

PHIL 5070/7070
Seminar on Chinese Philosophy: *Wuwei*
Term 1, 2022
Course Outline

Time : Thur 9:30am-12:15pm

Location : LSK 203

Course overview

This postgraduate seminar course will examine the Chinese philosophical concept of *wuwei* 無為, commonly translated as “non-action.” Although *wuwei* appears most frequently in Daoist texts, there are many examples in other schools, such as Confucianism (*Analects*, *Mencius*, *Xunzi*), Legalism (*Guanzi*, *Hanfeizi*), and Mohism, and in individual texts such as the *Shuo Yuan* 說苑, *Lüshi Chunqiu* 呂氏春秋, *Four Classics of the Yellow Emperor* 黃帝四經, *Lunheng* 論衡, and *Huainanzi* 淮南子. The objective of this seminar is to examine *wuwei* across the spectrum of pre-Han dynasty texts in order to demonstrate the limitations of translating it as “non-action.” In doing so, we will not only deepen our understanding of how *wuwei* influenced personal and political practice, but ancient Chinese society more generally.

Learning outcomes

1. Demonstrate familiarity with the primary and secondary source texts on the syllabus.
2. Gain competence in explaining and evaluating the key concepts and theories addressed in the course.
3. Be able to articulate and defend a philosophical thesis of their own concerning the issues discussed in the course.
4. Demonstrate progress in their papers toward mastering the expository and critical skills for argumentative writing.

Topics

Some of the themes covered in this course include: political theory, ethics, aesthetics, self-cultivation, ecology, health and well-being, and metaphysics.

Learning activities

The seminar consists of lectures and discussion. For the lecture portion (approximately 90 mins), we will read the primary texts (in English translation); the remainder of the time will be set aside for discussion and individual presentations (see below).

Assessment scheme

<i>Task nature</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Weight</i>	<i>Due Date</i>
Research Paper Outline	1 page, double spaced	10%	week 6
Research Paper	8 pages, double spaced	50%	week 13
Oral Presentation	Critique one article from given list (20 mins)	20%	tbd
Participation	Discussion of oral presentations	20%	n/a

If face-to-face teaching and assessment is no longer possible due to the pandemic, we will still follow the above assessment scheme.

Remarks on Assessment Scheme

Research Paper Outline:

This outline should clearly define the topic of your paper, its central thesis, and offer a short description of

each argument used to support your thesis. The outline must demonstrate you have carefully thought about your topic by providing evidence of your familiarity with the texts and/or arguments you are going to use.

Research Paper:

You can write on any aspect of *wuwei* so long as it deals with a text discussed in this course. Your research paper must match the topic of your outline. You will be assessed on your ability to formulate philosophical arguments, and use examples from the primary text to defend your thesis or criticize the interpretation of a modern scholar. Summarizing the arguments of a text and/or scholar is not acceptable. Comparative studies are not permitted.

Oral Presentation

You will be asked to give a 20-minute oral presentation on a scholarly paper from our list of suggested readings. You should briefly summarize the thesis of this paper (5 mins) before discussing its major arguments (15 mins) and why you agree/disagree with them. After the presentation, the remaining time will be used for general discussion about the paper and how it may/may not help our understanding of *wuwei* and Chinese philosophy more generally.

Participation:

Evaluates your involvement in the discussion following each oral presentation (or lecture, if there are no presentations). You are expected to ask questions or make comments related to the readings. It is critical you come to class well prepared

Grade Descriptor

Please refer to: http://phil.arts.cuhk.edu.hk/~phidept/UG/Grade_descriptors.pdf

Required Readings

Edward Slingerland. *Effortless Action: Wuwei as Conceptual Metaphor and Spiritual Ideal in Early China*. Oxford University Press, 2003.

D.C. Lau, trans. *Daodejing*. Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2001.

Edward Slingerland, trans. *Analects*. Hackett, 2003.

Brian van Norden, trans. *Mencius*. Hackett, 2008.

Burton Watson, trans. *Zhuangzi*. Columbia University Press, 2013.

W. Allyn Rickett, trans. *Guanzi*. Princeton University Press, 1985.

Ian Johnston, trans. *Mozi*. Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2010.

Eric Hutton, trans. *Xunzi*. Princeton University Press, 2014.

W.K. Liao, trans. *Hanfeizi*. Arthur Probsthain, 1959.

Eric Henry, trans. *Garden of Eloquence (Shuoyuan)* by Liu Xiang. University of Washington Press, 2021.

Robin Yates, trans. *Five Lost Classics: Tao, Huanglao and Yin-Yang in Han China*. Ballantine Books, 1997.

Alfred Forke, trans. *Lunheng*. Paragon Books, 1962.

John Knoblock, trans. *The Annals of Lü Buwei (Lüshi Chuqiu)*. Stanford University Press, 2000.

John Major, trans. *Huainanzi*. Columbia University Press, 2010.

Readings for Oral Presentation

See Blackboard

Course Schedule

<i>Week</i>	<i>Topics</i>	<i>Required reading</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
Sept 8	Course Introduction	Slingerland, intro	
Sept 15	Laozi	selections, see Blackboard	
Sept 22	Confucius/Mencius	selections, see Blackboard	
Sept 29	Zhuangzi	selections, see Blackboard	
Oct 6	Guanzi	selections, see Blackboard	
Oct 13	Mozi	selections, see Blackboard	Paper outline due
Oct 20	Xunzi	selections, see Blackboard	
Oct 27	Hanfeizi	selections, see Blackboard	
Nov 3	Shuo Yuan	selections, see Blackboard	
Nov 10	Huang-Lao	selections, see Blackboard	
Nov 17	Lunheng	selections, see Blackboard	
Nov 24	Lüshi Chunqiu	selections, see Blackboard	
Dec 1	Huainanzi	selections, see Blackboard	Research paper due

Details of course website

Reading materials and other necessary information will be posted on Blackboard.

Contact details for teacher(s) or TA(s)

Teacher	
Name:	Prof. Chai
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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.