The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology
Division of Humanities

HUMA 4700 Confucianism in a Global Context
(Fall 2018)
Professor Charles W. H. Chan

Rm. 4502
Tuesdays, 9:00-11:50
Office hours: Tuesdays, 11:00-12:30 & Wednesdays, 17:00-18:30
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Objectives:
This course is designed to introduce Confucianism as a major intellectual tradition not only in China and East Asia, but also in the global age of today. It seeks to trace how and explain why Confucianism, as a system of thought originating from the ancient state of Lu, has been first established as the Orthodoxy of the whole nation, then widely adopted by its neighboring countries in East Asia, and most recently emerging as a major religious and philosophical tradition for the entire humanity.

Description:
To be sure, Confucianism had repeatedly been blamed for the backwardness prevalent over the entire East Asian region for more than a century ever since the intrusion of the Western powers in the mid-19th Century. However, starting from the 1970s, as scholars have increasingly turned to it in explanation of the remarkable economic, social and cultural growth in almost all the countries in the region, namely Japan and the so-called “four little dragons,” there has been a tremendous upsurge of interest in the Confucian tradition, which, rather ironically, has now been characterized as going through a “creative transformation”.

What is even more striking is that not only has Confucianism generally been perceived as the key to some of the dynamic forces that underlie the contemporary success of East Asia, but it has also gradually been recognized as a “living tradition” that has indeed moved into the Western world along with the East Asian Diaspora, making it very much an active participant in the larger global community. Its potential impact on the world can well be detected from such testimony as the one given by a Western scholar who proclaims himself as a Boston Confucian, which states that “the Confucian tradition is one of the great intellectual achievements of humankind….the Confucian Dao represents one of the supreme human systems of study, contemplation, speculation, and
action."

Thus, whether for the purpose of understanding the modes of thought of the Chinese, the Korean, the Japanese, or those of the East Asians as a whole or for the simple reason that it is already one of the major intellectual traditions of the world the significance of which is comparable to those of Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, Confucianism is definitely something worthy of serious investigation today.

To introduce students to this ancient and yet living tradition, this course will first adopt a historical approach. Following a chronological order, it will focus on the most influential Confucian thinkers whose thoughts have significantly shaped the tradition. These surveys will not only simply show the unfolding of Confucianism through its ebb and flow, but also demonstrate how the tradition has indeed originated, consolidated, reformulated, adapted, transformed, revived and rejuvenated. To account for these developments in the most effective way, the thoughts of these eminent Confucian thinkers will, of course, have to be studied against the complicated historical background from which they emerged, which in turn will necessarily involve such intertwining factors as the economy, society and politics of their times.

The course will also adopt intercultural and comparative approaches for the very reason that the history of Confucianism is indeed both an international and intercultural phenomenon. Rather than purely a tradition indigenous to China, Confucianism has long been enthusiastically appropriated by generations of thinkers in Korea and Japan and, more recently, by scholars and thinkers in the West as well. Their persistent efforts to reinterpret the tradition adopted from China are undoubtedly the most enduring and powerful force that enables Confucianism to continue to grow in foreign lands. On the other hand, in order to survive and expand, consciously or unconsciously, it is also not infrequent the case that Confucianism adjusts itself to the various cultural environments within which it is placed. To explain these adaptations, cultural factors will have to be taken into consideration.

Apart from these contextual approaches, textual analysis will, of course, be employed when looking into the thoughts of the major Confucian thinkers in China, Korea and Japan. Though in translation, primary sources, such as excerpts from the Confucian Five Classics and Four Books, will not only be utilized when giving lectures, but also be required for students to prepare for their tutorial presentations, in order to ensure that an original understanding of the tradition will ultimately be acquired.

