Essentials of Confucianism: An Introduction

Instructor: Professor Dr. Guoxiang Peng

Venue: TBC

Time: TBC

Office Hour: by appointment

Course Description:

Embark on an illuminating journey into the heart of Confucianism, a profound philosophical and spiritual tradition that has left an indelible mark on Chinese civilization. In this introductory course, we delve deep into the essence of Confucian thought, examining its pivotal aspects. Through close examination and vibrant discussions of original Confucian texts spanning classical, Neo-Confucian, and contemporary perspectives, this course provides students with a nuanced comprehension of key Confucian principles.

What has been the central concern of every Confucian throughout history? What constitutes the Confucian ideal personality? How can one embody the qualities aspired to by Confucians? What is the Confucian vision of an ideal political system? How do we interpret historical instances of Confucian political engagement and its contemporary evolution? Furthermore, what relevance does Confucianism hold in the modern world?

As an introduction to Confucianism, this course endeavors to address these questions by delving into the core tenets of Confucian thought, which encompass five essential and interconnected aspects:

1. Junzi (君子): The virtuous person, representing the ideal personality.
2. Human Nature: The foundation for attaining the status of a *junzi*.
3. Self-Cultivation: The path towards becoming a *junzi*.
4. The One-Body Worldview: The broader framework within which one strives to become a *junzi*.
5. Political Ideal: Exploring the balance between meritocracy and democracy within Confucianism.

Grading:

The grades for this course will mainly be based on the final term paper, but regular participation and active discussions in class will also be an important consideration.

Course outline:

1. What is a *Junzi*? (I)
2. What is a *Junzi*? (II)
3. The ground of becoming a *Junzi*: Confucian understanding of Human nature (I)
4. The ground of becoming a *Junzi*: Confucian understanding of Human nature (II)
5. The way of becoming a *Junzi*: Self-cultivation (I)
6. The way of becoming a *junzi*: Self-cultivation (II)
7. The context of self-cultivation: Confucian one-body world view (I)
8. The context of self-cultivation: Confucian one-body world view (II)
9. Political ideal (I)
10. Political ideal (II)