

## **Syllabus: Introduction to Chinese Culture (CHIN 425, Fall 21)**

Time & Location: MW 2:10-3:30 pm, Murkland G17

Instructor: Wenjin Cui

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Office Hours: MW 10-11 am & by appointment

**I. Course Description:** This course offers a critical introduction to Chinese culture, including its philosophical foundations, various branches of cultural production, and modern transformation. A special emphasis is placed on the comparison between both the shared and the diverging ways of thinking that underlie the Chinese and the Western traditions. Students can expect to gain in-depth knowledge of major elements that have shaped the Chinese culture for the past two and a half millennia, and to develop critical perspectives and an intellectual sensitivity that are indispensable for cross-cultural thinking. This course fulfills World Cultures (Discovery) requirement.

We will start our inquiry with a discussion of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism, the three founding sources of classical Chinese thought, reading texts by their foundational thinkers and examining ideas that are central to these intellectual traditions. After this initiation into the roots of Chinese thought, we will explore various branches of cultural production that originated in the classical tradition and that continue to be part of contemporary life in China, including language, food, military strategies, painting, architecture, and literature. While learning about certain specific facts about these different realms of cultural production, we will pay special attention to how they are shaped by the three philosophical foundations of Chinese thought. Finally, the last cluster of texts will be devoted to modern China. In particular, we will consider the continuity and discontinuity of Chinese culture in the modern era, especially against the backdrop of its tumultuous encounter with the West since mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.

## **II. Course Requirements and Grading Ratio:**

1) **Attendance (10%).** Attendance is Mandatory. You are allowed one unexcused absence; beyond that, each unexcused absence will result in 0.5 point deduction from your final grade. You will receive an F for more than 8 unexcused absences. If, for some justifiable reason (health, family, etc.), you are unable to come to class on a certain day, you must inform me **in advance**, unless it is an emergency. For missed classes, it is your responsibility to speak to your classmates about the material covered in class and any work assigned for the next class.

2) **Class Participation (10%).** You are expected to complete the reading or film/video assignments before coming to the class and to actively participate in class discussion. **Sitting in on classes does not constitute participation.** Your participation score is determined by your preparedness for class, as well as your willingness to participate in group and class discussions. Active participation includes attentive listening, note-taking, asking questions, making comments, presenting ideas, and an attitude that is respectful of fellow students and the topic being discussed.

3) **Weekly Responses** for the texts to be discussed on **Monday** (10 in total; 15%). **Due on Canvas every Monday noon** (except Mondays when there are exams or special events). A prompt will be posted on Canvas by the previous Friday. No responses are required for Wednesday's readings.

This writing assignment is meant to keep you on board with the class, and should not require much extra effort if you have completed the reading/viewing.

I will not provide written comments on your responses, unless they contain obvious or serious problems, or are exceptionally good. But our class discussions should help you grasp the merits and weaknesses of your writings. If you would like to receive more feedback in person, please feel free to come to my office hours for a chat.

Late work will only be accepted on a case-by-case basis, due to exceptional circumstances, and with potential deduction of credit.

4) **In-class Exams (20%+25%).** There will be two in-class exams during the semester.

The 1<sup>st</sup> exam (**September 27<sup>th</sup>**) will be on basic doctrines of the three philosophical traditions (Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism) we discuss during the first four weeks of class. The format will be essay questions and analysis of a paragraph cited from the original texts. I will give you 3 essay questions and 3 paragraphs to prepare in advance, out of which 2 essay questions and 1 paragraph analysis will be chosen for the exam.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> exam (**November 8<sup>th</sup>**) will be on the various branches of cultural production covered between Week 6 and Week 10. The format will be matching, true/false, short answer and essay questions. I will give you a number of general questions to prepare in advance, but the actual exam will not necessarily follow the same format as these questions.

For the essay questions and paragraph analysis, your response should be 200-250 words for each. Please read the instructions closely to make sure you **address all the required elements**. Bear in mind that, besides **covering the main points**, you also need to **provide sufficient textual analysis to support your points**. All other types of questions (2<sup>nd</sup> exam) only require basic factual knowledge and should be very easy so long as you prepare. Since you need to handwrite for these exams, make sure that your writing is legible. **The key to your success in these exams is to be familiar with the course materials and to closely follow our class discussions.**

5) **Final Paper (20%). Due on Canvas by December 19<sup>th</sup>.** Please write a 1000-1200 words (double-space, 12-point font) analysis of one of the assigned texts from Week 12-15.

The paper is expected to be **critical analysis** of the text, rather than mere summary of its main ideas or plot, nor your own opinion of the issues presented in the text. You should provide a valid, in-depth and clearly articulated argument and support your argument with sufficient and logically coherent textual analysis. The paper should also be well-structured and conform to the academic writing style. Your paper will be evaluated on **4 basic elements: thesis, analysis, structure, and style**. More detailed guideline will be posted on Canvas.

I will propose a few possible paper topics, but you are also encouraged to develop your own. In the latter case, you must consult with me on the topic before writing the paper.

**\*Please note:** 1) All reading materials are uploaded on Canvas. Films/videos are available online.  
2) The schedule and content of the syllabus are subject to change.

### **III. Policies/ Statements**

#### **\*In-class Technology Policy:**

You must receive my approval before using any electronic devices in class, including but not limited to cell-phones, tablet devices, and laptop computers. **The devices can only be used for note-taking or checking the reading materials.** This is a small class and your full attention and participation are critical to doing well in class activities. Unauthorized use of electronic devices in class will result in being counted as “unexcused absence” for that day.

