**BROWN UNIVERSITY COURSE SYLLABUS**

**RELIGIOUS STUDIES 0120: THE CLASSICAL CHINESE PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE**

Semester I, 2014-2015 Tues./Thurs., 2:30 PM

Instructor: H. D. Roth

Office: Room 204, Shirley Miller House, 59 George Street

Office Hours: FRIDAY, 10:30 AM-12:30 PM

Teaching Assistant: Adrien Stoloff

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

It may seem hard to believe, but the problems we face as modern world citizens of the twenty-first century include certain perennial concerns that human beings have faced in all cultures. Sometimes taking a look at how a seemingly radically different culture at a much earlier time in human history faced these concerns gives us new insights into how to face them ourselves.

Ancient Chinese culture from its earliest surviving roots dealt with basic determinations of the nature of time, how to organize people into a society, the nature of human beings and the cosmos in which they live, and the very meaning and purpose of human existence. In our course we will examine how the philosophy of life in ancient China contains unique answers to these concerns, from the oracle bone divination of the Shang Dynasty to the ethical philosophy of Confucianism and the cosmology and mysticism of Daoism. We will examine the relationship of philosophy and religion in the Chinese context and in so doing will elucidate the basic elements of the distinctive Chinese world view and how they have shaped the nature of religious experience and how they have been shaped by it.

Works of interpretive scholarship will be used to supplement the primary texts in translation that will form the core of the course. The Tuesday class will primarily be a lecture, the Thursday class will primarily be a discussion of the lectures and readings.

Just to be clear, the point of this course is not simply to learn about a distant world view, both historically and geographically. That is an important, for sure. But the course also asks student to see if any of these ancient ideas are relevant for the modern world of the twenty-first century. With this in mind, there will also be optional practicums for each unit of the course: learning how to cast and interpret the *Yijing;* applying Confucian observations about human moral psychology to our everyday lives; and learning how to meditate like a classical Daoist.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

*Key Questions*: Students will be asked to submit 3 key questions they have about the weekly readings by Wednesday @ 2 PM each week. These will be submitted online to Canvas.

*Presentations*: At least one class presentation based on the readings that includes answers to the “Key Questions” submitted the day before class. This presentation should introduce for discussion three of four of the main ideas or questions in the readings in the assumption the weekly readings do not need to be recapitulated in detail.

*Media Assignments*: Each of the three units of the course will be summarized by a 50 minute radio program from the CBC FM “Ideas” Radio series entitled “Chinese Philosophy: Tradition in Action.” They will be available for downloading from OCRA AND CANVAS

*Exams*:One take-home mid-term examination on the first two units of the course.

One synoptic take-home final examination incorporating both the last unit of the course and an overview of the entire course

*Class Discussions*:Completion of the reading assignments prior to the appropriate class

Attendance in discussion sections

Active involvement in the class discussions

**GRADES**

Mid-term exam: 30%

Class: 30%

Final exam: 40%

**RESERVED READINGS**

All of the following books will be on reserve in the Rockefeller Library.

**BOOKLIST**

**Wm. Theodore DeBary and Irene Bloom (eds.)**  *Sources of Chinese Tradition* (2nd edition)Columbia University Press; 2 edition (March 15, 2000)

[**Patricia Buckley Ebrey**](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/search-handle-url/index=books&field-author=Ebrey%2C%20Patricia%20Buckley/102-1281926-1599335), Top of Form*The Cambridge Illustrated History of China*. Cambridge, 1999.**\***

**Herbert Fingarette,** *Confucius: The Secular as Sacred.* Harper, 1971.

**A.C. Graham**, *Chuang Tzu: The Inner Chapters* Repr. Hackett, 2001

**D.C. Lau**, *Lao Tzu: Tao Te Ching .* Repr., Penguin Books; 1985 (NB: ONLY this edition: ISBN-10:**014044131X**| ISBN-13:**978-0140441314)**

**John S Major, Sarah Queen, Andrew S. Meyer, and Harold D. Roth**, *The Essential Huainanzi.* Columbia University Press, 2012.

[**Frederick W. Mote**](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/search-handle-url/102-5541201-5329753?%5Fencoding=UTF8&search-type=ss&index=books&field-author=Frederick%20W.%20Mote), *Intellectual Foundations of China*. Knopf, 1971. (OCRA)

[**Rudolf Ritsema**](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/search-handle-url/102-5541201-5329753?%5Fencoding=UTF8&search-type=ss&index=books&field-author=Rudolf%20Ritsema) **and** [**Shantena Augusto Sabbadini,**](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/search-handle-url/102-5541201-5329753?%5Fencoding=UTF8&search-type=ss&index=books&field-author=Shantena%20Augusto%20Sabbadini) *The Original I Ching Oracle: The Pure and Complete Texts with Concordance*  Watkins, 2005 (Selections: OCRA) \*

**Harold D. Roth,** *Original Tao*. Columbia, 1999.

[**Benjamin Isadore Schwartz**](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/search-handle-url/index=books&field-author=Schwartz%2C%20Benjamin%20Isadore/102-1281926-1599335), *The World of Thought in Ancient China*. Belknap, 1989.

