

**Division of Humanities  
Tentative Course Syllabus**

**Course Code:** HUMA 1000B  
**Course Title:** Cultures and Values: Righteousness, Destiny and Well-being  
**Course Offered in:** Spring 2025  
**Course Instructor:** Prof. Sai-lok Nam

**Course Description:**

“At fifteen, I had my mind bent on learning. At thirty, I stood firm. At forty, I had no doubts. At fifty, I knew the *tianming* (天命). At sixty, my ear was an obedient organ for the reception of truth. At seventy, I could follow what my heart desired, without transgressing what was right.” This is a self-reflection of Confucius. The improvement throughout his life, not only demonstrates the life of a man of virtue (*junz* 君子), but also highlights the dialectical characteristic of Chinese philosophy. This characteristic can be shown by the correlation between righteousness, destiny and well-being.

Lectures and readings will be (mainly) built upon selected texts of Chinese classics. Through studying the texts, students will reflect and explore the deep meanings and relationship between the concepts of righteousness, destiny and well-being, which demonstrate the dialectical characteristic of the philosophy of life in both Classical Confucianism and Classical Daoism. For the concept of righteousness, the moral conflict between Confucianism and Mohism will be explored, together with the idea of dissolving the distinction between right and wrong in Daoism. For the concept of destiny, the discussion will begin with the ideas of endeavor (*li* 力) and destiny (*ming* 命) in the *Liezi*, followed by possible replies from Mencius, Xunzi and Zhuangzi. As for the concept of well-being, the ultimate goals of the philosophy of life in Confucianism and Daoism will be discussed, and the possibility of obtaining well-being under the influence of destiny will be shown.

**Course Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs):**

	Course ILOs
1	communicate in writing persuasively and effectively
2	demonstrate a humanities perspective in communication

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<b>3</b>	question assertions related to humanities, especially cultures and values
<b>4</b>	show appreciation of different views and contribute constructive feedback
<b>5</b>	apply existing empirical and logical skills to make independent judgments about personal values and priorities
<b>6</b>	appreciate the complexity of Righteousness, Destiny and Well-being

**Course Outline:**

Module	Topics
1	Introduction: General overview of the course and topics to be covered, with brief mention of the assessments and expectations.
2a	Moral Conflict in Western Ethics I: Principle of Utility in Utilitarianism
2b	Moral Conflict in Western Ethics II: Categorical Imperative in Kantianism
2c	Moral Conflict in Chinese Philosophy I: Moral Feeling in Confucianism
2d	Moral Conflict in Chinese Philosophy II: Inclusive Care in Mohism
3	Rationale of Dissolving Moral Conflict in the Thought of Daoism
4a	Destiny I: The Concept of <i>Tian</i> and <i>Ming</i>
4b	Destiny II: The Distinction between Righteousness and Destiny in the <i>Mencius</i>
5	Well-being: Self-establishment and Detachment in the <i>Zhuangzi</i>

**Planned Assessment Tasks:**

In-class Quizzes: 20%

Canvas Online Discussion: 10%

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Writing Workshops:	20%
Essay:	50%

**Restrict ways of using generative AI tools for assessment**

Generative AI may be used to find and evaluate sources of information, but must not be used to compose the essay or cited in the text or as an author of the text.

**Textbook/Required Learning Materials:**

- 1 The Analects, trans., D. C. Lau. New York: Dorset Press, 1986.
- 2 Mencius, trans., D. C. Lau. Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2003.
- 3 Mozi: Basic Writings, trans., Burton Watson. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003.
- 4 The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu, trans., Burton Watson. New York: Columbia University Press, 1968.
- 5 Xunzi: Basic Writings, trans., Burton Watson. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003.
- 6 James and Stuart Rachels, The Elements of Moral Philosophy (Boston: McGraw Hill, 7th edition 2014).