#### **\*Academic Honesty**

Please note the University has no tolerance for students who break the University Academic Honesty Policy. Please see the Students Rights, Rules, and Responsibilities Handbook for full description.

#### **\* Disability Services for Students**

The University is committed to providing students with documented disabilities equal access to all university programs and facilities. If you think you have a disability requiring accommodations, you must register with Disability Services for Students (DSS). If you have questions about the process, please contact DSS at (603) 862-2607 or [disability.office@unh.edu](mailto:disability.office@unh.edu). If you are registered with DSS, and eligible for accommodations that you would like to utilize in this course, please forward that information to me in a timely manner so that we can meet privately in my office to review those accommodations.

#### **\*Emotional/Mental Health**

Your academic success in this course is very important to me. If during the semester, you find emotional or mental health issues are affecting that success, please contact the University’s Counseling Center (3rd floor Smith Hall: 603-862-2090/TTY:7-1-1) which provides counseling appointments and other mental health services.

#### **IV. Schedule of Class Meetings:**

##### **Week 1. Introduction & Confucianism: Humaneness (*ren*) and the Moral Governance (I)**

Aug-30. Course Overview

Sept-1. Confucius. *Analects*, excerpts

##### **Week 2. Confucianism: Humaneness (*ren*) and the Moral Governance (II)**

Sept-6. **NO CLASS** (Labor Day)

Sept-8. Mencius. Selected writings

##### **Week 3. Daoism: The Way (*dao*) and Non-Action (*wuwei*)**

Sept-13. Laozi. *Dao De Jing*, excerpts

Sept-15. Zhuangzi. Selected writings.

##### **Week 4. Buddhism: Doctrines and Challenges**

Sept-20. Buddhist scripture: *Heart Sutra*  
Buddhist texts in the tradition of the Meditation (*zen*) School

Sept-22. Challenges from the Confucian orthodoxy. Selected texts

##### **Week 5. [Exam and Guest Lecture]**

Sept-27. *In-class Exam (I)*

Sept-29. *Guest Lecture* (TBA)

##### **Week 6. Language, Food**

Oct-4. Basic aspects of Chinese language:

Character: Han Jiantang. “Methods of Forming the Han Characters”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QvGPeezXDlg>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s0h18Rdhb44> (optional)

Tones: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F9tk-owBn4I>

Dialects: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=swvFhxkbj3A>  
Grammar: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6UZqN6QExrk>

Oct-6. Liu Junru. "A Gastronomic Tour of China"  
Ten Sichuan dishes: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i7EbvR6TNoo>  
Xi'an Famous Foods: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zQOOaTwrI8>  
11 Types of Dumplings: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SO3wsGobCy8>

### **Week 7. The Art of War**

Oct-11. **NO CLASS** (Mid-semester break)  
Oct-13. Sunzi. *The Art of War*, excerpts.

### **Week 8. Literati Painting, Traditional Architecture**

Oct-18. François Jullien. "Presence-Absence," *The Great Image Has No Form, or, On the Nonobject through Painting*, P1-14.  
Chinese Landscape Paintings at MET: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TIIt0wBUdY5E>  
Oct-20. Shan Deqi. "Beijing Quadrangle Courtyards"  
Chinese Gardens: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Otx-yWMX0Fk&frags=pl%2Cwn>

### **Week 9. The Portrait of a Confucian-Daoist Politician**

Oct-25. *Three Kingdoms: A Historical Novel*, excerpts.  
Oct-27. *Three Kingdoms: A Historical Novel*, excerpts.

### **Week 10. Fantastic Imaginations**

Nov-1. Pei Xing. *Tales of the Marvelous*, selected tales.  
Nov-3. Pu Songling. *Strange Tales From a Chinese Studio*, selected tales.

### **Week 11. [Exam and Guest Lecture]**

Nov-8. *In-class Exam (II)*  
Nov-10. *Guest Lecture* (TBA)

## **Week 12. Turning Against the Tradition**

Nov-15. Lu Xun. “Diary of a Madman,” “More Thoughts on the Collapse of Leifeng Pagoda,” “Thoughts before the Mirrors”

Nov-17. Ding Ling. “Miss Sophia’s Diary”

## **Week 13. The Modern Face of Confucianism**

Nov-22. Fei Mu. *Spring in a Small Town* (Film, 1948)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mt5d-hqYmkw>

Nov-24. **NO CLASS.** *Happy Thanksgiving!*

## **Week 14. The Communist Revolution**

Nov-29. Rebecca Karl. *Mao Zedong and China in the Twentieth-Century World*, excerpts

Dec-1. Xie Jin. *The Red Detachment Of Women* (Film, 1960)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z0PM9d18e9o&frags=pl%2Cwn>

## **Week 15. Contemporary Situations**

Dec-6. Jia Zhangke. *Still Life* (Film, 2006)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VWd0YFIwfc4>

Dec-8. Open discussion. A few videos on political issues:

Political system: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vVyHAQh2VTE&t=1s>

Hong Kong: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hv3H9PNw4eQ&ab\\_channel=DanielDumbrill](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hv3H9PNw4eQ&ab_channel=DanielDumbrill)

Coronavirus: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q5BZ09iNdvo&ab\\_channel=NewChinaTV](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q5BZ09iNdvo&ab_channel=NewChinaTV)

Xinjiang: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qZkxaEC1xjY&t=1237s>