

Reading Classical Chinese Philosophy

Syllabus
Fall 2001

Stephen C. Angle
Wesleyan University

I. Description and Goals

This course is designed to give students with no previous background in Chinese access to important philosophical texts in Classical Chinese. Over the semester, students will learn the basic grammar and core vocabulary of Chinese philosophical texts from the Warring States era (5th c. – 3rd c. BCE). Students will also read contemporary secondary scholarship on the passages and texts they study. The goal of the class is thus to allow students to engage more deeply with our texts on both linguistic and philosophical levels. To understand the goals of the class, it may be helpful to consider the following response from a former student in the class who was asked what portion of the class was devoted to language and what devoted to philosophy: "It was all a language class, and all a philosophy class."

Students should find this class to be both an end in itself and a gateway to future explorations. They will begin to be able to analyze and assess the ideas and texts of ancient Chinese philosophy at a high level, which should be intrinsically rewarding. The skills they learn, with the help of the Wenlin computer program to which they will be introduced, moreover, should allow them to explore new texts and ideas after the completion of this class.

II. Required Texts and Materials

1. Björkstén, *Learn to Write Chinese Characters*
2. Pulleyblank, *Outline of Classical Chinese Grammar*
3. Mathews, *Chinese-English Dictionary*
4. Coursepack (with secondary essays)
5. Various materials that will be made available on-line

III. Requirements

The requirements for the course are two 5-page papers, a midterm, and a final, as well as attendance in class and at the weekly, mandatory TA sessions. Each paper will count toward one-quarter of the final grade; the midterm will count toward one-eighth, and the final exam will count toward three-eighths. There will also be brief ungraded quizzes each class, memorization exercises, and the expectation of active participation in class discussions on Thursdays (when we discuss the secondary essay).

This course requires substantial and sustained work outside of class, including practice memorizing and writing characters and work with on-line sound files for practice with pronunciation. One quiz per week will include the recitation from memory of part of that week's text, evaluation of which will include both accuracy and pronunciation.

The two weekly class meetings will be roughly divided between introducing vocabulary and grammar (first class) and discussing the text(s) and essay for that week (second class), though there will be some crossing of this boundary in each direction. The weekly TA session will be primarily devoted to language issues.

IV. Schedule of Weeks

Week 1

Introduction of main concepts

Reading/exercises from Bjorkstein pp. 4-48

Begin learning some characters (子曰君成人小反)

Week 2 / Lesson 1

Text: *Lunyu* (LY) 12.16, 13.23, 2.13 (15 characters + 1 rare)

Grammar: verbal sentence, the conjunction 而, subordination and other uses of *zhī* 之, adjectives

Essay: Section on “*junzi*” in Hall & Ames, *Thinking Through Confucius* (pp. 176-192)

Week 3 / Lesson 2

Text: LY 12.1 (22 characters, + 2 rare)

Grammar: questions, imperatives, topicalization and time topics, *yān* 焉, *yóu* 由

Essay: Shun, “*Ren and Li in the Analects*”

[First paper assigned]

Week 4 / Lesson 3

Text: *Mozi* (MZ) selection from 35 (32 characters + 1 rare)

Grammar: nominalization with *zhě* 者, loan characters (發 for 廢), coverbs (esp. *yǐ* 以)

Essay: “*Mozi’s Theory of Language*,” in Hansen, *A Daoist Theory of Chinese Thought* (pp. 143-50)

Week 5 / Lesson 4

Text: *Mengzi* (MC) 2a6 (partial), 7a17 (31 characters + 4 rare)

Grammar: nominal sentences, nominalization with *suǒ*, negation with *wú* 無 and *fēi* 非

Essay: Nivison, “*Problems in the Mengzi: 7A17*”

[First paper due: Friday, 10/5]

Week 6 / Lesson 5

Text: MC 6a10 (partial), 7b31 (partial) (19 characters + 1 rare)

Grammar: more nominal sentences, final particle *yě* 也 vs. *yì* 矣, compound verbs (include. 可 as passive marker)

Essay: Nivison, “*On Translating Mencius*”

IV. Schedule of Weeks (cont'd)Week 7

Tuesday: No class (Fall Break)

Thursday (10/18): Midterm

Week 8 / Lesson 6

Text: *Dao De Jing* (DDJ) 1 (24 characters + 1 rare)

Grammar: numbers, punctuation (and unpunctuated texts)

Essay: Csiksentmihalyi, "Mysticism and Apophatic Discourse in the *Laozi*"

Supplementary: compare with received DDJ 1 text

Week 9 / Lesson 7

Text: DDJ 25 (21 characters + 5 rare)

Grammar: review of negation, more on passive voice

Essay: Chan, *Two Visions of the Way*, "Introduction," "The Dialectic of *Wu* and *Li*," and "The 'One': Cosmological Speculation in the Ho-shang Kung Commentary" (pp. 1-13, 57-68, 122-33)

Supplementary: ancient script exercise with Guodian DDJ 25 fragment

Week 10 / Lesson 8

Text: *Zhuangzi* (ZZ) 2.5 (22 characters + 3 rare)

Grammar: review demonstrative pronouns, review time words, comparisons with 如, 若, and 猶.

Essay: Ivanhoe, "Was Zhuangzi a Relativist?"

[Second paper assigned]

Week 11 / Lesson 9

Text: ZZ 3.1 (31 characters + 20 rare)

Grammar: superlatives, review of ways to express reasons and/or motives

Essay: Eno, "Cook Ding's *Dao* and the Limits of Philosophy"

Week 11.5/Lesson 10 (21 characters + 11 rare)

Text: ZZ 2.7

Grammar: other question words, all and some with 凡 and 或, pre-classical copula 唯

No Essay (short week)

Week 12 / Lesson 11

Text: Xunzi 19.1 (21 characters + 2 rare)

Grammar: pivot and causative structures, conditionals

Essay: Wong, "Xunzi on Moral Motivation"

[Second paper due: Friday, 11/30]

Week 13

Review: all grammar and all 266 characters are fair game for the final

Supplementary: discuss subsequent developments of philosophical literary Chinese, and how to use what you've learned, Wenlin, and other tools to help you read other things