

The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology
Division of Humanities
HUMA3810: Taoism and the Chinese Tradition
Fall 2017

Lecturer: Professor Simon Wong

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Course Description:

Taoism is a major philosophical tradition in China. It plays an important role in the shaping of the minds of the Chinese people, and has great impact on the formation of Chinese culture. It is still a living tradition influencing the way of life of many people, regardless of whether it is being practiced consciously or being submerged into the unconscious of the Chinese mass.

This course aims to introduce Taoism as a philosophy of life. Emphasis, however, is on Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu, the two most significant figures of Taoism. While some scholarly researches on them will be introduced, the primary texts of the *Lao Tzu* and *Chuang Tzu* are the foci for explanation and discussion in class. It is believed that an understanding of these basic materials will provide students with a solid foundation to comprehend the Taoist philosophy in its originality.

If time is sufficient, some basic knowledge of Neo-Taoism, as the development of early Taoism, will be briefly introduced.

Intended Learning Outcomes

On completion of the course, students will: 1. have basic knowledge of the spirits and philosophies of the *Lao Tzu* and *Chuang Tzu*; 2. acquire basic technique of writing an academic paper; 3. be able to evaluate and apply the Taoist philosophy they have learnt to reflect upon their lives and behavior.

Tentative Schedule of Lectures:

Week 1 Introduction

- Taoism in the context of Chinese philosophy
- Historical background of Taoism

Weeks 2-13 Philosophical Taoism

- Lao Tzu and the text of the *Lao Tzu*
- Important Chapters of the *Lao Tzu*
- Chuang Tzu and the text of the *Chuang Tzu*
- Important Chapters of the *Chuang Tzu*

Grading Scheme:

1. Essay 45%

- An essay about 4,000 words in length, neatly typed and double-spaced, or clearly hand-written, should be submitted by the end of the semester. Students should hand in a paper proposal for comment on Oct. 3, an additional draft document for specific revision on Oct. 31, and a rewritten final essay on Nov. 28.
- Marks will be deducted for late submission of the assignments.

2. Final Examination 40%

- Students will usually be given a number of essay questions to be selected and answered. These questions are aimed at testing how well the students understand the subject matter of the course.

3. Attendance, presentation and discussion 15%

- 1% will be deducted each time when a student is found absent from class.
- One hour in every two weeks will be spent for discussion of the content of the course.

Textbooks:

- 余培林. 《新譯老子讀本》. 台北: 三民書局, 1973
張松輝. 《新譯莊子讀本》. 台北: 三民書局, 2005

Reference:

- D.C. Lau. *Lao Tzu Tao Te Ching*. New York: Penguin Groups, 1963.
Burton Watson. *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1968.