

Course Title	EARLY CHINESE POLITICAL AND ETHICAL THOUGHT
Course Code	HST3005
Recommended Study Year	2, 3, 4
No. of Credits/Term	3
Mode of Tuition	Sectional
Class Contact Hours	3
Category	History Major Elective Category 1
Discipline	-
Prerequisite(s)	NIL
Co-requisite(s)	NIL
Exclusion(s)	NIL
Exemption Requirement(s)	NIL

Brief Course Description

In ancient China, we have one of the most significant intellectual traditions in all of world history. In the first millennium BCE, the violent transition from the old hereditary aristocracy to a centralized bureaucratic empire prompted a very lively and contentious intellectual debate. This course is an introduction to this great tradition of thought. We will read some of its earliest and most foundational texts, including the Confucian Analects and the Daodejing (aka Tao te ching). The focus will be on the ethical and political questions that these texts raised and debated with one another, such as: What does it mean to be a good individual? What is a state and how can it ensure proper order for all? and What is the proper relationship between a state and individuals? We will learn about how the ancient Chinese thought about their world, and at the same time, we will also discover for ourselves a rich and powerful intellectual resource for reflecting on our own.

Aims

The aim is to introduce students to the foundational works of the intellectual history of China, from the Eastern Zhou period to the Han dynasty. In addition, students will also learn about the history of this period, the context for the production of these various ideas and texts that would come to shape the subsequent history of China, East Asia, and the world in many significant ways. Finally, students will also be able read these texts as works of philosophy, engaging with broad humanistic questions that are potentially relevant outside of the context of the history of early China.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Explain and evaluate the basic political and ethical issues and debates in early Chinese intellectual history.
2. Identify and describe the basic canon available for the study of early Chinese thought.
3. Contextualize and analyze the major developments of early Chinese intellectual history.

Indicative Content

1. The “Axial Age” in Early China
2. Ritual and Goodness in the Analects of Confucius
3. Objectivity and Moral Calculus in the Mozi
4. Politics and Mysticism in the Laozi
5. Organic Morality in the Mengzi
6. Ethics of Spontaneity in the Zhuangzi

7. Morality as Human Artifice in the Xunzi
8. Traditions Lost and Found: Yangism, Logicians, and Excavated Manuscripts
9. Cosmology and the Body in the Inward Training
10. Laws and Bureaucracy in the Book of Lord Shang
11. Tragic Necessity of Laws in the Han Feizi
12. The First Emperor and the Rise and Fall of the Qin empire
13. Empire Redux: Imperial Confucianism of the Early Han Dynasty (Lu Jia, Jia Yi, and Dong Zhongshu)
14. History as Philosophy: Sima Qian's Records of the Grand Historian

Teaching Method

There will be lectures and group discussion in each class meeting. The lectures will provide the broad historical background, and the group discussion, led by the instructor, will focus on primary materials, both textual and visual, from the intellectual history of ancient China.

Measurement of Learning Outcomes

- I. Class participation: attendance, frequency of participation in class discussion, and level of engagement (LOs 1, 2, 3)
- II. Response papers: series of short response papers on primary sources in the intellectual history canon of early China (LO 2)
- III. Presentation: in-class presentation on the arguments of their term paper (LOs 1, 3)
- IV. Final paper: a 2000-words essay examining a central political and/or ethical issue within its historical context, with analysis of the primary sources (LOs 1, 3)

Assessment

Continuous Assessment: 100%

- I. Class participation, 20%
- II. Response papers, 30%
- III. Presentation, 15%
- IV. Final paper, 35%

Required/Essential Readings

Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy, edited by Philip J. Ivanhoe and Bryan W. Van Norden. Second edition. Hackett, 2006. (Required textbook)

Recommended/Supplementary Readings

Li Feng. *Early China: A Social and Cultural History*. Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Michael Loewe and Edward Shaughnessy, eds. *The Cambridge History of Ancient China: From the Origins of Civilization to 221 BC*.

Cook, Constance A., and Paul Rakita Goldin, eds. *A Source Book of Ancient Chinese Bronze Inscriptions*. Early China Special Monograph Series, No. 7. Berkeley, California: The Society for the Study of Early China, 2016.

Csikszentmihalyi, Mark, ed. *Readings in Han Chinese Thought*. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Pub. Co, 2006.

Denecke, Wiebke. *The Dynamics of Masters Literature: Early Chinese Thought from Confucius to Han Feizi*. Harvard-Yenching Institute Monographs 74. Cambridge, Mass: Published by the Harvard University Asia Center for the Harvard-Yenching Institute :

Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2010.

Di Cosmo, Nicola. *Ancient China and Its Enemies: The Rise of Nomadic Power in East Asian History*. 1st pbk. ed. Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Dong, Zhongshu, Sarah A. Queen, and John S. Major. *Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn*. Translations from the Asian Classics. New York: Columbia University Press, 2016.

Durrant, Stephen, Wai-yee Li, and David Schaberg, trans. *Zuo Tradition*. Volume 2: [...]. 1st edition. *Classics of Chinese Thought*. Seattle London: University of Washington Press, 2016.

Falkenhausen, Lothar von. *Chinese Society in the Age of Confucius (1000-250 BC): The Archaeological Evidence. Ideas, Debates, and Perspectives*, v. 2. Los Angeles: Cotsen Institute of Archaeology, University of California, 2006.

Graham, A. C. *Disputers of the Tao: Philosophical Argument in Ancient China*. La Salle, Ill: Open Court, 1989.

Mark Edward Lewis. *The Early Chinese Empires: Qin and Han*. 1. Harvard Univ. Press paperback ed. *History of Imperial China*. Cambridge, Mass: The Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press, 2010.

Major, John S., and Constance A. Cook. *Ancient China: A History*. New York, NY: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 2017.

Nylan, Michael, and Michael Loewe, eds. *China's Early Empires: A Re-Appraisal*. University of Cambridge Oriental Publications 67. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Schwartz, Benjamin Isadore. *The World of Thought in Ancient China*. Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press, 1985.

Pines, Yuri. *The Book of Lord Shang: Apologetics of State Power in Early China*. Translations from the Asian Classics. New York: Columbia University Press, 2017.

Important Notes:

- (1) Students are expected to spend a total of 9 hours (i.e. 3 hours of class contact and 6 hours of personal study) per week to achieve the course learning outcomes.
- (2) Students shall be aware of the University regulations about dishonest practice in course work, tests and examinations, and the possible consequences as stipulated in the Regulations Governing University Examinations. In particular, plagiarism, being a kind of dishonest practice, is “the presentation of another person’s work without proper acknowledgement of the source, including exact phrases, or summarised ideas, or even footnotes/citations, whether protected by copyright or not, as the student’s own work”. Students are required to strictly follow university regulations governing academic integrity and honesty.
- (3) Students are required to submit writing assignment(s) using Turnitin.
- (4) To enhance students’ understanding of plagiarism, a mini-course “Online Tutorial on Plagiarism Awareness” is available on <https://pla.ln.edu.hk/>.