

## Introduction to Confucianism

✽ ASIAN 3316 ✕ RELST 3316 ✽

Fall 2011 ✕ T R 2:55-4:10 ✕ 112 Rockefeller Hall

instructor Bruce Rusk  
email brusk@cornell.edu  
phone 255.0723  
office 382Rockefeller Hall  
hours W 11-12 +1:30-2:30 & by app't.



Dedication of a statue of Confucius donated by the Confucian Academy of Hong Kong. Beijing Normal University,

### Introduction

The name of the early Chinese thinker Confucius (551-479 BCE) has come to stand for a variety of social values, political programs, ritual practices, and intellectual commitments in China, in the rest of East Asia, and beyond. In the class we will explore some of the features

that connect and divide these various Confucianisms across time and space. Some of these connections will be ones we draw ourselves, by identifying similarities and differences. Other connections were made by people in the past in the process of creating and identifying traditions.

These issues remain important in the present day. Although Confucianism was once written off as a dead ideology of interest only to historians, a large and perhaps increasing number of people in East Asia and elsewhere identify with values or practices that they or others perceive as Confucian, and some argue that Confucianism is not only compatible with the needs of a modern society but also a source of solutions to contemporary ills. Others, by contrast, see it as an ideology that is used to justify oppression and backwardness.

The principal objective of this class will be to develop knowledge and skills that will allow us to understand how and why the traditions that we call “Confucian” were invented and perpetuated. We will have to work through a number of challenges in moving toward this goal. Most of the sources for understanding Confucianism were, of course, written in Classical Chinese and other East Asian languages, so we will have to consider the limitations of working from translations. Moreover, many texts, especially early ones, were in archaic, difficult, sometimes intentionally ambiguous language, so later readers frequently disagreed about their meaning. Since many of the core texts of Confucianism have been subject to multiple and contradictory interpretations, rather than always trying to find one correct reading we will seek to appreciate the range of different views.

Another challenge in understanding Confucian traditions is that contemporary academic categories such as “religion,” “science,” “philosophy,” and “literature” did not have correlates in the pre-modern world (be it in Asia or the pre-modern West). Hence we cannot expect people or texts to fit neatly with these fields, and will need to be wary of bringing in anachronistic assumptions that terms like “philosopher” can carry with them.

Finally, we will work with only a small fraction of the vast range of chronological and geographic settings in which Confucian texts or teachings were influential. Almost all of our readings will concern China, and many periods of history will be skipped over. Some of the gaps in our readings will be filled in by lectures and discussions, but other courses at Cornell offer much more coverage of other areas (especially Japan, Korea, and Vietnam) and of other time periods.

Together, these apparent limitations will provide an opportunity for us to look closely at a relatively small number of sources. We will read these very carefully and closely to understand not just the basic ideas of important thinkers but also the dynamics of their intellectual and pedagogical practice. We will also engage with the challenging problem of reading texts through multiple layers of interpretation and commentary. These skills have correlates in many other traditions such as Biblical exegesis, Anglo-American law, and Buddhist scriptural interpretation.

### Coverage & Sources

We will read and discuss a variety of materials from the time of Confucius to the present day. All are in English or in English translation—no knowledge of any other language is required or expected.

The following **required textbooks** are available for purchase at the Cornell Store. You may also find them at other bookstores, including online vendors, and in e-book form. Most are also on reserve at Kroch Asia Library reading room.

- Paul Goldin, *Confucianism*
- *Confucius, Analects, With Selections from Traditional Commentaries*, translated by Edward Slingerland
- *The Four Books: The Basic Teachings of the Later Confucian Tradition*, translated by Daniel K. Gardner
- Wilt Idema, *Filial Piety and Its Divine Rewards: The Legend of Dong Yong and Weaving Maiden with Related Texts*
- Michael Nylan, *The Five “Confucian” Classics*
- P.J. Ivanhoe, *Readings from the Lu-Wang School of Neo-Confucianism*

A **required course packet** is also for sale at the Cornell Store. Other materials will be made available on the Blackboard page.

You do not need to bring all the textbooks to class every day, but since we will often be reading particular passages very closely, be sure to bring the materials assigned to a given class meeting along with any other material the instructor specifies. If you have purchased a book in electronic form, please bring your e-book reader.

## Course Requirements

Regular attendance and active participation in class discussions are required and constitute an important component of the course.

**Participation** will count for 30% of your total grade. Your score will be based on active, thoughtful, and well-prepared participation in discussions in class and online, including postings to the Blackboard forum.

For each class meeting, one student will be designated as note-taker and will be responsible for summarizing that day's discussion to post on the Blackboard page. Students will also be assigned to contribute to an online glossary, which will list and define difficult or unfamiliar words that we encounter in our readings. If you know that you will miss a session, please inform the instructor as far in advance as possible; in cases of medical or other emergency, please notify the instructor as soon as possible. In either case, be ready to provide appropriate documentation in a timely fashion or the absence will not be considered excused.

