

## The Taoist Tradition

### Instructor

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### Institution

Division of Social Science  
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### Course Level and Type

Undergraduate class

### Hours of Instruction

3 hours / week; 15 weeks

### Enrolment and Last Year Taught

22 students, Spring 2001

### Course Description:

This course explores the rich heritage of Chinese Taoist tradition by examining Taoist philosophical discourse, religious movements, and techniques for achieving longevity and immortality. We begin with the cosmology contained in the *Book of Changes* and the philosophy in the two most important Taoist texts *Lao-tzu* and *Chuang-tzu*. We will then study the development of Taoist religion (founder, rituals, festivals, immortals and deities, sects, scriptures, etc.) and understand how Taoist philosophy and worldview have been carried into daily practice (= alchemy, meditation, and *ch'i-kung* [exercise of circulating vital energy]). The course is lecture with discussion, supplemented with audio-visual presentations. Readings include primary texts in translation and secondary works.

### Required Books:

1. Lau, D. C. trans. *Lao Tzu: Tao Te Ching*. [First Published in 1963] Penguin, 1974.
2. Schipper, Kristofer. *The Taoist Body*, translated by Karen C. Duval. [First Published in 1982] Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993.
3. Watson, Burton trans. *Chuang Tzu: Basic Writings*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1964. [New Edition: 1996]
4. Wilhelm/Baynes, *The I Ching (or Book of Changes)*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1977.
5. Liu, I-ming. *Awakening to the Tao*, translated by Thomas Cleary. Boston: Shambhala, 1988.

### Grading Policy:

90-100 = <b>A</b> (excellent)
80-89 = <b>B</b> (good)
70-79 = <b>C</b> (average)
60-69 = <b>D</b> (below average)
Below 60 = <b>F</b> (Fail)

Class Attendance & Participation: <b>10%</b>
Three Short Papers: <b>45%</b>
Quizzes and Final Exam: <b>15%</b>
One Term Paper: <b>25%</b>
Term Paper Presentation: <b>5%</b>

- I. **Class Attendance and Participation (10%):** Aside from attendance, you are expected to participate in class discussion & give oral reports.
- II. **Three Short Papers (45%)** on the given questions: Each is approximately **4 to 5 pages, typed, and doubled space**. All are due at beginning of the class. To be fair to everyone, the highest grade for a late paper (within three days after the deadline) is **C** unless you have legitimate reasons with documented proof. An excellent paper means 1) a careful and comprehensive study of the readings, 2) a critical and thoughtful way of thinking, 3) an effective response to the questions, and 4) with clarity and sufficient textual evidence.

- III. **Quizzes and Final Exam (15%):** Questions are drawn from the assigned readings, lectures, and films. Final Exam will be scheduled in the Exam Week.  
Format: Multiple-choice, True/False, Proper Link, or Short Essay Questions.
- IV. **One Term Paper (25%) and Oral Presentation (5%):** Write a paper (9-12 pages, typed, and doubled space) on any topic related to Taoism. To give just a few examples:
- 1) Discuss Taoist cosmology, concept of non-action, etc.
  - 2) Provide a comparative study of Taoism and Western philosophers' views toward ethics, knowledge, language, etc.
  - 3) Discuss the impact of Taoism on the West.

Toward the end of the semester, you are required to give a **15-min. oral presentation of your paper**. The final version of your term paper should be based on the comments given by Professor Hsieh and classmates.

**Required Contents of Paper Proposal** (Due: the Mon. right after Midterm Break)

- 1) Topic
- 2) What to Discuss and How to Proceed.
- 3) Annotated Bibliography→List 3 to 5 references, summarizing its main thesis and explaining why you use it as your reference.

**Note:** Your references must include at least two scholarly books (2 articles or 2 websites = 1 book) published by prestigious or authoritative University Press/Publishing Inc. Do not paste directly from the website and be careful about your source origins. "Research" means you discover new points aside from our class readings and textbooks and your paper demonstrate serious theoretical reflections and scholarly research.

