

HUMA 5900
Fundamentals of Comparative Philosophy
Course Syllabus
Spring 2017

Course Instructor: Eric S. NELSON (埃里克·尼爾森)
Time: Wednesdays 15:00-17:50
Class Room: 5562
My Office: 2370
Office Hours: Tuesdays 15:00-16:00; Wednesdays 13:00-14:30; and by appointment.
Language: English

Course Description

This course offers students opportunities for exploring philosophical questions by interpreting sources from Eastern and Western contexts in comparative and intercultural ways. We will consider the nature of philosophical questioning and interpretation as well as what it means for philosophy to be thought of and practiced comparatively.

Our readings will focus on: (1) classic Confucian, Daoist, and Buddhist texts in the first half of the semester and (2) modern Western and East Asian interpretations of “East/West” comparative philosophy in the second half of the course. The course will cover areas of inquiry such as moral psychology and human nature; skepticism, mysticism, and ethics; emptiness and experience; and the philosophy of interpretation (hermeneutics) across different cultural contexts.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

Upon completion of this course, students are expected to be able to:

1	Critically, comparatively, and interculturally analyze the forms and styles of philosophical interpretation and argumentation presented in the course readings.
2	Explain the role and significance of philosophical interpretations from diverse contexts and perspectives.
3	Develop a well-informed account of questions about comparative and intercultural philosophy.

Course Outline

Schedule

1.	Feb. 1	Introduction to the Course and to Comparative and Intercultural Philosophy.
I. Chinese and Buddhist Philosophy in Comparative and Intercultural Perspective		
2.	Feb. 8	Confucianism, Human Nature, and Moral Psychology I: Selected Readings from Confucius 孔子, <i>The Analects</i> 論語.
3.	Feb. 15	Confucianism, Human Nature, and Moral Psychology II: Selected Readings from Mengzi 孟子 and Xunzi 荀子.
	Feb. 19 (Sun): 3-5 pm	Recommended class-related lecture: Eric S. Nelson, Leibniz, Hegel, and the Political-Theological Interpretation of Chinese Philosophy / 萊布尼茲與黑格爾—中國哲學的政治與神學解讀 (香港歷史博物館: Hong Kong Museum of History).
4.	Feb. 22	Skepticism, Mysticism, or Ethos? I: Zhuangzi 莊子, chapters 1 and 2.
5.	March 1	Skepticism, Mysticism, or Ethos? II: Zhuangzi 莊子, chapters 2 and 3.
6.	March 8	Skepticism, Mysticism, or Ethos? III: Nāgārjuna 龍樹, the <i>Mūlamadhyamakakārikā</i> 中論.
7.	March 15	Yogācāra Buddhism as Phenomenology? Vasubandhu 世亲, <i>Triṃśikā-vijñaptimātratā</i> 唯識三十論頌.
II. Philosophy between East and West		
8.	March 22	Leibniz 萊布尼茨 and Chinese Philosophy: “The Natural Theology of the Chinese” First research paper due!
9.	March 29	Hegel 黑格爾 and Chinese Philosophy: Ethical Affinities and/or Eurocentric Critique?
	March 31 -April 1 (Fri and Sat)	Class-related workshop: Hegel: Intercultural and Critical Perspectives HKUST
10.	April 5	Nishida Kitarō 西田 幾多郎 and Nishitani Keiji 西谷 啓治 on nothingness and experience in Buddhist and Western Philosophy.
	April 12	No Class for Spring Break!
11.	April 19	Zhang Junmai 张君勱 and Mou Zongsan 牟宗三 on reason and intuition in Chinese and Western Philosophy.
12.	April 26	In-class Presentations
	May 3	No class for the Buddha's Birthday!

May 15	Second research paper due!
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Planned Assessment Tasks

1.	35%	1st Paper (8-10 pages) due on March 22. Task: Interpret a classic Chinese or Buddhist text in comparison with or relation to an aspect of non-Asian philosophy.
2.	35%	2nd Paper (8-10 pages) due on May 15. Task: Interpret a modern Eastern or Western philosopher's analysis of a philosophy from another social-historical context.
3.	20%	Participation in class discussion and in-class assignments.
4.	5%	Short in-class presentation about final research project (second paper).
5.	5%	Extra-credit: Partial Conference Attendance and Short Writing Assignment.

Readings are available on canvas: Select Readings from Philosophical Classics.

Supplementary Text: Jay L. Garfield, William Edelglass, *The Oxford Handbook of World Philosophy* (Oxford University Press, 2011)

Internet Resources:

A Brief Guide to Writing the Philosophy Paper:

http://philosophy.fas.harvard.edu/files/phildept/files/brief_guide_to_writing_philosophy_paper.pdf

Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper: <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>

Chinese Philosophical Etext Archive: <http://sangle.web.wesleyan.edu/etext/>

Chinese Text Project: <http://ctext.org/>

SEP Comparative Philosophy: <http://www.iep.utm.edu/comparat/>

IEP Comparative Philosophy: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/comparphil-chiwes/>

PLAGIARISM: The discovery of cheating on any in-class quiz or writing assignment will result in automatically failing the course, and will be reported to the university administration.