

## Classical Chinese Philosophy: An Analytic Approach

Instructor: Xingming Hu  
Affiliation: Philosophy Department  
Semester: Spring 2020  
Level: undergraduate  
Credits: 2  
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### Course Description

This course is an introduction to Chinese Philosophy in the Pre-Qin period, before the unification of China in 221 BCE. We will explore the four major systems of thought that deeply informed subsequent Chinese culture: Confucianism, Mohism, Daoism, and Legalism. Topics include filial piety, governance, wellbeing, knowledge, and human nature. We will focus on the philosophical arguments ancient Chinese philosophers make. To deepen our understanding those arguments, we will also discuss how some western philosophers argue about the issues that (would) interest ancient Chinese philosophers. No previous background in Chinese or philosophy is required.

### Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students will be able to

1. Identify and more effectively evaluate arguments in philosophical texts
2. Make their own arguments for a philosophical claim
3. Write a better philosophy paper
4. Have a better grasp of the key arguments in Classical Chinese Philosophy

### Required Texts:

1. Xingming Hu, Basic Logic, available on Hu's Website
2. Xingming Hu (ed.). Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy (Chinese-English). Nanjing University Press 2018. (胡星铭(编):《中国古典哲学原著选读(汉英对照)》, 南京大学出版社2018)
3. All other readings will be distributed in .pdf form via email or Wechat.

### Course Requirements

- Participation: 15%
- Two logic assignments: 15%
  - Super easy! And you may re-do the assignments until you get a great grade.
- Two short papers: 30%
  - Topic of the first paper
    - Should we love our family members more than others? Defend your answer.

- Read the guidelines by Shelly Kagan before writing. You must follow the guidelines.
  - Topic of the second paper
    - Xunzi raises many objections to Mencius' claim that human nature is morally good. What is the strongest objection on your view? State the objection clearly and forcefully on behalf of Xunzi. Then imagine that you are Mencius and give the best possible response to the objection.
  - You may write in either English or Chinese.
  - You have an opportunity to revise each short paper in light of my feedback.
- Term paper: 40%
  - Topic: Can I know that I am not a butterfly who dreams that I am a human being?
  - First state your thesis, then make an argument for your thesis, next consider 1-2 possible objections, and finally respond to the objections
  - 3000 – 5000 words

### Tentative Schedule of Readings and Assignments

#### Week #1

Course Introduction (Introducing yourself, syllabus, how to read philosophy, etc.)

*Exercises for Chapter 1 of Logic due on Sunday*

#### Week #2

"Filial Piety" in X. Hu (ed.): Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy

(We will focus on the *Analects*, *Mencius*, and *Classic of Family Reverence*)

*Exercises for Chapter 2 of Logic due on Sunday*

#### Week #3

Jane English: What Do Grown Children Owe Their Parents?

#### Week #4

Mozi on Filial Piety in X. Hu (ed.): Readings in CCP

Bryan W Van Norden: A response to the Mohist arguments in "impartial caring"

#### Week #5

Bryan W Van Norden: A response to the Mohist arguments in "impartial caring"

*First short paper due on Sunday*

#### Week #6

Xunzi and Han Fei on Governance in X. Hu (ed.): Readings in CCP

Eirik Lang Harris: Constraining the Ruler: On Escaping Han Fei's Criticism of Confucian Virtue Politics

#### Week #7

Eirik Lang Harris: Constraining the Ruler: On Escaping Han Fei's Criticism of Confucian Virtue Politics

Week #8

Mencius and Xunzi on human nature in X. Hu (ed.): Readings in CCP

Kim Chong Chong: Xunzi's Systematic Critique of Mencius

Week #9

Kim Chong Chong: Xunzi's Systematic Critique of Mencius.

*Second short paper due on Sunday*

Week #10

Ted Talk by Frans de Waal: Moral behavior in animals;

CBS NEWS: Born good? Babies help unlock the origins of morality

Week #11

Richard Kim: Wellbeing and Confucianism

Week #12

Justin Tiwald: Wellbeing and Daoism

Week #13

René Descartes: Meditations on First Philosophy (selections)

Week #14

Zhuangzi on knowledge in X. Hu (ed.): Readings in CCP

Eric Schwitzgebel: Zhuangzi's Attitude Toward Language and His Skepticism

Week #15

Eric Schwitzgebel: Zhuangzi's Attitude Toward Language and His Skepticism

Week #16

Term paper presentation

Week #17

Term paper presentation

Week #18

Review

*Term paper due on the last day of the semester*

### Academic Misconduct

You will be strictly held to the Nanjing University code of conduct. Violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, plagiarism, cheating on exams, falsification, and unapproved collaboration.