**Term Paper Due:** Last Day of the Class

- V. **Meeting with Instructor:** At least one meeting for each of you will be scheduled before the proposal due. Focus will be on your term paper and progress of your learning.

**Course Schedule: Discussion Issues, Readings, Papers Topics, and Due Dates**

**Week 1**---Introduction  
**Week 2-3**---The *Book of Change*  
**Week 4-5**---*Lao-tzu*  
**Week 6-7**---*Chuang-tzu*  
**Week 8**---Neo-Taoism  
**Week 9**---Midterm Break  
**Week 10-11**---Religious Taoism  
**Week 12-13**---Techniques of Longevity and Immortality  
**Week 14-15**---Term Paper Presentation  
**Week 16**---Course Evaluation and Final Exam Review

**Week 1**

**Mon.**---Course format, purposes, requirements, and readings.

**Wed.**---Introduction to Chinese Religious Traditions

**Fri.**---The Ancient Chinese Worldview: Correlative Cosmology.

Reading: The *I Ching*, "**Foreword**" by C. G. Jung, and "**Introduction**."

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**Week 2**

**Mon.**---Holiday (No Class)

**Wed.**---Yin-Yang & Five Elements: "Complementary Bipolarity and Cyclical Periodicity."

Reading: The *I Ching*, "Ch'ien" (Heaven) & "K'un" (Earth), pp. 3-15 and "Great Treatise," pp. 369-397.

**Fri.**---Divination: From Oracle Bone Inscriptions to the *Book of Changes*.

Reading: The *I Ching*, "Great Treatise," pp. 280-303.

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### Week 3

**Mon.**---Confucius and the *Book of Changes*.

Reading: "Great Treatise," pp. 304-324.

**Wed.**---Class Discussion on the Worldview contained in the *Book of Changes*.

Reading: The *I Ching*, "Great Treatise," pp. 325-355.

**Fri.**---Consulting the *Book of Changes*.

Reading: *I Ching*, "Appendix: On Consulting the Oracle," pp. 721-724.

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### Week 4

**Mon.**---Individual Report of Fortune-telling by Using *Book of Changes* [**Paper #1 Due**]

**Paper #1:** Use the *Book Of Changes* for Divination. The paper should include:

- 1) What is your question?
- 2) What is the result? That is, which hexagram you've got by using coins or sticks? If there is the change in the lines, you will have to consult the 2nd hexagram and take it into account. Give the number of the hexagram and the page of the book when you cite those passages.
- 3) Provide your analysis and interpretation of the result. Your interpretation should indicate your understanding of **the worldview contained in the *Book Of Changes***.

**Wed.**---Historical Background of Lao Tzu

Reading: *Lao-tzu*, "Introduction."

**Fri.**---The Concept of Tao in *Lao-tzu*

Reading: *Lao-tzu*, Part One: I-XX.

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### Week 5

**Mon.**--- "Non-action"

**Video:** "Taoism" [25 min.] BL1920.T36 1981

Reading: *Lao-tzu*, Part One: XXI-XXXVII.

**Wed.**---Humans and Nature

Reading: *Lao-tzu*, Part One: XXXVIII-LV.

**Fri.**---Lao-tzu's Vision of An Ideal Society and View of "Knowledge"

Reading: *Lao-tzu*, Part Two: LVI-LX.

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### Week 6

**Mon.**---Class Discussion on *Lao-tzu*

Reading: *Lao-tzu*, Part Two: LXI-LXXXI.

[Choose one or two passages that you think inspiring, interesting, or confusing.]

**Wed.**---Chuang-tzu (c. 369-286 B. C. E.) the person and *Chuang-tzu* the work

Reading: Watson, trans. *Chuang-tzu*, "Introduction," pp. 1-30.

**Fri.**---Chuang-tzu's View of Human Existence

Reading: Watson, trans. *Chuang-tzu*, pp. 31-63.

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## **Week 7**

**Mon.**---Relativism in *Chuang Tzu*

Reading: Watson, trans. *Chuang-tzu*, pp. 64-95.

**Wed.**---Class Discussion on *Chuang-tzu*

Reading: Watson, trans. *Chuang-tzu*, pp. 96-140.

