

Course Code: HUMA5910
Course Title: Philosophy of Religion: Chinese and Comparative Perspectives
Semester: Fall 2018
Instructor: Eric S. Nelson (埃里克·尼爾森)
Time: Tuesday 15:00-17:50
Room: 5508
Office Hours: Room 2370, Tuesdays and Wednesdays 12:45-14:45

Course Description

Are there religious dimensions in classical Chinese philosophical discourses? If yes, what are they? If not, what are the alternatives to the religious? What are the implications of Chinese discourses for the philosophy of religion that has been historically defined primarily in Western monotheistic terms?

This course seeks to introduce students to key questions in the philosophy of religion in the context of Mohist, Confucian, and Daoist philosophical and religious discourses in China and their Western philosophical reception. We will examine topics such as language and the ineffable; the existence and non-existence of spiritual realities; conceptions of self and non-self; explanations of suffering and evil; the relationship and tension between ethics and religion; and the meaningfulness of experience, reason, and meditation in approaching religious phenomena.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

Students are expected to:

1	develop a well-informed understanding of key questions in the philosophy of religion in relation to Chinese and East Asian philosophical discourses.
2	explain the role and significance of religious experience and religious phenomena in Chinese and East Asian contexts.
3	critically analyze forms of religious experience, interpretation, and argumentation.

Course Outline

Schedule	
1	Sept. 4 – Introduction Introduction to the class and philosophy and religion in the Chinese Context. Reading: four excavated manuscripts
Part One: Classical Chinese Philosophy and Religion	
2	Sept. 11 – tian 天 and spirits 鬼 in Early Chinese Philosophy: Mozi 墨子 and Kongzi 孔子
3	Sept. 18 – <i>Daodejing</i> 道德經, chapters 1–37

	Sept. 25 – Public Holiday – No Class
4	Oct. 2 – <i>Daodejing</i> 道德經, chapters 38–81
5	Oct. 9 – Zhuangzi 莊子: <i>Inner Chapters</i> 內篇, chapters 1-3
6	Oct. 16 – Zhuangzi 莊子: <i>Inner Chapters</i> 內篇, chapters 4-7
7	Oct. 23 – Wang Bi 王弼: Commentaries on the <i>Yijing</i> and <i>Daodejing</i>
8	Oct. 30 – Ji Kang (嵇康), Xiang Xiu (向秀), and the Nourishing Life (養生) Debate
	Oct. 31 – Paper One Due on canvas
	Part Two: Western Conceptions of Religion and the Reception of Chinese Philosophy
9	Nov. 6 – Leibniz and “The Natural Theology of the Chinese”
10	Nov. 13 – Hegel’s Conception of Religion and his Interpretation of Chinese Thought
11	Nov. 20 – No Class
12	Nov. 27 – Buber, Heidegger and the Western Reception of the <i>Daodejing</i> and the <i>Zhuangzi</i>
	December 20: Short Paper Two Due

Planned Assessment Tasks:

1. 1st Paper (7-10 pages) due on **October 31:** 35%
 Paper one should address a religious or anti-religious theme in classical Chinese philosophy.
2. 2nd Paper (7-10 pages) due on **December 20:** 35%
 Paper two should address a religious or anti-religious theme in classical or modern East Asian philosophy.
3. Participation in class discussion and in-class assignments: 30%
 (i). Students should do the assigned readings and be prepared to participate in each class. (ii). Participation in short discussion groups on assigned topics.

Attention: Please note the HKUST regulations concerning Academic Honesty and Plagiarism: <http://acadreg.ust.hk/generalreg.html>

Readings: Selected Readings in Chinese and East Asian Philosophy of Religion (see canvas for further details)