

## HIS 295 **Classical Asia**

M, W, F, 1-1:50 pm, HSSC-S2310

Prof. W. Luo

[luoweiwei@grinnell.edu](mailto:luoweiwei@grinnell.edu)

Officer Hours in Mears 312: MW 2-4 pm

### **Course Description and Learning Goals**

This course focuses on the major thinkers and texts from the ancient period of India, China, and Japan. We will study the historical and cultural background, as well as reconstruct the values and patterns of thought that circulated in this set of vanished worlds, each of them deeply removed and different from the one we live in today. At its heart, this course is an introduction to learning how to read, and simultaneously, a study of the changing ways in which people have read (books, people, situations, the world) in the past. It also provides an opportunity to study how two sets of conversations that at first operated in parallel (one conducted among societies living in the Yellow River basin, the other around the northern Indian Ocean,) eventually overlapped and collided as people inhabiting these regions read about and traded with one another, and transformed as they transmitted to other parts of Asia, such as Japan.

In this course, we will learn how to think and write critically, clearly, and precisely, about challenging ideas and concepts. We will also see whether these texts can speak across temporal, spatial, and historical divides to our own concerns as twenty-first century humans. Some of the texts we will encounter in this course are incredibly difficult. The reading, at times, will feel confusing and demanding. Entire year-long seminars could be devoted to some of these texts. Thus, there is a limit to how well we can understand them in the short time allotted. But by careful reading, active participation in class discussions, engaged and clear writing, and a willingness to take risks and learn from mistakes, we will likely find our own collective and individual capacities for knowledge considerably enhanced by the end.

### **Required Books**

**The Analects** (Penguin Classics Paperback 2014) Translated with an introduction by Annping Chin

**The Bhagavad Gita** (Nilgiri Press 2nd Edition Paperback 2007) Translated with an introduction by Eknath Easwaran

**Siddhartha** (any edition) Hermann Hesse

**The Tao of Pooh**

Other readings will be made available as PDFs (marked by @.)

### **Assignments**

## **Attendance and Participation 20%**

You are expected to attend class and participate actively throughout the semester. Lectures and discussions are essential to learning in this class. All readings are to be completed prior to the class period for which they have been assigned. You should come to class prepared to discuss them in detail, with questions and points for discussion prepared. Attendance (10%) will be taken at every meeting. Participation (10%) includes taking part in discussions, completing assignments, and other learning activities associated with the class.

**Concept memos 30%** see *Assignment Sheet* (under Assignment on PWeb) for details.

Concepts (in their historical contexts) are the “muscles” of this class. The better you can strengthen them, the better you can learn in this class. In this exercise, you should examine how the texts we have read so far have implicitly or explicitly defined the following notions, and strategically put these definitions together into your own statements. \* These memos will be posted on the PWeb, discussed in class, and revised under my supervision. Successful completion of the 3 memos of satisfying quality, and the active participation in the revision process will constitute 10 percent of the final grade. You will choose 2 of the 3 revised memos to submit for grading, each of which will count for an additional 10 percent of the final grade. This exercise also prepares you for the final paper by training your ability to synthesize ideas and articulate your own argument at the same time.

\*Although the examples in the prompts are from European thought, you are to only draw from readings in this class (China, India, Japan) for your definitions.

### **Memo 1: Virtue**

According to the scholar-poet Cristoforo Landino, citing Plato, “virtue is the only and unique giver of true nobility,” a kind of “health-bringing constellation and the highest support of the state.” Your first concept memo asks you to synthesize a definition of “virtue”, drawing on readings from this class.

### **Memo 2: Self**

As Descartes explains, “when I consider my mind—that is, myself, given that I am merely a thing that thinks—I can identify no distinct parts to it, but conceive of myself as a single and complete thing.” Your first concept memo asks you to formulate a definition of “self”, drawing on readings from this class.

### **Memo 3: Politics**

Aristotle indicates that “politics” is a practical knowledge that produces, operates, maintains a system according to universal principles, in order to ensure the good life for the citizens. Your third concept memo asks you to formulate a definition of politics, drawing on readings from this class.

## **Discussion Board: 10%**

On assigned days, long with one of your classmates, you will be responsible for posting reading and discussion questions on Pweb

*See Assignment Sheet (will be posted on Pweb) for details*

## **Midterm scaffolding paper: 15%**

A planning essay for your final paper

## **Final paper: 25%**

Your final paper will allow you to research a subject matter of your choosing. This can take a number of different shapes. Feel free to go into depth on something we have encountered in class readings or mentioned in discussions that intrigues you, or pursue something that interested you from additional sources on themes similar to what we have touched on in class. We will discuss details of this assignment during the first half of the semester.

