

## History of Chinese Political Thought

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**Office Hours:** 3-5pm on Fridays and by appointments

### Course Description

This is a survey course on the history of (pre-modern) Chinese political thought, which most of us rarely encounter in any systematic manner. Among academics, there is no shortage of ink spilled on Chinese politics. Nor is there a shortage of courses on it. Yet, surprisingly, the recent surge of interest on China has not led to the increase of courses on Chinese political theories. This course fulfills this gap by giving students a general sense of what it means to *think* politically from Chinese perspectives. Note my pluralistic rendition of what it means to be Chinese. In other words, by taking this course, students will not be fed a master narrative on the essence of Chineseness but will be exposed to a great variety of distinctive voices that influenced the history of Chinese political thought.

On this philosophical journey, we will try to see the world like these native Chinese thinkers. Nevertheless, we do live in a different time than most of these thinkers. As such, students are encouraged to speculate about how such differences may help us think through or challenge contemporary Western concepts such as rights, liberty, equality, power, and justice. All in all, by taking this class, students should be ready to either question or polish the very framework that defines for them what it means to study politics.

### Learning Goals

1. Learn to distinguish different concerns and approaches to politics in the history of Chinese political thought
2. Learn to treat Chinese concepts independently of Western ones as well as compare and contrast them
3. Learn to construct mutually intelligible arguments in a cross-cultural community composed of different individuals and traditions

### Course Materials

#### Required Texts:

- Ivanhoe and Van Norden, 2005. *Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed (Hackett)
- Tiwald and Van Norden, 2014. *Readings in Later Chinese Philosophy* (Hackett)
- Patricia Ebrey, 2010. *The Cambridge Illustrated History of China* (Cambridge University Press)

### Recommended Readings:

- Li Feng, 2013. *Early China: A Social and Cultural History* (Cambridge University Press)
- Gideon Shelach-Lavi, 2015. *The Archaeology of Early China: From Prehistory to the Han Dynasty* (Cambridge University Press)
- Peter Bol, 2008. *Neo-Confucianism in History* (Harvard University Press)

### **Course Assignments, Requirements, and Grading**

Since this is a text-based survey course, students are expected to finish the assigned readings (on average, about 30 pages for each lecture) with *patience and care* before each lecture. The reason why I emphasize a careful and patient reading of the texts is that they contain *unfamiliar* ideas. You may find some of them surprising, some interesting, some stimulating, and others disagreeable and distasteful. However, to let these ideas facilitate your intellectual growth, you must take them seriously first by reading the texts carefully.

I expect students to come to each lecture with some basic familiarity with the philosophical content assigned for the day. Students should have some questions and be ready to raise them during class. The lectures will be interactive, which means that students should be prepared for engagements. The class discussion after the lecture will also be more beneficial to your learning, if you have reflected on the political ideas in these texts before class. All of this is to say that regular attendance is crucial to succeeding in this course.

Texting, browsing, emailing, etc., during class distracts you and others, and so I respectfully ask that all laptops, phones, and other electronic devices be disconnected from the Internet during class. We are likely to retain more of the information covered in class if we take handwritten notes, so I also encourage bringing a notebook and pen.

### Your final grade will be calculated based on the following factors:

1. *One argumentative essays (20% each)*
  - a. 5-6 pages, 12pt, one inch, Palatino Linotype
  - b. The topics are up to you but each essay must take on at least two thinkers, e.g., you can evaluate whether Mozi's criticisms of Confucianism are convincing or whether or not Wang Yangming may have misunderstood Zhu Xi.
  - c. **No late submission will be accepted without a legitimate excuse.**
2. *Two examinations: midterm (20%) and final (30%)*
  - a. Both the midterm and final examinations are accumulative.
  - b. Both examinations consist solely of essay-type questions.
3. *Discussion Notes (20%)*
  - a. After finishing each reading, you should prepare a reading report of 150 words (about one paragraph), which should reflect your initial reactions that you

would like to discuss in class. This assignment is to ensure that you always have something to contribute to class discussions.

**b. Bring a HARD COPY to every class**

c. I will collect them randomly **ten times** throughout the course. I grade them based on your effort and completion, which will be marked by an S for satisfactory. However, if you get **three** OUTSTANDING grades from me, which indicates that your discussion note contains real insights and understanding of the text, your final exam grade (not your overall grade) will be bumped up for half a letter grade, e.g., B+ to A-.

d. Your grade for this section will be calculated based on the following distribution

- |               |                |
|---------------|----------------|
| i. 10 S's=A   | v. 6 S's=B-    |
| ii. 9 S's=A-  | vi. 5 S's=C+   |
| iii. 8 S's=B+ | vii. 4 S's=C   |
| iv. 7 S's=B   | viii. 3 S's=C- |

4. *Exceptional class participation will be considered as a plus when I calculate your final grades.* In other words, consider our class time an opportunity for you to earn extra credits.

**All class-related activities are covered by the Honor Code\***

\* If there are any factors that might hinder your success in this course, please see the following statement. Also, please talk to me immediately and I will do whatever I can to make class materials more accessible. All information will remain confidential according to university policy.