Several **writing assignments** of different lengths will be given over the course of the semester, some in class and some take-home. All will be based on course material and not require outside research. Some will be graded and others will only be checked for completeness (this will be indicated on the assignment).

In addition, you will be asked to **post online** at least six and no more than nine short (300–800 word) **response papers** based on assigned readings. At least three responses must be completed before the fall break and at least three after the break, and only one may be submitted in a given week (none the first or last week of class). They should be posted before the class at which a given reading is to be discussed.

At the end of the semester, you may choose four to six of the assignments, including response papers, written over the course of the semester (include at least one from the first half of the course, before fall break) to revise for a **portfolio**. This should include a summary of the changes you have made and, in the case of materials not submitted online, a copy of the original.

A **take-home final examination** will be based on material (readings/films, lectures, and discussion content) from the whole semester. It will ask for responses in essay form.

## Notice to students with disabilities

Academic adjustments can be made if you have a disability-related need; please discuss them with the instructor as early as possible and provide a letter from Student Disability Services.

### Makeup of final grade

participation	30%
response papers	20%
other writing assignments	20%
portfolio	10%
take-home final	20%

### Grading scale for response papers

×	missing, entirely off-topic, or late	0
✓-	poor work, incomplete, or off-topic	3
✓	satisfactory work, complete and clear	4
✓+	excellent work, exceptionally insightful or thorough	5

**Statement of University Policy**

Together with all the members of this Department, I respect and uphold University policies and regulations pertaining to racial or ethnic discrimination, sexual harassment, assistance available to handicapped, visually and/or hearing impaired students, and the observance of religious holidays. All students are advised to become familiar with the respective University regulations and are encouraged to bring any questions or concerns to our attention. Likewise, all work submitted for this course must be in conform with the Code of Academic Integrity, available at <http://www.cuinfo.cornell.edu/Academic/AIC.html>. In particular, this means that without prior agreement to the contrary all work submitted must be original, written by the student, and produced specifically for this course.

**Statement on Course Materials**

Please note that the course packet and other course materials are copyrighted and you do not have permission to distribute them to third parties for reproduction. In particular, private companies that request to purchase course materials from students have not been authorized by the instructor or the University.

**Schedule** (subject to change)

<b>Day</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Reading</b>
R 8/25	Introduction	
T 8/30	Definitions	Bell and Chan, "Domestic Workers" (BB) Delury, "Harmonious in China" (BB)
R 9/1		Meyer, "Familism" (CP) Warner, "In Search of Confucian HRM" (CP)
T 9/6	Origins & Elaborations	Sommer, "Ritual and Sacrifice in Early Confucianism" (CP) GC, 1–30
R 9/8		CA, 1–38 (Books 1–4)
T 9/13		CA, 64–77
R 9/15		"Critics" (BB) CA, selections
T 9/20	Defense & Consolidation	GC, 31–97 4B, 53–103 ( <i>Mencius</i> )
R 9/22		5C, 1–119
T 9/27	Empire & Expansion	5C, selections
R 9/29		<i>Classic of Filial Piety</i> (BB)
T 10/4		FP, "Introduction" and 1–7 <i>24 Exemplars of Filial Piety</i> (BB)
R 10/6		5C, selections
Fall Break		
R 10/13	Rediscovery & New Origins	FP, 8–28
T 10/18		4B, "Introduction," "Great Learning," "Maintaining Perfect Balance," Conclusion
R 10/20	Case Study: Learning of the Mind	LW, Part One
T 10/25		LW, Part Two
R 10/27		LW, Part Three
T 11/1	Revelations	FP, 9–43
R 11/3		Clart, "Confucius and the Mediums" (CP)
T 11/8		Park, "Funerary Transformations in Contemporary South Korea" (CP)
R 11/10		
T 11/15	A Post-Confucian World?	5C, 307–361 Chang, "The Bulwark" (CP)
R 11/19		Tu Wei-Ming, "Confucian Ethics Today" (CP)
T 11/22		Yao, <i>Confucian Capitalism</i> (CP)
Thanksgiving		
T 11/29	Post-Post-Confucianism?	Billioud, "Jiaohua" and "Anshen liming" (CP) Sun, "Fate of Confucianism" (CP)
R 12/1		
F 12/9	Portfolio due 2:00 pm, to mailbox in 381 Rockefeller Hall	
W 12/14	Final examination due by 2:00 pm, to mailbox in 381 Rockefeller	
BB—Blackboard   CA— <i>Confucius, Analects</i>   CP—Course Packet   GC—Goldin, <i>Confucianism</i>   4B— <i>The Four Books</i> FP— <i>Filial Piety and Its Divine Rewards</i>   5C— <i>The Five "Confucian" Classics</i>   LW— <i>Readings from the Lu-Wang School</i>		