Components of this paper:

### **1) Source annotation (1 page:) (5%)**

In addition to the primary sources we use in this class, make sure to include at least 3 pieces of secondary literature (monographs, book chapters, academic journal articles.) You may use as many sources as you need. You will submit source annotations for the sources you plan to use in this final paper. This should include the following:

- Bibliographical details
- Contextual information (what kind of scholarly conversation was this source a part of?)
- Summary (summarize what is important about this source for your project and how you plan to use it.)

### **2) A short 10 min presentation in class. (5%)**

This is a great opportunity for you to share your knowledge and discuss the ideas of your paper with your fellow classmates. We will discuss the details of this assignment during the first half of the semester.

### **3) A 5-6 double-spaced page paper. (15%)**

See *Rubric for Evaluation* (under Assignment on PWeb) for details

### **Grading Scale:**

93-100% A	83-86% B	70-76% C
90-92% A-	80-82% B-	60-69% D
87-89% B+	77-79% C+	below 60% F

## **Class Policies**

### **Academic honesty:**

In all assignments written for this course, you must abide by the College's rules on plagiarism. ([http://catalog.grinnell.edu/content.php?catoid=12&navoid=2537#Honesty\\_in\\_Academic\\_Work](http://catalog.grinnell.edu/content.php?catoid=12&navoid=2537#Honesty_in_Academic_Work)) Do not submit someone else's work as your own, quote from a source without citing it, or provide inappropriate help to a classmate on exams and assignments. If you paraphrase or quote any text from another you must indicate where the text comes from. Failure to comply

with the requirement of academic honesty may result in receiving no credit for the assignment in question or even failing the course in cases of serious academic dishonesty. If you are in doubt about any of the rules, please consult with me, or the professionals in the Writing Lab, *before* submitting your class materials and assignments.

### **Religious holidays:**

Grinnell College offers alternative options to complete academic work for students who observe holy days. Please contact me within the first 2 weeks of the semester if you would like to discuss a specific instance that applies to you.

### **Inclusive classroom and student accessibility services:**

I strive to create a fully inclusive classroom. Thus I welcome individual students to approach me about distinctive learning needs. In particular, I encourage students with disabilities, including invisible or non-apparent disabilities such as chronic illness, learning disabilities, and psychiatric disabilities, to discuss reasonable accommodations with me, and to have a conversation about how our classroom or course activities could impact the disability and what accommodations would be essential to you.

You will also need to have a conversation about and provide documentation of your disability to the Coordinator for Student Disability Resources, John Hirschman, located on the 3rd floor of Goodnow Hall (x3089). Students should then notify me within the first few days of classes so that we can discuss ways to ensure your full participation in the course and coordinate your accommodations.

### **Attendance and extension policies:**

If you have legitimate reasons to miss class or turn in an assignment late, please let me know in advance and supply relevant documentation. Everyone is allowed 2 absences without penalty during the semester. If you have 3 or more absences (regardless of reasons,) you will incur deduction of attendance grade. You are encouraged to come to talk to me about ways to make up for absences if you have legitimate reasons to miss more than 2 classes. Everyone is allowed 1 extensions of 24 hours on 1 writing assignments without penalty. If you have 2 or more late submissions (regardless of reasons) you will incur grade deduction on the assignment depending on the amount of time lapsed. You are encouraged to come to talk to me about ways to make up for the grade.

### **Laptop and tablet use:**

I believe that great discussions are facilitated by everyone's full attention including eye contact. For this reason, laptops and other electronic devices are discouraged. However, there are many good reasons to use laptops to facilitate learning. If you intend to use a laptop regularly or occasionally, please be mindful of the potential disruptive effect. If I find that you are using your device in ways that are distracting for you or the class I may ask you to put it away.

### Course Schedule

Online readings marked by @

*\*The reading assignments are subject to change*

Date	Topic	Assignments
1/22 W	Introduction	Syllabus @
1/24 F	“Eastern” vs. “Western” classics	J.M. Coetzee, “What is a Classic?” @
1/27 M	Oracles	Fairbank, 29-45@ [SKIM] Eno, “Deities and Ancestors in Early Oracle Inscriptions”@
1/29 W	Prof. Michael Puett visit (no class)	Attend and take notes on one of his two public lectures
1/31 F	Philosophers and “Power Consultants”	F. Li, “Philosophers as Statesmen” in <i>Early China</i> , 207-28 @
2/3 M	Confucian view of human relationships [ <i>in-class exercise: “as-if” rituals</i> ]	Analects, Introduction; books 1-4
2/5 W	Benevolence, humaneness, and governance	Analects, books 5-13
2/7 F	Decisions in a capricious world	Mencius @; “yin-yang way of thinking” @; “consulting the Yijing” @
2/10 M	The mysterious Tao	The Tao of Pooh, pp. 1-90 Tao Te Ching @

