bartlett Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 /

www.vpva.rutgers.edu/

The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance provides confidential crisis intervention, counseling and advocacy for victims of sexual and relationship violence and stalking to students, staff and faculty. To reach staff during office hours when the university is open or to reach an advocate after hours, call 848-932-1181.

Some Information on Implicit Bias:

<https://philosophy.rutgers.edu/climate-v2/climate-issues-in-academic-philosophy/implicit-bias>

Schedule:

Here's a tentative schedule for our class, subject to revision throughout the semester depending on what you find interesting, what you want to explore more of, and how fast we end up progressing. New versions will be posted to Sakai as we make changes, and I'll email you with any such updates.

Part I: Introduction

Wednesday, 1/22: Class Introduction

Assignment: Van Norden, “Western Philosophy is Racist”

Monday, 1/27: Comparative Philosophy, and A Brief History of Ancient Chinese Philosophy

Assignment: Angle, “The Minimal Definition and Methodology of Comparative Philosophy

Part II: Confucian Normative & Social Theory

Wednesday, 1/29: The Structure of Ethical Theories

Assignment: Kagan, “The Structure of Normative Ethics:

Forum Week 1: Describe your prior experience with Eastern philosophy

Monday, 2/3: Confucian Ethics, Part I

Assignment: Confucius, *The Analects* (selections)

Wednesday, 2/5: Confucian Ethics, Part II

Assignment: Confucius, *The Analects* (selections)

Forum Week 2: How would you classify Confucian ethics on Kagan’s scheme?

Monday, 2/10: No Class

Wednesday, 2/12: Confucius as Virtue Ethicist

Assignment: Anscombe, “Modern Moral Philosophy”

Monday, 2/17: Was Confucius a Normative Ethicist?

Assignment: Angle, “*The Analects* and Moral Theory:

Wednesday, 2/19: Confucius as Social Architect

Assignment: Nichols, “Early Confucianism is a System for Social-functional Influence and Probably does not Represent a Normative Ethical Theory”

Forum Week 3: Was Confucius a normative ethicist?

Monday, 2/24: Writing A Philosophy Paper

Assignment: Portmore, “Tips on Writing a Philosophy Paper”

Wednesday, 2/26: No Class

Monday, 3/2: Confucius as Self Architect

Assignment: Sarkissian, “Confucius and the Effortless Life of Virtue”
Recommended: Lai, “Knowing to Act in the Moment”

Wednesday, 3/4: Peer Review Workshop
Assignment: First Paper Draft

Saturday, 3/7 Paper on Confucianism Due

Part II: Three Kinds of Dao: Mozi, Laozi, and Zhuangzi

Monday, 3/9: In Praise of Inaction
Assignment: Laozi, TBD

Wednesday 3/11: In Praise of Chaos
Assignment: Zhuangzi, The Inner Chapters
Forum Week 4: How would you describe your own Dao?

Monday, 3/16: Spring Break

Wednesday, 3/18: Spring Break

Monday, 3/23: The Mohists, Part I
Assignment: Fraser, *The Philosophy of the Mozi*, Chapter 4
Recommended: Street, “If Everything Happens for a Reason”

Wednesday, 3/25: The Mohists, Part II
Assignment: Fraser, *The Philosophy of the Mozi*, Chapter 5
Forum Week 5: How would you characterize “the benefit of all?”

Monday, 3/30: Were the Mohists Utilitarians?
Assignment: John, “On the Fundamental Normative Ethics of the Mohists”

Part III: Human Nature

Wednesday, 4/1: Early Confucianism
Assignment: *Xunzi* (selections)

Saturday, 4/4 Paper on Dao Due

Monday, 4/6: Mengzi, Part I
Assignment: Van Norden, “The Influential Confucian Philosopher You’ve Never Heard of”

Wednesday, 4/8: Mengzi, Part II
Assignment: Mengzi, *Mencius* (selections)
Forum Week 6: Is human nature good or bad?

Monday, 4/13: Early Confucianism Redux
Assignment: Wong, "Early Confucian Philosophy and the Development of Compassion"

Wednesday, 4/15: British Sentimentalism and Human Nature
Assignment: Hume, *A Treatise on Human Nature* (selections)

Monday, 4/20: The Mohists on Human Nature
Assignment: Fraser, *The Philosophy of the Mozi*, Chapter 3
Forum Week 7: How can we "order" human nature?

Part IV: Ameliorative Metaphysics

Wednesday, 4/22: Conceptual Utilitarianism
Assignment: Fraser, *The Philosophy of the Mozi*, Chapter 2 (pp. 49-69)

Monday, 4/27: Feminist Metaphysics
Assignment: Haslanger, "What Good are our Intuitions? Philosophical Analysis and Social Kinds"

Wednesday, 4/29: Conceptual Utilitarianism in the 20th Century
Assignment: Smart, "Free Will, Praise, and Blame"
Forum Week 8: Are there any concepts that you think are in need of amelioration?

Monday, 5/4: Wrap-up

Saturday, 5/9 Paper on Human Nature Due