

Chinese Religions

Instructor

Ding-hwa E. Hsieh
dhsieh@truman.edu

Institution

Division of Social Science
Truman State University
Kirksville, MO 63501
O: (660) 785-4655

Course Level and Type

Undergraduate class

Hours of Instruction

3 hours / week; 15 weeks

Enrollment and Last Year Taught

25 students, Fall 2001

Description:

This course is a general survey of Chinese religious traditions, including Taoism, Confucianism, Buddhism, and popular beliefs and practices. We will explore the development of each religion in a larger social context and examine the interaction among these traditions and their impact on Chinese people's daily lives. How are humans to achieve harmony in this world and life after death? Through lecture, discussion, and occasional audio-visual presentations, the course seeks to provide an understanding of what religion has meant for Chinese people and what role religion has played in Chinese culture and society. Readings include primary texts and secondary works.

Required Books

- 1) Ching, Julia. *Chinese Religions*. New York: Orbis Books, 1993.
- 2) Cleary, Thomas, trans. *Unlocking the Zen Koan: A New Translation of the Zen Classic Wumenguan*. Ca., Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1997.
- 3) Fingarette, Herbert. *Confucius---The Secular as Sacred*. (first published by New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1972). Waveland Press, 1998.
- 4) Lau, D. C. trans. *Confucius: The Analects* Penguin Books.
- 5) Sommer, Deborah, ed. *Chinese Religion: An Anthology of Sources*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- 6) Teiser, Stephen F. *The Ghost Festival in Medieval China*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988.

Grades and Class Policies:

90-100 = **A** (excellent)

80-89 = **B** (good)

70-79 = **C** (average)

60-69 = **D** (below average)

Below 60 = **F** (fail)

Attendance, Participation, and Assignments: **20%**

Two Short Papers: **30%**

Two Midterms: **30%**

One Final: **20%**

- I. **Class Attendance, Participation, and Assignments (20%):** Aside from attendance, you are expected to participate in class discussion, give oral reports, write assignments, and summarize readings. Please **bring your textbooks to the classroom**.

II. **Two Short Papers (15 x2 = 30%):** 4-5 pages, 12-sized font, and double space. Due at beginning of the class. To be fair to everyone, a late paper is accepted **ONLY** if you turn it in within three days after the deadline. Also, the highest grade of a late paper is B unless you have legitimate reasons with official documents. An excellent paper means 1) a careful and comprehensive study of the readings, 2) a critical and thoughtful way of thinking, 3) an effective respond to the questions, and 4) with clarity and sufficient textual evidence.

III. **Two Midterms (15x2 = 30%) and One Final (20%).** The examinations will be based on the assigned readings, lectures, and films.

➤ **The Midterm may include the following formats:**

- Multiple-choice questions.
- Proper links or True/False questions
- Short essay questions.

➤ **Final Exam: 50 Multiple-choice questions**

It will be held in class on the day of the final exam week. The final will include everything covered in this class.

IV. **Meeting with Instructor:** You are welcome!

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

Week 1

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

Wed.---A General Survey of Chinese Religious Traditions

Fri.---Ancestor Worship and Oracle Bone Divination

Reading: Ching, **pp. 1-32.**

Week 2

Mon.---Labor Day [No Class]

Wed.---Early Chinese Cosmology and Notion of Divinity

Reading: Ching, **pp. 33-38 and Sommer, pp. 3-12.**

Fri.---Early Chinese Concept of Life after Death

Reading: Ching, **pp. 38-50 and Sommer, pp. 21-39.**

Week 3

Mon.---Confucius and the Religious Tradition by His Time

Video: "The Confucian Tradition" [PL 2956 C66 1997]

Reading: Ching, **pp. 51-67 & Sommer, pp. 41-48.**

Wed.---Confucius and His Analects (I)

Reading: Analects, **Intro. and Book I-III.**

Fri.---Confucius and His Analects (II)

Reading: Analects, **Book IV-VII and XII.**

Week 4

Mon.--- Confucius and His Analects (III)

Reading: Analects, **Book XIII-XVII.**

Wed.---The Teachings of Confucius: “li” and “jen”
Reading: Fingarette, *Confucius*, pp. 1-36.

Fri.---Class Discussion on Fingarette’s *Confucius*.
Reading: Fingarette, *Confucius*, pp. 37-56.

Week 5

Mon.---Oral Report on Fingarette’s *Confucius*. [Paper #1 Due]

Paper #1 Write a critical review of Fingarette’s *Confucius*. Your paper should include: **1).** What is the main argument of this book? **2).** Do you think that his work contributes to your understanding of Confucius’ emphasis on “rites/propriety”? Yes/No, why and how? **Use Lau’s translation for your analysis and argument.**

Reading: Fingarette. *Confucius*, pp. 57-79.

Wed.---Mencius and Hsun-tzu on Human Nature and Concept of Heaven
Reading: Ching, pp. 72-84 & Sommer, pp. 55-70.

