

**INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY:
PERSPECTIVES FROM CLASSICAL CHINA**



**First Year Seminar 10-19
Macalester College
Fall 1993**

✍ Professor Russell Kirkland
📍 Old Main 105
🕒 TTh 1-2 & by appt.
☎ 6151

The Purpose of the Course

Many of the issues in contemporary American society reflect the specific cultural and historical circumstances that have shaped its evolution. Yet, many other current issues reflect perennial concerns - concerns endemic to any civilized society. This course will explore those perennial concerns through the eyes of a unique group of thinkers -- the thinkers of classical China.

At about the same time that Socrates, Plato and Aristotle were trying to put human life into perspective in Greece, a similar Golden Age of Thought was occurring in ancient China. The best-known of the ancient Chinese thinkers is **Confucius**, whose humanistic moral and social principles have molded the Chinese family, government and society for twenty-five centuries. But in ancient times, the ideals of Confucius and his followers were hotly debated. The **Mohist** school, for instance, rejected the Confucian emphasis on stratified social relationships: it espoused an egalitarian society based upon "universal compassion" and submission to "the will of Heaven." The **Taoist** school, meanwhile, questioned those values as well: it advocated a life of quiet simplicity in harmony with the order of nature. And the totalitarian **Legalist** school rejected all thought and culture: it advanced a militant political philosophy that sacrificed all human values to the power of the state.

The debates that raged among those and other schools raised many fundamental human issues -- issues concerning the relation of the individual to the family, the state, the social order, the natural order, and the divine. This course will attempt to stimulate sensitivity to -- and critical analysis of -- such enduring moral, social, political, and religious issues. In this course, we will first read a few pertinent writings by Western thinkers of various periods. The majority of the course will then be dedicated to the reading of extensive selections from representatives of the diverse schools of thought of classical China, and the views of modern interpreters. The emphasis in class will be upon dialogue among the participants. We will discuss each text in detail, and attempt to work out its meaning. In particular, we will be looking for indications of how the attitudes and values of each thinker compares with those seen in rival schools.

Grading will be based primarily upon a series of brief essays, in which participants analyze and compare the treatment of important themes in the readings. Careful attention will be given to writing, in two main ways: (1) class time will be devoted to discussion of techniques for clear and effective writing, and (2) in responding to participants' papers, the instructor will work to provide constructive suggestions for more effective writing.

You are entirely welcome to chat with me at any time after class, or during office hours. At other times, you may leave me a message ((6151). You may call me at home at any time that your life is in immediate danger (though I would recommend dialing 911 instead).

 **Texts** (available at bookstore)

Frederick Mote, *Intellectual Foundations of China* (2nd ed.)

Herbert Fingarette, *Confucius: The Secular as Sacred*

D. C. Lau, trans., *Confucius: The Analects*

D. C. Lau, trans., *Mencius*

D. C. Lau, trans., *Lao-tzu: Tao te ching*

Burton Watson, trans., *Basic Writings of Chuang-tzu*

Burton Watson, trans., *Basic Writings of Mo-tzu, Hsün-tzu, and Han-fei-tzu*

Recommended Texts: Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*

Benjamin Schwartz, *The World of Thought in Ancient China*

A. C. Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*

P. J. Ivanhoe, *Ethics in the Confucian Tradition*

Other works (marked below thus *) will be found on reserve at the library. In addition, the following materials are also required:

Chris Anson & Lance Wilcox, *A Field Guide to Writing* (the FSEM standard)

Joseph Gibaldi & Walter Achart, *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 3rd ed.

 **Requirements**

 Regular class attendance

 Timely completion of **all** required readings

 Three essays [each 1/3 of course grade]

Constructive participation in class will also be taken into consideration. Incompletes will be granted only by prior arrangement, and only in truly exceptional situations; failure to plan properly for the end-of-semester workload does **not** constitute such a situation.

COURSE OUTLINE AND READINGS

[Recommended readings are in square brackets]

PRELIMINARY REFLECTIONS: THE GOOD PERSON AND THE GOOD SOCIETY

Readings from Aristotle, Alexis de Tocqueville, John Dewey, Peter Berger, Alasdair MacIntyre, and the Rev. Jesse Jackson

* Reinhold Niebuhr, "The Individual and the Community": selections

[* Reinhold Niebuhr, "Man's Nature and his Communities"]

* Robert Bellah, *Habits of the Heart*: selections

* MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*: 1-11 [349-88] 389-403

THE WORLD OF ANCIENT CHINA

Graham: 1-8; Mote: xi-xiii, 1-25; Schwartz: [1-15, 40-55]

CONFUCIUS

Mote: 26-46

Lau, trans., *Analects*: as assigned

Fingarette: vii-79

* Ivanhoe, "Reweaving the 'One Thread' of the *Analects*" (extracts)

Schwartz: [56-67] 67-85 [85-99] 99-102 [102-17] 117-27; Graham: [9-33]

A POSTMODERN CONFUCIANISM

* Tu Wei-ming, *Confucian Thought*: 51-64 [67-90]

🎥 **Video**: *A World of Ideas: Bill Moyers with Tu Wei-ming*

MO-TZU

Mote: 77-83; Graham: 33-36 [41-51]

Watson, trans., *Basic Writings of Mo-tzu...*: 34-49, 78-109, 117-23 [124-36]

Schwartz: [135-38] 138-45 [145-64] 168-72

MENCIUS

Mote: 46-54; Graham: 107-111 [111-32]; Schwartz: 173-79, 184-85 [255-90]

Lau, trans., *Mencius*: as assigned

Ivanhoe, *Ethics in the Confucian Tradition*: 5-14, 30-36, 49-60, 73-79, 91-101

HSÜN-TZU

Mote: 54-58, 94-95

Watson, trans., *Basic Writings of...Hsün-tzu...*: 157-71, 15-55, 79-119

* Ivanhoe, "A Happy Symmetry: Xunzi's Ethical Thought"

Schwartz: 290-91 [291-316] 316-20; Graham: [235-61]

THE CHUNG-YUNG

* Chan, *Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy*: 433-443: *The Chung-yung*

THE TAO TE CHING ("LAO-TZU")

Kirkland, "Taoism," and other readings (Handout)

Graham: 170-72; * Kirkland, "Text and Method: Interpreting the *Tao te ching*"

Graham: 215-19 [219-34] 234-35; Mote: 59-73

Lau, trans., *Tao te ching*: 57-143; 7-52, 163-74, 147-62

Schwartz: [186-205] 205-15

NB: Other versions of the *Tao te ching* (on Reserve): Chan, Henricks.

CHUANG-TZU

Mote: 73-76, 92-94; * Graham, *Chuang-tzu*: 3-33

Watson, *Chuang-tzu: Basic Writings*: 1-140

Schwartz: [215-29] 229-33 [233-37]

* Ivanhoe, "Skepticism, Skill & the Ineffable *Tao*"