

Great Texts in the Humanities III

Humanities 203

Section: D100

Term: 2000 Fall

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Discussion Topics: This course is a study of four great texts (two Confucian and two Taoist) from China's Classical Age. Through close reading and critical discussion, we will examine some central ideas in Confucianism and Taoism that have shaped the Chinese tradition.

During the formative period of China's Classical Age, Confucianists and Taoists tried to offer direct or indirect answers to such fundamental human questions as: What kind of life should we live? What is the best way to order society? What kind of relationship should we have with Nature and with the Numinous? How should we deal with suffering, and with life and death? What is the nature of language? Can language give us access to reality, etc. Their answers to these questions are markedly different and yet at the same time uniquely Chinese. Over the centuries, Confucianism and Taoism have developed syncretically. Along with Buddhism, they have come to shape and inform every aspect of Chinese life.

Grading: Grading is based on a combination of in-class participation (25%), scores on two take-home, written papers of 5-7 pages (50%), and a final exam. Success on the exam is a significant consideration and will be worth 25% in grade determination. In-class participation will involve some sub-group study and a presentation for discussion and evaluation. Early in the course, a brief non-graded diagnostic writing exercise will be given. Assignments are late if not submitted on due date, and a half grade will be deducted for each late day. To receive a grade of "A", work demonstrating excellence (91%+) will be expected. The two course papers should observe correct grammar, punctuation, mechanics, and citation.

Required Texts: Tao Te Ching. tr. D.C. Lau, Harmondsworth-Penguin, 1979.

Chuang Tzu: Basic Writings. tr. Burton Watson, Columbia University Press, 1964.

The Analects. tr. D.C. Lau, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979.

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HUM 203-3 may be applied to the Certificate in Liberal Arts.

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