Fri.---Midterm # 1 Review

Week 6

Mon.---**Midterm #1** (On Ancient Chinese Concept of Religion and Confucianism)

Wed.---Taoism as A School of Philosophy: Lao Tzu
Reading: Ching, pp. 85-91 & Sommer, pp. 71-75.

Fri.---Taoism as A School of Philosophy: Chuang Tzu
Reading: Sommer, pp. 77-83.

Week 7

Mon.---Religious Taoism (I)
Reading: Ching, pp. 91-95, 102-118 and 215-7.

Wed.---Religious Taoism (II)
Video: "Taoism: A Question of Balance--China" (1978) [Long Search Series/55 min.]
Reading: Sommer, pp. 145-151 and 199-210.

Fri.---Class Discussion on Taoist Tradition
Video: "And the Gods moved to Taiwan" (NY: Esicma, BL920 .A52 1995) [52 min.]

Week 8

Mon.---Introduction of Buddhism from India to China
Video: "The Silk Road--The Art-gallery in the desert" (1990) [55 min.]
Reading: Ching, pp. 121-132.

Wed.---Early Chinese Buddhism: Resistance
Reading: Sommer, pp. 127-143.

Fri.--- Early Chinese Buddhism: Accommodation
Reading: Sommer, pp. 169-175.

Week 9

Mon.---Sinification of Buddhism

Reading: Ching, pp. 132-136.

Wed.---Ch'an Buddhism: Origin and Doctrine
Reading: Ching, pp. 137-142.

Fri.---Split of Ch'an: Northern School vs. Southern School
Reading: Sommer, pp. 155-164.

Week 10

Mon.---The Practice of Kung-an (Public Case) [I]
Reading: *Wu-men Kuan* (Gateless Gate), Cases 1-16.

Wed.---The Practice of Kung-an (Public Case) [II]
Reading: *Wu-men Kuan* (Gateless Gate), Cases 17-32.

Fri.---The Practice of Kung-an (Public Case) [III]
Reading: *Wu-men Kuan* (Gateless Gate), Cases 33-48.

Assignment: Pick up one of your favored koans and discuss what points you have learned from this koan. (one-to-two pages, typed, and double-space)

Week 11

Mon.---Pure Land Buddhism
Reading: Ching, pp. 142-152 & Sommer, pp. 119-125.

Wed.---Buddhism and Chinese Culture
Reading: Sommer, pp. 239-246 and 249-265.

Fri.---Midterm #2 Review

Week 12

Mon.---Midterm #2 (Taoism & Buddhism)

Wed.---Popular Religion and Syncretism of Three Teachings
Reading: Ching, pp. 217-220 & Sommer, pp. 211-223 and 241-246.

Fri.---Ghost Festival (I)
Reading: Teiser, *The Ghost Festival in Medieval China*, Chapters 1 (pp. 3-25) and 2 (pp. 27-42).

Week 13

Mon.---Ghost Festival (II)
Reading: Teiser, pp. 48-56 & Chapter 4.

Wed.---Thanksgiving Holidays

Week 14

Mon.---Class Discussion
Reading: Teiser, Chapters 7-8.

Wed.---Individual Oral Report [Paper # 2 Due]

Paper #2: Answer the following two questions based on Teiser's book: 1) What is "Ghost Festival"? 2) Analyze the Buddhist, Confucian, and Taoist influences/elements in this popular festival. Provide textual evidence/reference whenever it's necessary.

Fri.---Religion in Contemporary China (I)

Reading: Patricia Ebrey, "The Chinese Family and the Spread of Confucian Values," pp. 45-83. In *The East Asian Religion: Confucian Heritage and Its Modern Adaptation*. (Princeton, 1991).

Week 15

Mon.---Religion in Contemporary China (II)

Reading: Sommer, pp. 281-316.

Wed.---Religion in Contemporary China: Fa-lun gong (III)

Assignment: Search Websites for the information about Fa-lun gong.
--

Fri.---The Future of Chinese Religions

Video: "The Heart of Dragon---Believing" [30 min.] DS779.23.H4 1984

"Tu Wei-ming: a Confucian Life in America" (1994) [28 min.] B127.C65 T8 1994

Reading: Ching, pp. 221-230.

Week 16

Mon.---Conclusion, Class Evaluation, and Final Exam Review

Pedagogical Reflections

This course aims to provide students with a general understanding of the history, doctrine, and practice of Chinese religions. We start from early Chinese correlative cosmology, because it has exerted a profound impact on Chinese people's way of life and mode of thinking. "Harmony," "Hierarchy," and "Syncretism" are the key terms in analyzing Chinese worldview. We go through the details of Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist beliefs and practices and examine the interaction among these three teachings. The "Ghost Festival" provides a good example of the syncretism of the three teachings. Through readings and films, students have gradually achieved knowledge and information about the nature and function of "religion" from a Chinese perspective. Although this course centers on traditional China, it also introduces students to the situations of religion (like the new religious movement: Falun gong) in contemporary China through films, scholarly works, and websites.