

CHI/SLC 336 & HST 386 INTERPRETING CHINA'S CLASSICS  
With a Focus on the *Mencius* and the *Laozi*  
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Fall 2016 (CHI #89073; SLC #90475; HST #91564) TTH 10:30-11:45 in ED 202

General Studies Credit:

L (Literacy & Critical Inquiry) or HU (Humanities), and H (Historical Awareness).

**Office Hours:** LL411, Tuesdays & Thursdays 10:00-10:20 a.m. and 1:20-2:15 p.m.,  
and cheerfully by appointment.

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If absolutely necessary, you may call my home: (480) 838-1895.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

The primary learning outcome will be to enhance your understanding of the meaning and significance of two core Chinese Classics in English translation. You will encounter texts and ideas that will present worldviews and ways of thinking that are significantly different from contemporary views in both China and America. You are encouraged to reflect on the text and explore the challenges to your conceptions of the self and your actions in family and society. The professor's role is not to push these ancient ideas or to attempt to convert you to become either Confucian or Daoist; however, he will seek to enhance your understanding and analysis of such ideas and texts. These texts are conventionally called "Classics"; however, they are also China's "scriptures" and core to China's philosophical and religious canon. We will not deal with the literary canon, which you can study with other professors in the School of International Letters & Cultures. The central focus for this semester will be the classical *Mencius* (from the fourth to the third century B.C.E.). You will be reading either Irene Bloom's quite clear translation or James Legge's more literal translation (with more extensive notes and the Chinese text). The professor will bring into class discussions, when appropriate, what the Chinese text is and ways that scholars over the centuries have explained the particular passages. Thus, besides a close reading of the text itself, we will explore how Chinese in different times and situations read the Classic and applied it to their lives. The amount of the *Mencius* to be read for each class is not large, so you are expected to read it carefully and ponder it to get beyond the surface.

If you are studying Chinese or can read Chinese, you are strongly encouraged to read the Chinese text along with the translation. Reading the Chinese text in the original is NOT required to do well in the course. Still, even if you have no prior knowledge of Chinese, you can learn a lot from our discussions of different ways crucial Chinese terms have been understood.

A major interpretative context will be how Chinese traditionally conceived of "learning" (*xue* or *hsueh*) and how Chinese were taught to study the classics. (Since readings for the first three weeks use traditional Wade-Giles spelling for Chinese names and terms, that spelling will be given along with the now more popular *pinyin*; however, students are welcome to use either one of these two spelling systems in their papers.)

Another core reading will be a translation of the recorded conversations that Zhu Xi (Chu Hsi, 1130-1200) had with his students regarding how to read the classics and how to study. It was Zhu's teachings and commentaries on the *Mencius* that served as the foundation for the text becoming one of the four core texts of education and the civil service examination system in China from 1241 to 1908. Chinese for centuries memorized the whole text and often quoted it in their conversations and writings.

As a counter balance to the sociopolitical and ethical teachings of the *Mencius*, we will also read Richard Lynn's translation of the central Daoist (Taoist) classic, the *Laozi* (*Lao-tzu*).

For introductory and historical context, we will read one chapter from F. W. Mote's *Intellectual Foundations of China* to orient ourselves to major differences between the mainstream worldview in the West and those prevalent in ancient China.

Please note that this is not a survey of Chinese thought during the classical period and does not cover all of the Classics. My broader course (CHI/HST/SLC 451) gives special attention to other Classics, e.g., the *Analects* of Confucius, the *Zhuangzi* (*Chuang-tzu*). 451 and this course on the Classics are taught in different semesters. This semester's course has the advantage of concentrated reading and reflecting upon a couple of selected classics.

### CORE READINGS:

Mote, F. W. *Intellectual Foundations of China*, chapter 3.

Ames, Roger T. and Henry Rosemont, Jr., *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation*, Introduction, pp. 37-65.

Chu Hsi (Zhu Xi), *Learning to be a Sage; Selections from the Conversations of Master Chu, Arranged Topically*. Translated with a Commentary by Daniel K. Gardner.

Mencius, *The Mencius*, translated by Irene Bloom.

Legge, James, translator. *The Works of Mencius* (Also in *The Four Books*). I will draw attention to Legge's translation for some passages. Legge's translation is in older British English, but it is more 'literal' and provides useful notes as well as a convenient Chinese text for those who want to study the Chinese original.

*Laozi*, or *The Classic of the Way and Virtue*, translation & commentary by Richard Lynn. All six books will be on Reserve at Hayden Library for 4-hour and overnight loan. The last four (except Legge) are in the ASU Bookstore.

### REQUIREMENTS:

Although there will be mini-lectures to introduce needed background and to bridge between topics, most of class time should explore the classical texts themselves. Thus, students will be required to participate *actively* in these discussions. Students will be expected to read the Classics and assigned materials before class and to come to class prepared with questions and reflections about the texts.

