

The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology  
Division of Humanities

**HUMA 1001B**  
**(Fall 2022)**

**FOUNDATIONAL TEXTS IN THE HUMANITIES:  
THE FOUR BOOKS—ZHU XI'S READING**

Lecturer: Professor Charles W. H. CHAN

Office hours: Mon: 11:30-13:00, Fri: 13:00-14:30

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**Lectures:**

LTA, Mondays 9:30-11:20

**Tutorial sections:**

T1 & T2: Mon 13:30-15:20

T3 & T4: Fri 11:30-13:20

T5 & T6: Fri 9:00-10:50

T7: Thur 14:30-16:20

**Description:**

This course is intended to familiarize the students with a major spiritual humanism in the world that was advanced by Zhu Xi (朱熹, 1130-1200), whose position in the entire intellectual history of China seconds only to Confucius (孔子), through his reinterpretation of the Four Books (四書).

The Four Books, as is well-known, include the *Analects* (論語), the *Great Learning* (大學), the *Doctrine of the Mean* (中庸) and the *Mencius* (孟子). As the embodiment of the teachings of the ancient sages and worthies of Confucius (孔子), Zengzi (曾子), Zixi (子思), and Mencius (孟子), they have long been venerated as sacred texts by Confucian scholars in China, as well as those in her neighboring countries, namely Korea, Japan and Vietnam.

They, however, did not form an organic set of philosophical treatises until Zhu

Xi (朱熹, 1130-1200), the renowned Neo-Confucian great synthesizer in the Southern-Song (南宋), grouped them together. Apart from giving them the specific format, Zhu also wrote them prefaces and commentaries, highlighting their themes and suggesting how they should be studied and practiced, as a result of which the *Collected Commentaries on the Four Books* (四書章句集注) was produced.

Zhu's commentaries, alongside with the books upon which they elaborated, were the most widely read and, thus, the most influential texts among the Chinese literati from the early 14<sup>th</sup> Century onward up until the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The significance they had attained in late Imperial China can indeed be compared to that of the *Bible* in medieval and early modern Europe.

Their popularity, of course, had much to do with the fact that they constituted the core of the official curriculum for the Civil Service Examinations (文官考試) during those six centuries. What is even more essential, however, is that as the fruit of a lifetime search for the ideal personality and governance, Zhu's *Collected Commentaries* was indeed a major source of inspiration for generations of Confucian gentlemen whose aspirations were nothing but the ideals of "inner-sageliness and outer-kingliness" (內聖外王), horizontally speaking, and "communion of Heaven and man" (天人合一), vertically speaking.

This course will guide students to read carefully through the lines of the books, in a way as recommended by Zhu, and to investigate into the following questions:

1. What are the specific contents, structures and functions of each of these books and how should they be studied?
2. How do they form an organic whole and what ultimate concerns are they intended to address?
3. What does "the recovery of the innately good nature" really mean? How the mastery of these books can lead to its realization?
4. Apart from the self-cultivation program, what sociopolitical blueprint have these Books come up with in order to bring peace and prosperity to the world?

It is expected that through probing into these crucial questions, students will not only appreciate better the essence of the Neo-Confucian teachings of how to become a sage or a worthy for oneself and to bring about a much better world for others, but also gain a deeper understanding of the religion and philosophy that lies behind: the peculiar ontology, cosmology, philosophical anthropology, philosophical psychology, epistemology, ethics, social and political theories by which Zhu permanently reshaped the Confucian tradition through re-reading the Books.

#### **Schedule of lectures and tutorials:**

Weeks	Dates	Lectures	Presentations
1	5 Sept	The course and its significance: How studying the Four Books can enrich you?	
3	19 Sept	Background: Why Zhu's reading of the Four Books is important?	First meetings for tutorial arrangement: 15*, 16, or 19 Sept (*15 Sept is the last day of add/drop)
4	26 Sept	<i>The Great Learning</i> (I): University education, the <i>Great Learning</i> , and the text	
5	3 Oct	<i>The Great Learning</i> (II): <i>How does Zhu read its classic portion?</i>	
6	10 Oct	The <i>Analects</i> (I): Conscientiousness and altruism (忠恕); Ceremony and humanity (禮仁); Human nature and the Heavenly Way (性與天道)	The <i>Great Learning</i> : 13, 14, or 17 Oct
7	17 Oct	The <i>Analects</i> (II): The obligations of the great minister (大臣)	
8	24 Oct	The <i>Mencius</i> (I): Theories on human nature (性) and self-cultivation (教)	The <i>Analects</i> : 27, 28, or 31 Oct
9	31 Oct	The <i>Mencius</i> (II): What a sage-king (聖王) should do?	
10	7 Nov	The <i>Doctrine of the Mean</i> (I): Equilibrium and harmony (中和); Caution, apprehension and watchfulness in solitude (戒懼謹獨)	The <i>Mencius</i> : 10, 11, or 14 Nov
11	14 Nov	The <i>Doctrine of the Mean</i> (II): Wisdom, humanity and courage (知仁勇)	
12	21 Nov	The <i>Doctrine of the Mean</i> (III): The five universal ways (五達道), the nine standards (九經), and sincerity (誠)	The <i>Doctrine of the Mean</i> : 24, 25, or 28 Nov
13	28 Nov	Concluding remarks	