**Fri.**---Review and Compare *Chuang-tzu* to *Lao-tzu*

Reading: Schipper, *Taoist Body*, Chapter 10 (pp. 183-216).

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## **Week 8**

**Mon.**---Individual Paper Report [**Paper #2 Due**]

**Paper #2:** What is the general Taoist philosophy in both *Lao-tzu* and *Chuang-tzu* (such as their views toward nature, human society, language and knowledge, etc.)? What are their main differences [List at least one point]? Use *Lao-tzu* and *Chuang-tzu* as your textual references and provide the pages whenever it's necessary.

**Wed.**---The Rise of Neo-Taoism

Reading: Pages Selected from Richard Mather, trans., *A New Account of Tales of the World* (U. of Minnesota, 1976).

**Fri.**---Individual Report of Term Paper Proposal

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## **Week 9** Midterm Break

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## **Week 10**

**Mon.**---The Rise of Religious Taoist Movement [**Term Paper Outline Due**]

Reading: 1. Lau, *Lao-tzu*, XVI, XXXIII, L, LVI & *Chuang-tzu*, pp. 23-26, "The Great and Venerable Teacher" (pp. 73-88), and "Mastering Life" (pp. 118-130).  
2. Schipper, *Taoist Body*, pp. 1-31.

**Wed.**---The Development of Religious Taoism

Reading: Schipper, *Taoist Body*, pp. 32-60.

**Fri.**---The Taoist Pantheon

**Video:** "And the Gods moved to Taiwan" (1995)

Reading: Schipper, *Taoist Body*, pp. 61-71.

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## **Week 11**

**Mon.**---Taoist Rituals and Priests

**Video:** "Taoism: A Question of Balance--China" (Long Search Series, 1978) [55 min.]

Reading: Schipper, *Taoist Body*, pp. 61-99.

**Wed.**---Taoist View of Body

Reading: 1. Schipper, *Taoist Body*, pp. 100-129, 130-159 and 160-182.

2. Michael Saso, "The Taoist Body and Cosmic Prayer," in *Religion and the Body*, ed. Sarah Coakley (Cambridge University, 1997), pp. 231-247.

**Fri.**---Class Discussion on Schipper's *Taoist Body*.

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## **Week 12**

**Mon.**---**Video:** "The Mystery of Chi" (1993) [58 min.]

**Wed.**---Cultivation of the Tao (I)

Reading: *Awakening to the Tao*, pp. xiii-47.

**Fri.**---Cultivation of the Tao (II)  
Reading: *Awakening to the Tao*, pp. 48-81.

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**Week 13**

**Mon.**---Cultivation of the Tao (III)  
Reading: *Awakening to the Tao*, pp. 85-105.

**Wed.**---Individual Paper Report [**Paper # 3 Due**]

**Paper #3:** Based on our readings and the video tape, write a paper on "ch'i." You should answer the following questions: **[1]** What is the Taoist concept of "ch'i"? **[2]** How do Taoists maintain and strengthen "ch'i"? **and [3]** Do you believe the existence of ch'i within human body? Yes/No, why?

**Fri.**---T'ai-chi Boxing  
Guest Speaker: Dr. Mike Davis, Professor of Anthropology

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**Weeks 14-15**

Term Paper Presentation

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**Week 16**

Course Evaluation and Final Exam Review

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**Pedagogical Reflections:**

We begin with the early Chinese worldview: correlative cosmology conceptualized through the concept of yin-yang and wu-hsing. We then examine the development of Taoism as a school of philosophy, as a religious movement, and as a way of attaining health, longevity, and immortality.

Both readings and films provide useful knowledge and information of the Taoist thought and practice. Students are enthusiastic about writing short papers; they think that the topics enhance their understanding of Taoism.

Aside from short papers and examinations, each student also has to write a 9-12 page paper on any topic related to Taoism. The topics include a variety of themes: t'ai-chi, dietary, meditation, feng-shui, view of language, concept of evolution, Taoism and Western films/novels, and so forth. In all, the term papers are creative and interesting, and also demonstrate students' understanding of Taoism.