

PHIL 4381
Seminar on Eastern Philosophy 東方哲學研討
(The Pre-Qin Debate over People's Nature)

Course Outline

Time: M 1:30pm-4:15pm

Location: ERB408

Course overview (as shown on CUSIS)

This is a seminar course devoted to an in-depth examination of the selected topics in Eastern philosophy. The specific content varies from semester to semester. Offerings with different subtitles can be taken for credit, up to a maximum of two times.

The 2023 version of this course will guide students in close study of the content and significance of the debate over the role of people's nature (*xìng* 性) in pre-Qin Chinese ethics and moral psychology. The course will examine the origins of the debate as reflected in discussions in *The Annals of Lv Buwei* and the *Zhuangzi* "primitivist" writings. We will then move on to discuss how passages in *Mengzi* appear to be responding to the sorts of views found in the *Annals* and "primitivism." Next we will explore the development of Xunzian discourse on people's nature as a response to both "primitivist" and Mencian ideas. Finally, we will consider whether the *Zhuangzi* presents a further "Daoist" development of *xìng* discourse. We will also consider the underlying question of to what extent, if any, appeals to *xìng* can ground or constrain normative claims. All primary source readings will be available in Chinese and in English translation.

Advisory to Majors: to be taken in year 3 or above.

Learning outcomes (as shown on CUSIS)

*What are the students expected to know and be able to do after taking this course?

1. Gain competence in explaining and evaluating the key concepts and theories addressed in the course.
2. Demonstrate familiarity with the primary and secondary source texts in the syllabus.
3. Engage in in-depth discussion on the selected topics of the course.
4. Demonstrate ability to articulate and defend one's own philosophical theses with clarity.
5. Demonstrate consolidated skills in expository and argument writing.

Topics

The conceptual and ethical role of "people's nature" (人性); "nature" in the *Annals of Lv Buwei*; "nature" in Zhuangist "primitivism"; "nature" in *Mengzi*; the development of views on "nature" in *Xunzi*; further Zhuangist views on "nature."

Learning activities

Lectures; class discussions of primary source readings; class presentation; essays.

Assessment scheme as prescribed on CUSIS (revise if necessary)

| <i>Task nature</i> | <i>Description</i> | <i>Weight</i> |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------|---------------|
| Essays | One midterm essay, one final essay | 60% |
| Class participation | Regular contributions over the semester | 20% |
| Presentation | Several brief activities to be specified | 20% |

Remarks on Assessment Scheme (if any)

Grade Descriptor

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

Recommended learning resources

Course schedule

| <i>Week</i> | <i>Topics</i> | <i>Teaching Mode</i> <i>Online / in-campus</i> | <i>Required reading</i> | <i>Tutorials</i> | <i>Remarks</i> |
|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| 1 | Introduction | | | | |
| 2 | Health, fulfillment, and xing in the Annals | | Selections from the <i>Annals of Lv Buwei</i> | | |
| 3 | Health, fulfillment, and xing in the Annals | | Selections from the <i>Annals of Lv Buwei</i> | | |
| 4 | The conflict between mainstream ethics and xing in Zhuangist primitivism | | Selections from <i>Zhuangzi</i> | | |

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| 5 | The conflict between mainstream ethics and xing in Zhuangist primitivism | | Selections from <i>Zhuangzi</i> | | |
| 6 | The Mencian response: ethical norms as a fulfillment of xing | | Selections from <i>Mengzi</i> | | |
| 7 | The Mencian response: ethical norms as a fulfillment of xing | | Selections from <i>Mengzi</i> | | |
| 8 | Early Xunzian views: Xing is irrelevant | | Selections from <i>Xunzi</i> | | |
| 9 | Later Xunzian views: Xing is bad | | Selections from <i>Xunzi</i> | | |
| 10 | Xunzi on ethical “transformation” | | Selections from <i>Xunzi</i> | | |
| 11 | Mencius vs Xunzi on how to become good | | Review of selections from <i>Mengzi</i> and <i>Xunzi</i> | | |
| 12 | Further Zhuangist views: Xing as a key to Dao | | Selections from <i>Zhuangzi</i> | | |
| 13 | Review and conclusion | | | | |
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Details of course website

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

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| Teacher | |
| Name: | Fraser, Christopher |
| Office location: | Room 436, Fung King Hey Building |
| Telephone: | |
| Email: | cjfraser@gmail.com |

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| TA | |
| Name: | |
| Office location: | |
| Telephone: | |
| Email: | |

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.