THE HKU OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
DIVISION OF HUMANITIES

HUMA 5810
CONFUCIANISM: CLASSICAL PERIOD

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Course Description:

This seminar course on Confucianism will have its focus on the pre-Ch’in period. Its primary purpose is to guide students to an original understanding of the Confucian teachings as they were found in their formative years. This task will require a thorough survey of the thought of Confucius, 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 unequivocally claimed themselves the defender of the Confucian faith. Their thoughts had together laid down the basic philosophical framework within which Confucians in the entire subsequent history of Chinese civilization were to perceive the world.

There are, however, also other important pre-Ch’in Confucian texts that worth our exploration. They include at least the Great Learning and the Doctrine of the Mean, which together with the Analects and the Mencius constitute the so-called Four Books, the set of Confucian canon that has been particularly influential since the Sung and Ming periods. Subject to the interest of the class, they might also be the foci of the course.

Special attention will be given to such issues as: What were the ultimate concerns of these early Confucians? From where they derived their sources of inspirations? What did they really aspire to? Did the proposals put forward by them ever provide a solution to what they considered to be the most crucial problems of their times? How should their words, deeds and impacts be evaluated despite the fact that they had hardly fulfilled their self-designated missions? Apart from treating these thinkers each on an individual basis, comparisons between them will also be attempted.
Thus far, observations on Confucianism, made either in a laudatory or deprecatory spirit, have been diversified. In order to foster an original understanding of the subject on the part of the students, both intensive and extensive reading of the major Confucian texts are considered necessary. Students are, therefore, expected to devote much of their efforts to deciphering the primary sources in this course. Need not to say, to familiarize themselves with the current stage of art, they are also expected to study those scholarly works considered to be important in the field.

To enhance fuller understanding of the subject, the approach adopted in this course is not merely philosophical and philological, but indeed interdisciplinary. Attempts will be made to view early Confucianism against the archelogical, economic, socio-political, religious, cultural and historical backgrounds from which it emerged.

Schedule:

While the schedule will have to be determined together with the students, for the sake of reference, its temporary version is shown as follows:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>WEEKS</th>
<th>SUBJECTS</th>
<th>PERSON/S IN CHARGE</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Instructor</td>
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<td>Background</td>
<td>Instructor</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Reading the <em>Analects</em> I</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>Reading the <em>Mencius</em> I</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Reading the <em>Mencius</em> III</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Overview of Hsun Tzu’s Thought</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Reading the <em>Hsun Tzu</em> I</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Reading the <em>Hsun Tzu</em> II</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Reading the <em>Hsun Tzu</em> III</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Comparing Mencius and Hsun Tzu</td>
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**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.

**Grading Scheme:**

1. Attendance and participation in classroom discussions: 20%.
2. A presentation that demonstrates a good mastery of the primary sources: 30%.
3. A literature review on important scholarly works as assigned by the instructor. The review, approximately 8000 words in length, should show good understanding of the scholarship in the field: 50%.

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