PHIL5190/7190 (Seminar on Comparative Philosophy: East and West)
Moral Realism, Anti-Realism, and Confucianism

Location: Esther Lee Bldg 204; Time: Wednesday 1:30-4:15 pm

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Course overview

One of the central issues of meta-ethics is about the objectivity of moral properties, if there are such properties. When we make claims such as "this action is morally right or wrong" and "this person is morally good or bad," are we assuming that there are such moral properties as rightness/wrongness and goodness/badness? If so, are they mind-dependent (non-objective) or mind-independent (objective)? In this course, we will discuss some main positions developed in the contemporary debate between moral realists (naturalist, non-naturalist, and moral sensibility theorists) and anti-realists (non-cognitivists, error theorists, and non-objectivists). Then we will turn to Confucianism, to see how it bears on the issue of moral realism and anti-realism, by focusing on Mencius, Xunzi, and Neo-Confucians, particularly Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming. The goal of this comparative study is primarily not to use the contemporary moral realist and anti-realist theories as cookie-cutter to interpret/categorize classical Confucian moral theories, but aims to see whether and how Confucianism can make important contributions to this contemporary debate between moral realists and anti-realists.

Learning outcomes

1. Develop sensitivity to the common concerns of human existence especially from a comparative perspective between eastern and western of philosophy.

2. Equip students with life-long learning capacities especially through understanding of the connections between academic pursuits and life experience.

3. Relate the subject matters to human experience and/or modern life.

Learning activities

1. Students are supposed to attend weekly class sessions regularly; absence without excusable reasons is not tolerated;

2. Students are supposed to come to class prepared, with the assigned readings for the given class carefully read;

3. Students are supposed to actively participate classroom discussions by raising questions and making comments regarding either the assigned readings or the instructor's lectures or fellow students' comments;

4. Students are supposed to write three papers (each with a minimum of 3000 English words), with the first paper is on moral anti-realism, the second on moralism, and the third on Confucianism. For their due dates, please refer to the course schedule below. They must be accompanied by a signed Veriguide form. Late papers turned in within a day of the due date is accepted with light discount (for example an A grade will be discounted as A-); late papers turned in within a week of the due date are accepted with a heavy discount (for example, an A grade will be discounted as B). After one week of the due date, no papers will be accepted;

5. Students are supposed to do one (two) class presentations, based on the papers written as required above.

Guidelines of Papers:
For each paper, choose a topic of you own interest from those discussed in class. Make sure that this is a topic about which you have something of your own to say; summarize the relevant discussions of the topic by the author(s) we read and discussed in class; explain what part(s) of this position you have most agreements and, more importantly, disagreements with; develop your own alternative position, or provide

your own arguments, and explain how your position and/or arguments will be able to overcome the problems with, or further support, the position you summarize; think what objections (possible or actual, including from those authors we discussed) there might be to your arguments; try to respond such objections. Your paper may have an introductory paragraph (announce what you are going to do in this paper) and a concluding paragraph (summarize the main arguments of your paper). You may also consider divide your paper into several sections.

In addition to the required readings, you may also consult secondary literatures. Whatever materials you are using, it is imperative to indicate very clearly from which sources these materials are (title of the book, or title of the article and the journal in which the article is published, publication year, and page number).

Assessment scheme

Task nature	Description	Weight
Class Preparation/participation	Preparation for and participation at class discussions	15%
Three Papers		25% each (75% total)
One Presentation		10%

Recommended learning Resources

Benson, Mark. 2014. "*Xunzi's Reinterpretation of Ritual: A Hermeneutic Defense of the Confucian Way*." In T.C. Kline III and Justin Tiwald, eds., *Ritual and Religion in the Xunzi*. Albany: SUNY Press, 107-134.

Goldin, Paul R. 2000. *Rituals of the Way: The Philosophy of Xunzi*. Chicago: Open Court.

Hagen, Kurtis. 2000. "A Critical Review of Ivanhoe on Xunzi." *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 27: 361–373.

Hagen, Kurtis 2003. "Xunzi and the Nature of Confucian Ritual." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 71: 371-403.

Hagen, Kurtis. 2007. *The Philosophy of Xunzi: A Reconstruction*. Chicago: Open Court.