- o *The University of Virginia strives to provide accessibility to all students. If you require an accommodation to fully access this course, please contact the Student Disability Access Center (SDAC) at (434) 243-5180 or [sdac@virginia.edu](mailto:sdac@virginia.edu). If you are unsure if you might benefit from an accommodation, or to learn more about their services, you may contact the SDAC at the number above or by visiting their website at [www.sdac.studenthealth.virginia.edu](http://www.sdac.studenthealth.virginia.edu).*

**CLASS SCHEDULE**

*A note on the readings: although the pre-modern texts of Chinese philosophy are not organized thematically, weekly lectures will be presented to you thematically, which cites passages from both assigned readings of the week. Therefore, it is recommended that you stay at least one lecture ahead of the reading schedule. For example, my first lecture on Confucius assumes that you have also done the reading for the second half of the assigned reading on Confucius. More importantly,*

students are encouraged to challenge those labels I give to individual thinkers in the reading schedule. They are expected to come up with their own narratives on the development of Chinese political thought.

1. Introduction: The Origins of Chinese Civilization

- Patricia Ebrey, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of China*, chaps. 1-2
- Li Feng, *Early China*, chap. 7 (optional)

Week One—Classical/Pre-Imperial China

2. Confucius 孔子: Restoring the Ancient Rites (I)

- Ivanhoe and Van Norden, pp. 1-20
- Li Feng, *Early China*, chap. 8 (optional)

3. Confucius 孔子: Restoring the Ancient Rites (II)

- Ivanhoe and Van Norden, pp. 20-54

Week Two

4. Mozi 墨子: Impartial Love (I)

- Ivanhoe and Van Norden, pp. 68-90
- Li Feng, *Early China*, chap. 9 (optional)

5. Mozi 墨子: Impartial Love (II)

- Ivanhoe and Van Norden, pp. 90-111

Week Three

6. Mencius 孟子: Defender of Benevolent Governance (I)

- Ivanhoe and Van Norden, pp. 115-137
- Li Feng, *Early China*, chap. 10 (optional)

7. Mencius 孟子: Defender of Benevolent Governance (II)

- Ivanhoe and Van Norden, pp. 137-157

Week Four

8. Laozi 老子: The Daoist Libertarian (I)

- Ivanhoe and Van Norden, pp. 161-183

9. Laozi 老子: The Daoist Libertarian (II)

- Ivanhoe and Van Norden, pp. 183-203

### Week Five—Essay Due

10. Zhuangzi 莊子: Dissolving Dichotomies (I)
  - Ivanhoe and Van Norden, pp. 207-231
11. Zhuangzi 莊子: Dissolving Dichotomies (II)
  - Ivanhoe and Van Norden, pp. 231-260

### Week Six

12. Xunzi 荀子: Confucian Realism (I)
  - Ivanhoe and Van Norden, pp. 261-286
13. Xunzi 荀子: Confucian Realism (II)
  - Ivanhoe and Van Norden, pp. 286-307

### Week Seven

14. Hanfeizi 韓非子: Legalism as State Consequentialism (I)
  - Patricia Ebrey, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of China*, chap. 3
  - Ivanhoe and Van Norden, pp. 311-335
  - Li Feng, *Early China*, chap. 11 (optional)
15. Hanfeizi 韓非子: Legalism as State Consequentialism (II)
  - Ivanhoe and Van Norden, pp. 335-359

### Week Eight—Imperial China

16. Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒: The Start of Imperial Confucianism (I)
  - Tiwald and Van Norden, pp. 1-26
  - Li Feng, *Early China*, chap. 13 (optional)
17. Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒: The Start of Imperial Confucianism (II)
  - Tiwald and Van Norden, pp. 26-54

### Week Nine

18. Chinese Buddhism (I)
  - Tiwald and Van Norden, pp. 68-80
  - Patricia Ebrey, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of China*, chap. 4
19. Chinese Buddhism (II)
  - Tiwald and Van Norden, pp. 91-111
  - Patricia Ebrey, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of China*, chap. 5

### Week Ten – Midterm

#### 20. The Rise of Neo-Confucianism (I): The Formative Stage

- Tiwald and Van Norden, pp. 112-133, 134-136, 143-52, 158-167
- Patricia Ebrey, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of China*, chap. 6
- Peter Bol, *Neo-Confucianism in History*, chap. 1 (optional)

### Week Eleven

#### 21. The Rise of Neo-Confucianism (II): Zhu Xi 朱熹's Synthesis

- Tiwald and Van Norden, pp. 168-203
- Peter Bol, *Neo-Confucianism in History*, chap. 2 (optional)

#### 22. The Rise of Neo-Confucianism (III): Zhu Xi 朱熹's Synthesis

- Tiwald and Van Norden, pp. 203-230
- Peter Bol, *Neo-Confucianism in History*, chap. 3 (optional)

### Week Twelve

#### 23. Diversifications Within Neo-Confucianism (I): Lu Xiangshan 陸象山's Critique of Zhu Xi

- Tiwald and Van Norden, pp. 231-238, 251-260

#### 24. Diversifications Within Neo-Confucianism (II): Wang Yangming 王陽明's Critique of Zhu Xi

- Patricia Ebrey, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of China*, chaps. 7-8
- Tiwald and Van Norden, pp. 238-250, 261-279

### Week Thirteen

#### 25. Women and Gender

- Tiwald and Van Norden, pp. 55-67, 290-307

#### 26. New Developments in Confucianism (I): Huang Zongxi 黃宗羲 and the Chinese Enlightenment

- Tiwald and Van Norden, pp. 308-336
- Patricia Ebrey, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of China*, chaps. 9

### Week Fourteen

#### 27. New Developments in Confucianism (II): Dai Zhen 戴震 and Zhang Xuecheng 章學誠

- Tiwald and Van Norden, pp. 337-351