

Confucianism in a Global Context

Syllabus (February 6, 2025)*

Course Code:	HUMA4700
Course Title:	Confucianism in a Global Context
Course Offered:	Spring Semester 2025, February 5 to May 7
Course Schedule:	Wednesdays, 9:00-10:50 (lecture); 14:00-14:50 (tutorial)
Course Location:	Rm 4503 (lecture & tutorial)
Course Instructor:	Dennis PROOI (Lecturer, Philosophy, HUMA); hmdprooi@ust.hk
Office Hours:	TBA

Course Description

Confucianism originated in China but spread from there to have a major impact on East Asia and beyond. This course: 1) surveys the historical development of Confucianism into a tradition of global import, focusing on how Confucianism fared in Chinese history and its reception by Korea, Japan, and the West; and 2) examines the core principles of Confucian philosophy in relation to other major traditions such as Buddhism, Daoism, and Western philosophy.

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- 1 Describe the historical development through which Confucianism became of global relevance: how it originated and consolidated in ancient China, was reformulated and revitalized in the Song and Ming periods, transformed through its adaptation to Korean and Japanese culture, and reinvented in its encounter with the West;
- 2 Demonstrate an understanding of the central philosophical tenets of Confucianism in relation to other major traditions of global import such as Buddhism, Daoism, and Western philosophy;
- 3 Write a short research paper that critically engages with primary and secondary sources on Confucianism.

Course Outline	
1. February 5	<p>Lecture: What is “Confucianism”?</p> <p><u>Required:</u> Xinzhong Yao, <i>An Introduction to Confucianism</i>, “Introduction: Confucian studies East and West,” pp. 1-9; “Confucianism, Confucius, and Confucian Classics,” pp. 16-21, 30-47</p> <p><u>Recommended:</u> G.W.F. Leibniz, <i>Writings on China</i>, “On the Civil Cult of Confucius,” pp. 61-65; “Remarks on Chinese Rites and Religion,” pp. 67-74</p> <p>Tutorial</p> <p>Practical information (e.g., how to do well in this class)</p>
2. February 12	<p>Lecture: Who is “Confucius”?</p> <p><u>Required:</u> Xinzhong Yao, <i>An Introduction to Confucianism</i>, “Confucianism, Confucius, and Confucian Classics,” pp. 21-26; Lionel M. Jensen, <i>Manufacturing Confucianism</i>, “Introduction: Confucius, Kongzi, and the Modern Imagination,” pp. 1-31</p> <p><u>Recommended:</u> Karl Jaspers, <i>The Great Philosophers</i>, “Confucius,” pp. 51-73</p> <p>Tutorial</p> <p>How to approach the course readings (and the reading questions)</p>
3. February 19	<p>Lecture: Classical Confucianism and the <i>Analects</i></p> <p><u>Required:</u> Xinzhong Yao, <i>An Introduction to Confucianism</i>, “Evolution and Transformation – a Historical Perspective,” pp. 68-89; Wing-Tsit Chan, <i>A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy</i>, “The Humanism of Confucius,” pp. 14-48</p> <p>Tutorial</p> <p>How to give a presentation, or comment on one</p>
4. February 26	<p>Lecture: The <i>Mencius</i> and the <i>Xunzi</i></p> <p><u>Required:</u> Wing-Tsit Chan, <i>A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy</i>, “Idealistic Confucianism: Mencius,” pp. 49-83; “Naturalistic Confucianism: Hsun Tzu,” pp. 115-135</p> <p>Tutorial</p> <p>Student presentations on classical Confucianism</p>