Huang, Yong. 2019. "How to Derive Ought From Is: Zhu Xi's Moral Realism." *Dao Companion to Zhu Xi's Philosophy*. Springer.
Huang. Yong. Forthcoming. "WangYangming's Agent Moral Realism."
Ivanhoe, Philip. 1991. "A Happy Symmetry: Xunzi's Ethical Thought," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 59: 309–322.
Ivanhoe, Philip J. 2000. "Human Nature and Moral Understanding in the *Xunzi*." In T.C. Kline, III, and Philip J. Ivanhoe, ed., *Virtue, Nature, and Moral Agency in the Xunzi*. Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 237-249.
Ivanhoe, P.J. 2011. "McDowell,Wang Yangming, and Mengzi's Contributions to Understanding Moral Perception." *Dao* 10: 273–290.
Joyce, Richard. 2016. "Moral Anti-Realism." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/moral-anti-realism/>. (Also refer to the list of the references at the end of entry).
Kline III, T.C. 2004. "Moral Cultivation through Ritual Participation: Xunzi's Philosophy of Ritual." In Kevin Shilbrack, ed., *Thinking through Ritual*. New York: Routledge, pp. 188-175.
Kupperman, Joel J. 2000. "Xunzi: Morality as Psychological Constraint." In T.C. Kline, III, and Philip J. Ivanhoe, ed., *Virtue, Nature, and Moral Agency in the Xunzi*. Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 89-102
Lee, Janghee. 2004. *Xunzi and Early Chinese Naturalism: Xunzi's Concept of Xin and His Ethical Theory*. Albany: SUNY Press.
Liu, Jeeloo. 2007. "Confucian Moral Realism." *Asian Philosophy* 17: 167-184.
Liu, JeeLoo. 2011. "The Is–Ought Correlation in Neo-Confucian Qi-Realism How Normative Facts Exist in Natural States of Qi." *Contemporary Chinese Thought* 43.1: 60–77.
刘纪璐. 2017. "儒家价值实在论能否抵制 Sharon Street 的达尔文式挑战?"《思想与文化》2: 157-171.

Liu, Jeeloo. 2018. "Zhu Xi's Internal Moral Realism: Human Nature Is Principle." In Liu, *Neo-Confucianism: Metaphysics, Mind, and Morality*. Malsden, MA: Wiley Blacwell.

Liu, Jeeloo. 2019. "Zhu Xi's Normative Realism and Internal Moral Realism." *Dao Companion to Zhu Xi's Philosophy*.

刘纪璐. 2019. "荀子如何调解'其善者伪也'与道德实在性的冲突:荀子的道德理论是道德建构论还是道德实在论?" 《人文杂志》4：22-34.

Liu, Xiusheng. 2002. "Mencius, Hume, and the Sensibility Theory." *Philosophy East & West Volume* 52: 75-97.

Sayre-McCord, Geoff. 2017. "Moral Realism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, **URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2017/entries/moral-realism/>. (Also refer to the list of the references at the end of entry).**

Shafer-Landau, and Terence Cuneo, eds. 2007. Foundations of Ethics: An Anthology. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Shun, Kwong-loi. 1991a. "Mencius and the Mind-dependence of Morality: An Analysis of Meng Tzu 6A:4-5. *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 18: 169-193.

Shun, Kwong-loi. 1991b. "Mencius and the Mind-Inherence of Morality: Mencius' Rejection of Kao Tzu's Maxim in Meng Tzu 2A: 2. *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 18: 371-386.

Wong, David 2006. *Natural Moralities: A Defense of Pluralist Relativism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Course schedule (Class on March 8 is cancelled; it will be made up on the 25th)

Week	*Topics*	*Reading*
1 (September 4)	(1) Introduction of the Course (2) Introduction to the topic: Moral Realism, Anti-realism, and Confucianism	
2 (September 11)	Anti-realism 1: Moral Non-Cognitivism	Ayer and Blackburn (other than those indicated, all readings below are frim Shafer-Landau and Terence Cuneo 2007) (Supplemental: Allan Gibbard)
3 (September 18)	Anti-realism 2: Moral Error Theories	Mackie and Joyce
4 (September 25)	Anti-realism 3: Moral Non-Objectivism	Korsgaard and Firth (Supplemental: Harman and Milo)
5 (October 2)	Discussion Session 1: Moral Anti-Realism (Presenters:)	
6 (October 9)	Moral Realism 1: Naturalistic (The 1st paper due)	Boyd and Railton
7 (October 16)	Moral Realism 2: Non-Naturalistic	Hampton and Shafer-Laudau
8 (October 23)	Moral Realism 3: Response-dependent Theories	McDowell and Wiggins
9 (October 30)	Discussion Session 2: Moral Realism (Presenters:)	
10 (November 6)	Confucianism 1: Mencius as a Response-Dependent Theorist, Anti-realist, or Realist? (The 2nd paper due)	Liu 2001, Liu 2007, Shun 1991a, 1991b, 刘 2017.
11 (November 13)	Confucianism 2: Xunzi as a Moral Constructionist or Realist	刘 2019；Ivanhoe 1991, Ivanhoe 2000; Goldin 2000:

		ch. 3; Hagen 2000, Hagen 2003, 2007: ch. 4; Wong 2006: 37-41, 211-220 [supplement: Benson 2014; Kline III 2004; Lee 2004: ch. 5; Kupperman 2000]
12 (November 20)	Confucianism 3: Neo-Confucianism as Moral Realism?	Ivanhoe 2012, Liu 2011, Liu 2018, Liu 2019, Huang 2019, Huang forthcoming
13 (November 27)	Discussion 3: Confuciansim (Presenters:)	
14 (December)	The Third Paper due	

Academic honesty and plagiarism

Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/

With each assignment, students will be required to submit a signed declaration that they are aware of these policies, regulations, guidelines and procedures. For group projects, all students of the same group should be asked to sign the declaration.

For assignments in the form of a computer-generated document that is principally text-based and submitted via VeriGuide, the statement, in the form of a receipt, will be issued by the system upon students' uploading of the soft copy of the assignment. Assignments without the receipt will not be graded by teachers. Only the final version of the assignment should be submitted via VeriGuide.