Note that subject to actual enrolment, changes might have to be made to the dates for presentations listed above. Revisions, if any, will be announced after the add-drop period.

**Assessment:**

1. Lecture attendance and participation (20%):
  - a. To ensure that the course will be followed closely, attendance will be taken right after the add-drop period. Students will receive 1.5% for attending each lecture for a maximum of 15%. Since there are eleven lectures after add-drop period, students can earn the full 15% even though they miss one of the eleven lectures.
  - b. Using PRS, attendance will be taken through answering a simple question at a time determined by the instructor, which may vary from one lecture to another. Those who fail to do so will be taken as absent.
  - c. To take leave, students must have reasonable excuses and send apologies to the IA well in advance, unless impossible, while producing documents, such as medical certificates or invitation letters to conferences or interviews, as proofs afterwards.
  - d. To enhance classroom interactions, students will be randomly selected in every lecture to answer questions, offer comments on subjects that have just been taught or discussed, or simply read the texts and explain their meanings. Those who fail to give sensible responses will have part of their attendance score for that lecture (0.5%) forfeited, even though they are indeed present.
  - e. On the other hand, those taking the initiative to raise good questions or in one way or another contributing meaningfully toward classroom discussions will be rewarded with 1% each time they do so, to a maximum of 5% for the whole semester.
  - f. Note that the ppt for each lecture will be uploaded to the CANVAS one week in advance. Students should go through them before attending the lecture.
  
2. Tutorial presentation and discussion (32%):
  - a. There will be altogether four tutorial presentations, each on one of the Four Books.
  - b. Students in each of the tutorial sections will either voluntarily form, or be randomly divided into, four groups, which in turn will be assigned with the

duty of presenting on one of the books.

- c. Having been assigned the Book, each group will also be provided with a set of primary sources four weeks in advance to prepare for its presentation.
  - d. Each group as a whole is to give a coherent and systematic presentation on the sources provided within 70 minutes and to raise meaningful questions for discussions toward the end of the presentation. The remaining 35 minutes will be for Q&A.
  - e. Presentation materials, such as ppts, are to be submitted to the IA two days in advance so that they may be uploaded to the canvas for students in the same section to study before coming to tutorials. For instance, if the presentation takes place on 20 October, then the materials will have to be submitted to the IA by noon, 18 October.
  - f. Out of the total of 32%, 18% will be given to students as a group member. This 18% will be evenly divided into two parts, with the first part being given by the IA and the second part by their fellow groupmates through peer evaluation. Regarding details of the peer evaluation, please refer to the document “Presentation\_peer evaluation” on the canvas.
  - g. 9% of the score will be given by the IA to students as an individual. To facilitate this process, students are required to specify in the presentation the part of the materials for which they are solely responsible.
  - h. The remaining 5% will be awarded to those actively and productively engaging themselves in classroom discussions.
  - i. Note that free riding is strictly prohibited. Once found, the students might lose all their marks in this category. Students who are aware of such violations should report them to the IA, or the Professor if deemed necessary.
3. Two short essays (24% each) or one long essay (48%) :
- a. Students are required to write two short essays for the whole semester.
  - b. The first essay will be on either the *Great Learning* or the *Analects*, whereas the second one will be on either the *Mencius* or the *Doctrine of the Mean*.
  - c. To write both these essays, students may choose any subject of interest to them within the two books being assigned, so far as they have consulted the IA and gained his approval. Those who have difficulty in finding appropriate topics may consider writing their essays on the basis of the primary sources provided in any of the lectures and tutorials related to the assigned two books.