5. March 5	<p>Lecture: Neo-Confucianism and its metaphysics</p> <p><u>Required:</u> Xinzhong Yao, <i>An Introduction to Confucianism</i>, “Evolution and Transformation – a Historical Perspective,” pp. 96-115; Stephen C. Angle & Justin Tiwald, <i>Neo-Confucianism: A Philosophical Introduction</i>, “Introduction,” pp. 12-22; “Pattern and Vital Stuff,” pp. 23-49</p> <p><u>Recommended:</u> Wing-Tsit Chan, <i>A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy</i>, “Moral and Social Programs: The <i>Great Learning</i>,” pp. 84-94; “Spiritual Dimensions: The <i>Doctrine of the Mean</i>,” pp. 95-114; “Chang Tsai’s Philosophy of Material Force,” pp. 500-507</p> <p>Tutorial</p> <p>Formulating a research question</p>
6. March 12	<p>Lecture: Neo-Confucian ethics and epistemology</p> <p><u>Required:</u> Stephen C. Angle & Justin Tiwald, <i>Neo-Confucianism: A Philosophical Introduction</i>, “Nature,” pp. 50-70; “Knowing,” pp. 110-132</p> <p><u>Recommended:</u> Wing-Tsit Chan, <i>A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy</i>, “The Great Synthesis in Chu Hsi,” pp. 609-620; “Dynamic Idealism in Wang Yang-Ming,” pp. 659-667</p> <p>Tutorial</p> <p>Student presentations on Neo-Confucianism</p>
7. March 19	<p>Exam One (takes place instead of the lecture)</p> <p>Tutorial</p> <p>Writing an abstract</p>
8. March 26	<p>Lecture: Korean Confucianism and the Four-Seven Debate</p> <p><u>Required:</u> Xinzhong Yao, <i>An Introduction to Confucianism</i>, “Evolution and Transformation – a Historical Perspective,” pp. 115-125</p> <p><u>Recommended:</u> Michael C. Kalton, <i>The Four-Seven Debate</i>, “T’oegye’s Letter to Kobong,” “Kobong’s Letter to T’oegye,” “T’oegye’s Reply to Kobong,” “Kobong’s Response to T’oegye,” pp. 1-47</p> <p>Tutorial</p> <p>Researching and writing the draft version of the final paper</p>

9. April 9	<p>Lecture: Tokugawa Confucianism</p> <p><u>Required:</u> Xinzhong Yao, <i>An Introduction to Confucianism</i>, “Evolution and Transformation – a Historical Perspective,” pp. 125-138; Richard Bowring, <i>In Search of the Way</i>, “The Confucian Turn,” pp. 46-62</p> <p>Tutorial</p> <p>Student presentations on Korean and Japanese Confucianism</p>
10. April 16	<p>Lecture: Tokugawa Confucianism and Ogyū Sorai’s Bendō</p> <p><u>Required:</u> Richard Bowring, <i>In Search of the Way</i>, “Two Individualists,” pp. 69-84; “The Way of Man,” pp. 121-133; “The Way of the Former Kings,” pp. 198-209</p> <p><u>Recommended:</u> Tetsuo Najita, <i>Tokugawa Political Writings</i>, “Bendō: A Discourse on the Way,” pp. 1-33</p> <p>Tutorial</p> <p>Student presentations on Korean and Japanese Confucianism</p>
11. April 23	<p>Lecture: The encounter of Tokugawa Confucianism with Western Learning</p> <p><u>Required:</u> Thomas R.H. Havens, <i>Nishi Amane and Modern Japanese Thought</i>, “Attack on Neo-Confucianism,” pp. 114-140</p> <p>Tutorial</p> <p>Giving and receiving feedback</p>
12. April 30	<p>Lecture: Modern Confucianism and Xiong Shili’s <i>New Treatise</i></p> <p><u>Required:</u> Xinzhong Yao, <i>An Introduction to Confucianism</i>, “Confucianism and its Modern Relevance,” pp. 245-286</p> <p><u>Recommended:</u> Xiong Shili, <i>New Treatise on the Uniqueness of Consciousness</i>, “Weishi,” pp. 49-59</p> <p>Tutorial</p> <p>Student presentations on the encounter of Confucianism with Western philosophy</p>
13. May 7	<p>Exam Two (takes place instead of the lecture)</p> <p>Tutorial</p> <p>Turning the draft version into the final paper</p>

