

Religious Studies 472

DAOISM

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Spring 2011

T 7:30-10:00

Ascension 120

Office hours: MWF 3-4, T 1-3

and by appointment

- [Daoism links](#)
- [Paper Format Guide](#)
- [Selected handouts](#)
- [Paper criteria](#)

This seminar will examine the various expressions of Daoism (Taoism) in the Chinese religious tradition. Beginning with the classical Daoist texts of the third century BCE (often referred to as "philosophical Daoism"), we will discuss the mythical figure of Laozi (Lao Tzu) and the seminal and enigmatic text attributed to him (*Daodejing* / *Tao Te Ching*), the philosopher Zhuangzi (Chuang Tzu), and the shadowy "Huang-Lao" tradition. We will then examine the origins, beliefs, and practices of the Daoist religion, with its hereditary and monastic priesthods, complex body of rituals, religious communities, and elaborate and esoteric regimens of meditation and alchemy. Finally, we will look at Daoism in China and the West today.

Some of the themes and questions we will pursue along the way are: (1) the relations between the mystical and the political dimensions of Daoist thought and practice; (2) the problems surrounding the traditional division of Daoism into the "philosophical" and "religious" strands; (3) the relations between Daoism and Chinese "popular" religion; and (4) the temptation for Westerners to find what they want in Daoism and to dismiss much of its actual belief and practice as crude superstition, or as a "degeneration" from the mystical purity of Laozi and Zhuangzi.

READING

- Livia Kohn, *Introducing Daoism*
- D. C. Lau, trans., *Lao Tzu: Tao Te Ching*
- Victor H. Mair, trans., *Wandering on the Way: Early Taoist Tales and Parables of Chuang Tzu*
- Moodle readings

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

1. **Participation** (20% of course grade). The success of a seminar depends on the active participation of all members. Attendance at all meetings is required, unless you have a legitimate excuse and inform me about it beforehand. You are expected to have read the assigned material and to participate regularly in seminar discussion.
2. **Short commentaries** (total 15%) on 6-8 chapters of *Laozi* (depending on the number of students in the seminar), with oral presentation in class.
3. **Analytical summary** of readings for Week 7 (10%); no class that week.
4. **Two short research papers** (15% each), 4-6 pages plus bibliography, following the Paper Format Guide. Each must use at least two sources outside of required readings for the course
5. **Term Paper** (25%), 10-15 pages plus bibliography, following the Paper Format Guide, on any topic in Daoism. You must discuss your topic with me by Monday, April 18. The paper must use at least three sources outside of required readings for the course.

SEMINAR SCHEDULE

1 Jan 18 Introduction and overview

- Kohn, *Introducing Daoism*, Introduction

2 Jan 25 Laozi and the *Daodejing* (I)

- Kohn, ch. 1
- Lau, *Lao Tzu*: Introduction, chs. 1-37

3 Feb 1 Laozi and the *Daodejing* (II)

- Lau, *Lao Tzu*: chs. 38-81

Moodle:

- Benjamin Schwartz, "The Thought of the *Tao-te-ching*"
- Liu Xiaogan, "Naturalness (*Tzu-jan*), the Core Value in Taoism: Its Ancient Meaning and Its Significance Today"

4 Feb 8 Laozi and the *Daodejing* (III)

Moodle:

- Roger Ames, "Taoism and the Androgynous Ideal"
- Philip J. Ivanhoe, "The Concept of *de* ("Virtue") in the *Laozi*"
- Bryan W. Van Norden, "Method in the Madness of the *Laozi*"



Laozi

Friday, Feb. 11: Commentaries due

5 Feb 15 The *Zhuangzi* (I)

- Kohn, ch. 2
- Mair, *Wandering on the Way*: Preface, Introduction, chs. 1-11

6 Feb 22 The *Zhuangzi* (II)

- Mair, *Wandering on the Way*, chs. 17-22, 26-27



Zhuangzi dreaming of the butterfly, or vice versa.

7 Mar 1 **Reflections on the *Zhuangzi* (I)**

No class this week

Moodle:

- Judith Berling, "Self and Whole in Chuang Tzu"
- Daniel Coyle, "On the *Zhenren*"
- Kirill Ole Thompson, "What Is the Reason of Failure or Success? The Fisherman's Song Goes Deep into the River: Fishermen in the *Zhuangzi*"

Reading reports due in O'Connor 105 by 4:00 pm

<< Spring Break >>

8 Mar 22 **Reflections on the *Zhuangzi* (II)**

Moodle:

- Lee Yearley, "The Perfected Person in the Radical Chuang Tzu"
- A.C. Graham, "Taoist Spontaneity and the Dichotomy of 'Is' and 'Ought'"

Friday, March 25: Paper 1 due

9 Mar 29 **The Han dynasty (206 BCE - 220 CE)**

- Kohn, chs. 3-4

Moodle:

- Mark Csikszentmihalyi, "Laozi" (two biographies)
- Sima Tan, "On the Six Lineages of Thought"
- *The Huang-Lao Silk Manuscripts: "Daoyuan"*
- "The *Huainanzi* on Rulership"
- Paul W. Kroll, "An Early Poem of Mystical Excursion" ("*Yuanyou*," from the *Chuci*)
- Anna K. Seidel, "The Image of the Perfect Ruler in Early Taoist Messianism: Lao-Tzu and Li Hung"

10 Apr 5 **The major revelations and schools**

- Kohn, chs. 5-6

Moodle:

- Stephen Bokenkamp, "General Introduction" (to *Early Daoist Scriptures*)
- Stephen Eskildsen, *Asceticism in Early Taoist Religion*, chs. 1, 8

11 Apr 12 **Beliefs and practices**

- Kohn, chs. 7-8

Moodle:

- Kohn, "Transcending Personality: From Ordinary to Immortal Life"
- Kohn, "Daoist Visions of the Body"
- Stephen Bokenkamp, "The Upper Scripture of Purple Texts Inscribed by the Spirits: Introduction" (from *Early Daoist Scriptures*)
- Fabrizio Pregadio, "An Introduction to Taoist Alchemy"
- Nathan Sivin, "Chinese Alchemy and the Manipulation of Time"



The inner gods

Friday, April 15: Paper 2 due

12 Apr 19 **Daoist women**

Moodle:

- Barbara Reed, "Taoism," from Arvind Sharma, ed., *Women in World Religions*
- Suzanne E. Cahill, *Divine Traces of the Daoist Sisterhood*, excerpts
- Catherine Despeux and Livia Kohn, *Women in Daoism*, ch. 7

13 Apr 26 **Daoist monasticism**

- Kohn, ch. 9

Moodle:

- Yoshitoyo Yoshioka, "Taoist Monastic Life"
- Lai Chi-tim, "[Daoism in China Today, 1980-2002](#)"
- Kim Sung-hae, "[Daoist Monasticism in Contemporary China](#)"

14 May 3 **Modern Daoism and Qigong**

- Kohn, chs. 10-12

Moodle:

- David A. Palmer, "[Body Cultivation in Contemporary China](#)"
- Vincent Goossaert and Fang Ling, "Temples and Daoists in Urban China Since 1980"



Daoist priest

Monday, May 9, 4:30 pm: Term paper due

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