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Assignments</b>
2/12 W	Spontaneous actions	Zhuangzi @
2/14 F	Legalism and the rise of the state	Han Feizi@
2/17 M	Universal love and “sprouts of democracy”	Osborne@ Mozi @
2/19 W	Politics and Heaven	Nakayama, “Characteristics of Chinese Astrology” @ X. Sun, “The role of astronomy in ancient Chinese society and culture” @  Concept Memo 1 due
2/21 F	<i>Workshop for concept memo 1</i>	Review and annotate your classmates’ memo drafts. Please bring them to class.
2/24 M	Human and universe in Vedic thought	The Rig Veda @ “Vedic thought” @ “Origins of Existence” @
2/26 W	The search for Atman	Upanishads @
2/28 F	The Hindu epical tradition  Guest visit by Prof. Mercado	Gita, part 1
3/2 M	Dharma and early Indian social structure	Gita, part 2
3/4 W	What is yoga?	Yoga Aphorisms @; the Yoga Sutra @

Date	Topic	Assignments
3/6 F	The historical Buddha	“The Buddha” @ Siddhartha, pp. 3-42
3/9 M	Justice of the holy man	Siddhartha, pp. 43-152  Concept Memo 2 due
3/11 W	<i>Workshop for concept memo 2</i>	Review and annotate your classmates’ memo drafts. Please bring them to class.
3/13 F	Why enlightenment? [ <i>in-class exercise: mindful communication</i> ]	Dhammapada @; “The Art of Communicating” @
3/16-27	<b>Spring Break</b>	
3/30 M	Defining “Ancient” and “Classical”	Chapter by Piggot, in <i>Japan Emerging</i> @  Scaffolding Paper due
4/1 W	Shaman Queen’s Lost Realm	Farris, <i>Sacred Texts and Buried Treasures</i> (chapter 1)
4/3 F	Writing, Text, and Civilization in Early Japan	Lurie, <i>Realms of Literacy</i> (excerpt)
4/6 M	Histories and Mythologies	Shirane, <i>Inventing the Classics</i> (chapter 2) @ Kojiki (excerpt) @
4/8 W	Early Kingship and Political Narratives	Totman, <i>A History of Japan</i> (excerpt) @ Fudoki (Introduction) @
4/10 F	“All under Heaven”	“Manyoshu and the Imperial Imagination in Early Japan” @

Date	Topic	Assignments
4/13 M	Women	Yoshie, "Gender in Early Classical Japan"@
4/15 W	Formation of the Japanese State	Ooms, <i>Imperial Politics and Symbolics in Ancient Japan</i> (Introduction) @  Concept memo 3 due
4/17 F	<i>Workshop for concept memo 3</i>	Review and annotate your classmates' memo drafts. Please bring them to class.
4/20 M	TBA	
4/22 W	The Sati controversies	Mani, "Contentious Traditions - The Debate on Sati in Colonial India." @
4/24 F	Chinese vs. Japanese	Goodrich et al. <i>Japan in the Chinese Dynastic Histories</i> (excerpt) @ Ury, "Chinese Learning and Intellectual Life," in <i>Cambridge History of Japan</i> @
4/27 M	Buddhism in modern politics	Lopez, <i>Tibetan Buddhism and the West</i> (Intro) @
4/29 W	Nationalism and Modern Reinventing of "Classics"	Inventing Tradition (Introduction) @
5/1 F	Student presentations and feedback	
5/4 M	Student presentations and feedback	



Date	Topic	Assignments
5/6 W	Student presentations and feedback	
5/8 F	Conclusion and evaluations (extra time for presentations if necessary)	
5/12-15	<b>Exam week</b>	Final paper due May 12, noon

-classical period; and about works that can be called classics

Is there such a thing as Eastern classics, and how should we study them? Why should we study them?

Inherited culture—whose heritage? Does Shakespeare matter to Asian people? Why? In what way does the gender and race of the writer matter?

-how many of you have read some of these texts, regardless of language

History class—boundaries of disciplines quite blurred

Disciplines being modern social science inventions; ancient science—projecting back in time the way we understand the world

Is there such a thing as the Eastern Canon—western canon debate

what should be included and not included here

What are the functions of a classic: social classification? Personal identity?