

THE HONG KONG UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
DIVISION OF HUMANITIES

HUMA 5810
CONFUCIANISM: CLASSICAL PERIOD

Spring 2018

Room 5560

Thursdays 19:00-21:50

Instructor: Professor Charles Wing-hoi CHAN

Office hours: Wed 13:00-14:30 and Thu 17:30-19:00, or by appointment

Office: Rm. 3357; Tel: 2358-7765; E-mail: hmwhchan@ust.hk

Course Description:

The subject matter of this seminar course is Confucianism in the pre-Ch'in period. Its primary objective is to guide students to an original understanding of the Confucian teachings as they were formulated in their formative years.

In order to achieve such an understanding, what is requisite is a thorough survey of the thought of Confucius, the founder of the School that bears his name, and those of Mencius and Hsün Tzu, the two most towering figures in the Warring States Period who, both coincidentally and unequivocally, proclaimed themselves the defender of the Confucian faith. Their thoughts had alongside, though in different directions, laid down the basic philosophical framework within which Confucians in the entire subsequent history of China were to perceive and encounter the world.

In examining their thoughts, special attention will be given to: What were the problems they perceived to be the most severe and crucial of their times? What proposals had they put forward in order to have those problems settled, on both the individual and socio-political levels? Where from did they derive their sources of inspiration? What to did they aspire? What actually were their ultimate concerns? Did their proposals ever provide a sound solution? How should they be evaluated if they did not? What were the impacts of their words and deeds on later generations?

How should their influences be assessed in the long run even though the philosophers themselves had hardly fulfilled their self-designated missions?

As always, interpretations of Confucianism have been diversified. In order to attain an authentic understanding of it, reading the texts that record its teachings, both intensively and extensively, is an absolutely “must”. Students taking this course should, thus, be prepared for devoting much of their time and efforts to studying the primary sources in order to decipher the messages behind.

While textual analysis, namely philological investigation and philosophical explication, will be the basic methodology to be employed in this course, such contextual approaches as placing early Confucianism against the economic, socio-political, religious, archeological, cultural and historical backgrounds from which it emerged will also be adopted, so as to foster a more comprehensive and reliable understanding of the subject matter of the course on the part of the students.

Finally, to familiarize them with the stage of art of Classical Confucianism, students will also be introduced to, and indeed expected to work on, those scholarly works considered to be most important in the area.

Schedule for Lectures and Students’ Presentations:

WEEKS	DATES	SUBJECTS	PERSON/S IN CHARGE
1	Feb 1	Introduction: Subject Matters, Significance and Methodology	Instructor
2	Feb 8	Backgrounds: The Ritual-musical Tradition preceding Confucius	Instructor
3	Feb 15	Backgrounds: The Breakdown of the Ritual-musical Order and the Rise of the <i>Shih</i>	Instructor
4	Feb 22	Confucius I-II	Instructor

5	Mar 1	Confucius III-VI	Instructor
6	Mar 8	Students' Presentations on Confucius I Mencius I	Instructor
7	Mar 15	Students' Presentations on Confucius II Mencius II	Instructor
8	Mar 22	Mencius III-IV	Instructor
9	Mar 29	Hsün Tzu I Students' Presentations on Mencius I	Instructor
10	Apr 12	Hsün Tzu II Students' Presentations on Mencius I	Instructor
11	Apr 19	Hsün Tzu III Students' Presentations on Hsün Tzu I	Instructor
12	Apr 26	Hsün Tzu IV Students' Presentations on Hsün Tzu II	Instructor
13	May 3	Students' Presentations on Comparing Confucius and Mencius Students' Presentations on Comparing Mencius and Hsün Tzu	

Grading Scheme:

1. Attendance (10%):
Students may only be absent from class with good reason and proof, such as a certificate issued by a medical doctor. Unexcused absence will result in a grade penalty.
2. Participation in class (10%):
Students are expected to have read the assigned materials before coming to class. They should also actively participate in class through raising sensible questions and engaging in discussions.
3. Presentation (30%):

In consultation with the instructor, students are to select a topic of interest to them to present in class.

To make sure that they have sufficient time to prepare for their presentations, students should have their topics decided no later than February 15, 2018.

The presentation should first of all have a clear focus. Its arguments should be solidly grounded on the primary sources, systematically organized and logically presented. To ensure presentation quality, it is necessary for the enrolment of the course not to exceed 20.

4. Final Paper (50%):

The paper will be approximately 6000 words in length. It should demonstrate not only a firm mastery of the primary sources involved, but also a good understanding of the scholarship related to the subject to be addressed.

Intended Learning Outcomes:

After taking the course, students will:

1. Gain an overview of Classical Confucianism, discovering how pre-Qin Confucian thinkers made sense of the universe in which they lived, how they positioned themselves both as individuals and as members of the society, and what ideals were they committed to, on both personal and societal levels.
2. Familiarize themselves with both the primary and secondary sources fundamental to the study of Classical Confucianism.
3. Strengthen their ability to present their points of view and comment on those of others in front of an audience.
4. Learn how to think critically when conducting their research on the subject they choose and to write professionally when delivering their findings.

References:

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