- d. Students should fully utilize the number of words at their disposal to articulate their ideas. Excluding punctuation marks, footnotes and references, the length of each essay will be within the range from 1000 to 1500 words, and score will be deducted from those either shorter or longer than is required, with 5% of the essay score per 100 words. Students are to indicate the number of words used (for the main body) at the end of their essays.
- e. Marks will be added to essays that have consulted secondary sources, such as scholarly books and articles in journals or encyclopedias.
- f. The essays are to be neatly typed and double-spaced and be submitted to the IA through Canvas before the due dates.
- g. While the mid-term essay is due 31 October, the final essay is due 5 December. Note that unless exceptional contingencies, request for extension will normally not be entertained. Rather, penalty will be applied to late essays, with a daily deduction of 5% of the essay score.
- h. Students may, however, opt for writing a long essay on one of the Four Books as a substitute. In such a case, they will have to declare their intention by writing the IA no later than 10 October. Any late declaration will not be entertained.
- i. While the requirements for long essay remain basically the same as that for the short ones, those opting for it will have to produce an essay within the range of 2000-3000 words (excluding punctuation marks, footnotes and references) and have it submitted by 12 December. Note that score will be deducted from essay either shorter or longer than is required, with 2.5% of the essay score per 100 words and that a penalty of 10% of the essay score per day will also be applied to unjustifiable late submission.

### **Outcomes:**

Through attentively listening to the lectures, carefully preparing for their presentations, seriously engaging in discussions, and diligently writing their essays, upon completion of the course, students will be:

1. Familiar with the Four Books as foundational texts of the Chinese philosophical and spiritual traditions,
2. Familiar with Zhu Xi's commentaries as the most representative interpretation of the books,
3. Proficient in close reading of both the books and Zhu's commentaries,
4. Well-informed of both the inspirations and aspirations of traditional Chinese

literati, and

5. Capable of relating the wisdom embodied in the books and commentaries to issues and problems they encounter today and of utilizing it to enrich their lives, both practically and existentially.

For your reference, the following was a feedback from a student last year:

“我從課程中習得四書基礎知識及核心思想，從對儒學、四書思想概念含糊，到讀完課程已能大概掌握其要點，認識多一個世界觀。課程內容充實，材料和講解仔細、清楚有條理，教授課堂上的解釋和例子非常有助去理解其內容及思想。課餘討論教授也很有耐性用心回答同學問題，就著四書、儒學的思想給予意見，甚至帶出另一個思考角度。可謂達至傳道、受業、解惑也。”

### **Required primary sources:**

1. 朱熹撰，《四書章句集注》（北京：中華書局，1983）。
2. 朱熹撰；鄭明等校點，《朱子語類》，卷 14-64，收入朱傑人、嚴佐之、劉永翔主編，《朱子全書》（上海古籍出版社；安徽教育出版社，2010），冊 14-16。

### **Suggested secondary reading:**

1. 謝冰瑩（等）編譯，《新譯四書讀本》（臺北：三民書局，1987）。
2. 邱漢生，《四書集注簡論》，（北京：中國社會科學出版社，1980）。
3. 錢穆，〈朱子之四書學〉，《朱子新學案》，第四冊（臺北：三民書局，1971），頁 180-229。
4. 陳來，《近世東亞儒學研究》（北京：北京大學出版社，2018）。
5. Gardner, Daniel Kip. *Chu Hsi and the Ta-hsüeh: Neo-Confucian Reflection on the Confucian Canon*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986.
6. Gardner, Daniel Kip. *Zhu Xi's Reading of the Analects: Canon, Commentary, and the Classical Tradition*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003.
7. *The Four Books: The Basic Teachings of the Later Confucian Tradition*, trans, with introduction and commentary by Daniel K. Gardner, Hackett Pub., 2007.

### **Useful databases:**

1. For primary sources:  
中國哲學書電子化計劃 (<http://ctext.org/zh>)
2. For secondary sources (all of which can be found in the University Library):

- a. 世紀期刊人文社科精品數據庫文史哲 (1950-1993)
- b. 中國期刊全文數據庫——文史哲、教育與社會科學綜合、政治軍事與法律及經濟與管理 (1994-)
- c. 臺灣期刊論文索引系統 (1970-)
- d. 香港中文期刊論文索引 (1990-)
- e. *Bibliography of Asian Studies* (1971-)

### **Academic integrity:**

The whole University is very serious about upholding academic integrity. Students are required to comply with the Academic Honor Code adopted by the Senate, which is as follows:

1. Honesty and integrity are central to the academic work of HKUST. Students of the University must observe and uphold the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty in all the work they do throughout their program of study.
2. As members of the University community, you have the responsibility to help maintain the academic reputation of HKUST in its academic endeavors.
3. Sanctions will be imposed on students, if they are found to have violated the regulations governing academic integrity and honesty.

For regulations that help you understand and avoid academic dishonesty, please visit <https://registry.hkust.edu.hk/resource-library/academic-honor-code-and-academic-integrity>.