Assessment		
1	<p>Two exams</p> <p>Exam questions are based on the required course readings and the lectures. Students have 80 minutes to answer four out of five questions.</p>	30%*2
2	<p>The writing process</p> <p>Students receive marks for completing components of the writing process of the final paper, these being: i) formulating a research question; ii) writing an abstract; iii) writing a draft version; iv) offering feedback on the draft version of another student.</p>	20%
3	<p>Final paper</p> <p>A 2000-word final paper, which is the outcome of the writing process.</p>	20%
4	<p>In-class presentation (optional)</p> <p>Optionally, during the tutorials a student may, if needed together with another student, choose to deliver a short presentation (see the course outline above for the sessions and their topics), which will be commented on by up to two other students. Participants receive a separate bonus. Details will be announced in class.</p>	

Mapping of Course ILOs to Assessment Tasks		
Component	ILOs	Explanation
Two exams	1, 2	Tests students' knowledge of the historical development of Confucianism and its philosophical tenets.
The writing process	3	Has students master the fundamentals of writing a short research paper on Confucianism.
Final paper	1, 2, 3	Consolidates students' knowledge of the historical development and/or philosophical tenets of Confucianism in a piece of academic writing.

Rubric for the Two Exams		
Score	Evaluation	Description
27-30	Excellent	Answers are clear and concise, demonstrating near-perfect understanding of the covered materials.
22-26	Good	Answers are sufficiently clear and to the point, demonstrating a comprehensive grasp of the covered materials. They may contain irrelevant details as long as key information is not omitted.
15-21	Satisfactory	Answers contain the relevant information, but lack in clarity or concision. They demonstrate an adequate grasp of the covered materials while containing claims that are erroneous or omitting information that is key to the topic at hand.
7-14	Poor	Answers are in the right direction but fail to make the required point. They are incomplete, contain irrelevant details, omit key information, contain inaccurate claims, or get basic facts wrong.
0-6	Fail	Answers show a very poor understanding of the course materials. They are incomplete or wide of the mark.

Rubric for the Final Paper		
Score	Evaluation	Description
18-20	Excellent	Starts with an introduction containing a well-formulated research question that is both justified and adequate in scope; develops a clear line of thought or argument in the main body; and has a conclusion that neatly summarizes findings. Engages with relevant literature using a consistent citation style, referring to primary and secondary sources where necessary. Feedback has, where applicable, been incorporated.
14-17	Good	Starts with an introduction containing a well-formulated research question that may require further justification or be somewhat lacking in scope; develops a clear line of thought or argument in the main body that may yet require further

		elaboration; and has a conclusion that neatly summarizes findings. Engages with most of the relevant literature using a citation style that may not always be consistently applied, referring to primary and secondary sources where necessary. Most of the relevant feedback has been incorporated.
10-13	Satisfactory	Starts with an introduction containing a research question that might however lack adequate formulation, justification, or scope; attempts to develop a line of thought or argument in the main body yet leaves much to be desired; and has a conclusion, but one that does not adequately summarize findings or that introduces new arguments. Engages with some of the relevant literature, employs a citation style but inconsistently, and occasionally fails to refer to sources while clearly necessary. Feedback has been incorporated haphazardly.
6-9	Poor	Lacks an introduction with a research question, fails to develop a line of thought or argument in the main body, and has an inadequate conclusion. Fails to engage with crucially-relevant literature and employs an improper citation style. Feedback has barely been incorporated.
0-5	Fail	Lacks any organization whatsoever. The introduction has no research question; the main body has no line of thought or argument. Engages with no literature, and employs no citation style. Feedback is ignored completely. Indications of academic misconduct, including the use of AI to generate portions of the essay without citing its use.

AI policy

Use of AI as a research tool for the final essay is permitted. Any use of AI must clearly be indicated; failure to do so may be counted as plagiarism.

Additional notes:

- All readings will be available on Canvas and in English. Knowledge of classical Chinese, while helpful, is not required.
- No marks are awarded for attendance. Failure to attend the lectures and tutorials on a regular basis will result in a penalty. Further details regarding attendance requirements will be announced in class.
- HKUST upholds academic integrity and has a no plagiarism policy (see: <https://registry.hkust.edu.hk/resource-library/academic-integrity>). Plagiarism will result in failure of the course.

* Be prepared for changes in the schedule. Regularly check Canvas for updates.