Objectives:

This course is designed to introduce Confucianism as a major intellectual and spiritual tradition not only in China and East Asia, but also in the global community of today. It seeks to trace how and explain why Confucianism, as a system of thought originating from the ancient Chinese state of Lu, was first established as the Orthodoxy of the whole nation, then widely adopted by its neighboring countries in East Asia, and has most recently been 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 region of East Asia for more than a century ever since the intrusion of the Western powers in the mid-19th Century. However, beginning the 1970s, as scholars are increasingly turning 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 undergoing a process of “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 entered 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 the testimony given by a Western scholar who proclaims himself 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 a comparative approach for the very reason that the history of Confucianism is indeed both an international and intercultural phenomenon. Rather than purely 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 some of the most enduring and powerful forces that enable 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 adjusted 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.

**Schedule of Lectures and Tutorials:**

<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>7 Sept</td>
<td>1. What the course is about?</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>Lecture</td>
<td>Reading References</td>
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<td>L2. Confucius as both transmitter and innovator</td>
<td>Yao, <em>An Introduction to Confucianism</em>, 21-26; Schwartz, <em>The World of Thought in Ancient China</em>, 56-134</td>
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<td>L4. Defenders of the Way (II): Hsun-tzu</td>
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<td>L5-6. Confucianism as compared to major Pre-Qin’s schools and its establishment as the state orthodoxy</td>
<td>Yao, <em>An Introduction to Confucianism</em>, 68-71, 81-86</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>28 Sept</td>
<td>L7. The Confucian Revival (I): Challenges from Neo-Daoism and Buddhism and its initial responses in Wei-jin and Tang</td>
<td>Yao, <em>An Introduction to Confucianism</em>, 89-96</td>
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<td>L8. The Confucian Revival (II): Neo-Confucianism in Song and Ming</td>
<td>Yao, <em>An Introduction to Confucianism</em>, 96-115</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>5 Oct</td>
<td>T1. Students’ presentation on Confucius</td>
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<td>T2. Students’ presentation on Mencius and Hsun-tzu</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>12 Oct</td>
<td>T3. Students’ presentation on comparison of Confucianism with major schools in Pre-Qin</td>
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<td>T4. Students’ presentation on Neo-Confucian responses to Daoist and Buddhist challenges</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>2 Nov</td>
<td>L10. The Adaptation of Confucianism in Japan</td>
<td>Yao, <em>An Introduction to Confucianism</em>, 125-137; Chang &amp; Kalmanson, 52-66</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>9 Nov</td>
<td>16 Nov</td>
<td>23 Nov</td>
<td>30 Nov</td>
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<td>T5. Students’ presentation on Korean Confucianism</td>
<td>L11. Confucianism in Modern China</td>
<td>L12. Confucianism in the West</td>
<td>T7. Students’ presentation on Confucianism in Modern China</td>
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<td>T6. Students’ presentation on Japanese Confucianism</td>
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<td>T8. Students’ presentation on Confucianism in the West</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yao, <em>An Introduction to Confucianism</em>, 245-286</td>
<td>Same as the above</td>
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**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 (10%):
   - Attendance will be counted right after the add-drop period. 1% will be deducted every time when students are found absent without any reasonable excuse.
   - Students who do not turn on their video will only receive 0.5% per lecture even if Zoom records their attendance of the meeting.
   - Students are expected to involve actively in classroom discussions.
   - To take leave, students must send apologies to the TA in advance, if possible, while producing such necessary documents as medical certificates or invitation letters to conference or interview afterwards.

2. Tutorial presentation (25%):
   - Students are 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”.

3. Essay (35%):
Students are required to write an essay on the basis of their careful reading of the entire set of primary sources for their tutorial presentation.

Note that in order to write a good essay, they might also need to consult other secondary sources, such as other scholarly works and journal articles.

The essay should be within 2000 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 Monday on November 23. 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%):

There will be an open book examination for two hours at the end of the semester, covering materials of both lectures and tutorials.

**Basic References:**


**Important Source books:**


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

II. Chinese Confucianism:
17. Munro, Donald. *Images of Human Nature: A Sung Portrait.* Princeton:
III. Korean Confucianism:

IV. Japanese Confucianism:


V. Confucianism in the Modern Age:


2. Yang, Feng-gang and Joseph Tamney, eds. Confucianism and Spiritual Traditions in Modern China and Beyond. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2012. [ ]


9. Rozman, Gilbert, ed. The East Asian Region: Confucian Heritage and Its Modern

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.