**Richard Wilhelm** (translator) and [C.F. Baynes](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/search-handle-url/index=books&field-author=C.F.%20Baynes/102-1281926-1599335) (Editor) *The I Ching or Book of Changes.* Princeton University Press; third ed., 1967.\*

\* Recommended book

**COURSE OUTLINE**

**HALF WEEK -1: September 4**

Theme: Introduction to the course; Discussion of fundamental themes

1. **THE ORIGINS OF THE CHINESE WORLD VIEW**

**WEEK 1: September 9, 11**

Theme: Philosophy and Religion in Ancient China; Introduction to the Shang Dynasty

Readings: Schwartz, 1-39; Mote, *Intellectual Foundations of China* chapters 1 and 2

**WEEK 2: September 16, 18**

Theme: The Worldview of the Shang Dynasty and the Chou Conquest

Readings: Debary and Bloom, 3-41; Schwartz, 40-55; Ebrey, 1-37\*

**WEEK 3: September 23, 25**

Theme: The Religious and Philosophical Significance of the *Yijing* , the oracle of change

Media Assignment: Listen to “Divination and Cosmology in Ancient China” (CBC Radio Program 1)

Readings: Schwartz, 390-400; Ritsema and Sabatini, 2-67 (OCRA); Wilhelm/Baynes, Part I (Selected Hexagrams) (OCRA/CANVAS)

**II. HUMAN NATURE AND SELF CULTIVATION IN CONFUCIAN THOUGHT**

**WEEK 4: September 30, October 2**

Theme: The life of Confucius and The *Analects* as a Source for Foundational Confucianism

Readings: Debary and Bloom, 41-63; Schwartz, 56-134; Mote, 26-46

**WEEK 5: October 7, 9**

Theme: Applied Confucianism: The ethicalphilosophy of the *Analects*

Readings:Fingarette

**WEEK 6: October 14, 16**

Theme: Challenges to Confucian Eudaimonia: Mozi’s Universal Love and Yang Zhu’s Hedonism

Readings:Mozi: Debary and Bloom, 64-76; Schwartz, 135-72; Mote, 77-83

Yang Zhu: Graham 1, 221-53

**WEEK 7: October 21, 23**

Theme: The Idealistic Confucianism of Mencius

Readings:Debary and Bloom, 112-58; Schwartz, 255-90; Mote, 46-54

**WEEK 8: October 28, 3**

Theme: The Pragmatic Confucianism of Xunzi

Media Assignment: “Self and Society: The Teachings of Confucius” (CBC Radio Program);

Readings: Debary and Bloom, 158-89; Schwartz, 290-320; Mote, 54-58

**DISTRIBUTION OF MID-TERM EXAMINATION; DUE ON 11/03 AT 5 PM: SENT TO YOUR DISCUSSION SECTION LEADER VIA EMAIL**

**III. COSMOLOGY AND SELF DISCOVERY IN CLASSICAL DAOISM**

**WEEK 9: November 4, 6**

Theme: *Inward Training* and The Inner Cultivation Tradition of Early Daoism

Readings:Roth, *Original Tao*,1-33; 41-134

**WEEK 10: November 11, 13**

Theme: Epistemology and Mysticism in the *Zhuangzi*

Readings: Graham, 3-99; Schwartz, 215-37

**WEEK 11: November 18, 20**

Theme: Primitivist Daoism in the *Daode jing* and *Zhuangzi*

Readings:Lau; Schwartz, 186-215; Graham, 197-217

**WEEK 12: NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING RECESS**

**WEEK 13: December 2, 4**

Theme: Politics and Mysticism in the Syncretic Daoism of Huang-Lao

Readings: Debary and Bloom, 235-81; Graham 259-85; *The Essential Huainanzi*, chapters 1and 2; Schwartz, 237-54.

**WEEK 14: December 9, 11 (Special Review Class)**

These: Review and Overview: Towards a New Theory of The Origins of Daoism

Readings: Roth, 125-202; *The Essential Huainanzi*, chapters 7 and 11.

Media Assignment: “The Mystical Way of Daoism” (CBC Radio Program)

**DISTRIBUTION OF FINAL EXAM, DUE BY 5 PM, MONDAY, DECEMBER 15.**

**ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK FOR RELIGIOUS SYSTEMS**

**I. Descriptive-Prescriptive Axis** (after Clifford Geertz)

1. ***Descriptive***

**How the universe functions and how humans fit into it**

1. *Mythology*: the pre-philosophical expression of the human understanding of the universe
2. *Cosmology*: theories of the various forces and elements that construe the cosmos and how they interact
3. *Cosmogony*: theories about the origins of the cosmos
4. *Ontology*: theories about the nature and activity of Being, or the reality that underlies the cosmos, both in its essence and its manifestations
5. *Epistemology*: theories about what we know about the cosmos and how we know it
6. *Anthropology*: theories of the nature and essence of human beings
7. ***Prescriptive***

**How the understanding of the nature of the universe is applied to the concrete problems of how we are to lead our lives**

1. Ethics: principles of how human beings should relate to each other
2. Sacrifice, devotion, faith: how human beings should relate to the power or powers that underlie the universe
3. Prayer, yoga, meditation: how human beings can transform themselves and attain the ultimate goals envisioned in their religious tradition

**II. Institutional-Personal** **[Experiential] Axis** (after William James)

**A. *Institutional***

1. *Sacred space*: churches, temples, monasteries, etc.
2. *Clergy*
3. *Religious rituals*
4. *Sacred texts*

**B. *Personal***

1. *Numinous experience*: experiencing the Absolute as “Wholly Other” (most often in theistic religions)
2. *Mystical experience*: attaining union with, or unitive experience of, the Absolute (most often in monistic religions)
3. *Mundane experience*: daily practice of religious prescription