**Preliminary Schedule of Lectures:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weeks</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Recommended readings</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>4 Sept</td>
<td>1. About the course</td>
<td>Course outline &amp; Tutorial Description</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Introduction</td>
<td>Yao, <em>An Introduction to Confucianism</em>, 16-47; Rozman, <em>The East Asian Region: Confucian Heritage and Its Modern Adaptation</em>, 3-42</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topics</td>
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| 2    | 11 Sept | 1. Early Chinese religious and philosophical orientations: The ritual-musical tradition preceding Confucius  
2. Confucius as transmitter and innovator |
|      |       | *Yao, An Introduction to Confucianism, 16-21, 47-67; Schwartz, The World of Thought in Ancient China, 16-55* |
|      |       | *Yao, An Introduction to Confucianism, 21-26; Schwartz, The World of Thought in Ancient China, 56-134* |
| 3    | 18 Sept | 1. Defenders of the Way (I): Mencius  
2. Defenders of the Way (II): Hsun-tzu |
|      |       | *Yao, An Introduction to Confucianism, 71-80; Schwartz, The World of Thought in Ancient China, 255-320* |
| 5    | 2 Oct | 1. Students’ presentation on Confucius  
2. Confucianism as compared to major Pre-Qin’s schools and its establishment as the state orthodoxy |
|      |       | *Yao, An Introduction to Confucianism, 68-71, 81-86* |
| 6    | 9 Oct | 1. Students’ presentation on Mencius and Hsun-tzu  
2. Students’ presentation on comparison of Confucianism with major schools in Pre-Qin |
| 7    | 16 Oct | 1. The Confucian Revival (I): Challenges from Neo-Daoism and Buddhism and its initial responses in Wei-jin and Tang  
2. The Confucian Revival (II): Neo-Confucianism in Song and Ming |
|      |       | *Yao, An Introduction to Confucianism, 89-96* |
|      |       | *Yao, An Introduction to Confucianism, 96-115* |
| 8    | 23 Oct | 1. Students’ presentation on Neo-Confucian responses to Daoist and Buddhist challenges  
2. The Confucianization of the Korean society |
|      |       | *Yao, An Introduction to Confucianism, 115-125; Chang & Kalmanson, Confucianism in Context, 33-52* |
| 9    | 30 Oct | 1. The Confucianization of the Korean society  
2. The adaptation of Confucianism in Japan |
<p>|      |       | <em>Same as the above</em> |
|      |       | <em>Yao, An Introduction to Confucianism, 125-137; Chang &amp; Kalmanson, Confucianism in Context, 52-66</em> |</p>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reference</th>
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| 10 6 Nov | 1. The adaptation of Confucianism in Japan  
        2. Students’ presentation on Korean Confucianism | Same as the above                      |
| 11 13 Nov | 1. Students’ presentation on Japanese Confucianism  
        2. Confucianism in modern China | Yao, *An Introduction to Confucianism*, 245-286 |
| 12 20 Nov | 1. Confucianism in modern China  
        2. Confucianism in the West | Same as the above                      |
| 13 27 Nov | 1. Students’ presentation on Confucianism in modern China  
        2. Students’ presentation on Confucianism in the West |                                           |

**Outcomes:**

1. By the end of the course, students will acquire the knowledge of the major trends of developments of Confucianism in the past: how it originated and consolidated in ancient China, reformulated and revitalized itself in the Song and Ming periods, and transformed itself by adapting to the Korean and the Japanese cultures.
2. In addition, they will also attain a good understanding of how Confucianism develops in the modern period, both in the East and the West.
3. Above all, they will master the basic tenets of Confucianism as one of the major religious and philosophical traditions of the human kind.

**Assessment:**

1. Classroom performances (30%):  
   - Attendance will be taken every lecture and tutorial. Marks will be deducted from those who are absent without apology and proper excuse.  
   - Students are expected to involve actively in classroom discussions.  
   - In addition, they are also required to do a presentation in group. In preparation for this, students are to study carefully the primary sources assigned, make sense out of them, organize them in a systematic and coherent manner, and raise meaningful questions for further discussion. For details, consult also the “Tutorial_Description and Topics”.

2. Book review (40%):  
   - Students are required to write a review on a book selected from the “List of Further References”. The review should include a clear summary of and some critical comments on the book selected. The proportion between them should be 2:1.  
   - Since it will take much time to fully understand the book, students are strongly advised to start reading it as early as possible. To ensure that they will do so, they
are required to submit the title of their chosen book no later than the Tuesday on October 2.

- Note that in order to write a good review, they might also need to consult other secondary sources, such as articles in journals or encyclopedias.
- The report should be within 3000 words, neatly typed and double-spaced. Marks will be deducted from shorter or longer report, with 5% for every hundred words.
- The report is due normally one week before the end of the semester, that is, the Tuesday on November 20. Unless exceptional contingencies, request for extension will not be entertained. Penalty will also be applied to late reports, with a daily deduction of 5%.

3. Final examination (30%):  
- The examination will be an open book one and will last for two hours, covering materials in both the lectures and the tutorials. The date for the examination will be announced in due course.

Basic References:


Important Source books:


Further References (especially for Book Review):
I. East Asian Confucianism:

II. Chinese Confucianism:


III. Korean Confucianism:


IV. Japanese Confucianism:


V. Confucianism in the Modern Age:


VI. Confucianism in the West:


Journals Most Frequently Consulted:

1. *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*
2. *DAO: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy*
3. *Philosophy East & West*
4. *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*
5. *Journal of Chinese Religions*
6. *Journal of Asian Studies*

**Useful Links:**

1. [http://philpapers.org/s/confucianism](http://philpapers.org/s/confucianism) An online search in Confucianism featuring 1000 books or articles, with abstract and similar books or articles for most of the entries.


**Database Easily Accessible:**

*Bibliography of Asian Studies (BAS) (1971-)* The online version of the Bibliography referencing principally western-language articles and book chapters on all parts of Asia published since 1971. It is available in the HKUST’s Library.