*Indeed, you will be required each class to turn in your written statement(s), reflection(s), or question(s) on a passage or passages in the assigned readings.* Although it will require some disciplined effort to write the brief expositions for every

class, this is the easiest way to build a solid grade in the course. This is also a way for you to grasp an aspect of learning in an academy in traditional China. To gain more of a sense of the learning community within those academies, you are strongly encouraged to form small groups to discuss the readings, compare notes, and discuss or proofread your papers. More explanation about these aspects will be explained in class.

As an **L (Literary & Critical Inquiry) class**, this course requires considerable essay writing. In addition to the final examination essay, three papers are also required. You are encouraged to rewrite and re-submit your second paper. If you choose to improve your grade by showing your grasp of the professor's corrections and suggestions about your first version, submit both versions of the second paper.

The first two writing assignments focus on the topic of "learning." The **first paper** will challenge you to think through what "learning" means to you and how study and reading is approached within your own cultural time and place. The first paper will also provide a writing diagnostic and an opportunity to correct some writing problems before getting into the more difficult analytical and expository writing assignments. The first paper will be due on August 30. This first paper should be typed, double-spaced and approximately 500 words in length. Place the "word count" within brackets at the end of each paper. You should construct your thoughts into an essay with a thesis statement, several paragraphs developing points in your argument with supporting evidence, and ending with a conclusion.

In your **second paper**, you will revisit this issue of what "learning" means. In this second paper, you will discuss and evaluate what Chinese meant by learning, as well as *how and why* they read the Classics. In this second paper, you will incorporate your own reading and analysis of Zhu Xi's (Chu Hsi) program for learning and reading. It is imperative that you do NOT simply summarize Zhu's program, or still worse, simply paraphrase Gardner's summary of Zhu's ideas. This second paper will be due on September 29 and should be about 1,500 words in length. It must have standard citations and a Bibliography. An assignment sheet and instructions for this paper will be distributed and discussed in class. The professor will read and make suggestions on your second essay, so you may revise it by October 13 for a higher grade by demonstrating your progress both in your comprehension of Zhu Xi's standard approach to the Classics and in your writing skills.

The **third required paper** will be a textual exposition of the *Mencius*. You may focus on a close reading of one or more passages, or you may expound on a concept or the usage of a particular term in the text as demonstrated in specific passages. Your task is to demonstrate your close reading and understanding of the *Mencius* and to use the *Mencius* to explain the *Mencius*. In addition to demonstrating your understanding of the *Mencius* itself, you should show your awareness of relevant interpretative contexts and interpretations discussed in class. This paper should be about 2,000 words, plus citations and Bibliography and is due on November 17.

The **final** examination will also be an essay format, but will focus primarily on the *Laozi*. More details will be given in class.

## GRADING:

As a preliminary exercise, the first writing assignment will be graded P/F and will not impact your grade negatively—unless you fail to complete it satisfactorily. The second paper will be worth 20 percent. You may rewrite the second paper based upon the professor's corrections and comments. The initial grade on the second paper will count 5 percent of the total course grade, and your rewritten second paper will count 15 percent of the course grade. Or, if you are pleased with your initial results, all 20% will rest on that first submission.

The remaining 25 percent of total grade will be the instructor's estimation of your written and oral comments about the assigned readings discussed in class; see the above first paragraph under Requirements. **Rubric:** Being present and attentively following class discussion gets you a C for the day; turning in a thoughtful comment/question raises you to a B for the day; and contributing an insightful comment/question orally in discussion merits an A for the day. You should turn in your question/comment on a 3X5 card each class day that you want to improve your participation grade. You will be allowed two absences during the semester; however, additional absences will impact what you reap from the course. These weekly grades will not be recorded on Blackboard; however, you may keep a record of your level of class participation on a biweekly basis, so you can compute your progress in the above grading rubric. Active, oral participation in the **two debates** in class are most important. The weight of required papers increases during the semester, so you have opportunity for significant improvement. The final essay examination will count 20 percent of the final grade. Grading will follow standard ASU system utilizing both the plus and minus distinctions.

- First Paper on August 30: P/F
- Second Paper on September 29: 5%; Rewritten 2<sup>nd</sup> Paper on October 13: 15%
- Third Paper on November 17: 35%
- Written & Oral Comments/Questions for Each Class & Debate Participation: 25% (The two class debates are especially important and should be fun.)
- Final Essay: 20%

## Honors Credit:

If you are in the Honors College and want to take this course for Honors credit, you should complete the contract form online. To earn this credit (which would be computed into your course grade), you will need to meet with others in group discussions and also to write an additional five-page paper and give a brief oral report to the class on December 1. If you intend to join this group, you should make this known to the professor within the first two weeks of class.

## FOREWARNINGS:

(1) Most of the course will focus on discussion of primary sources (in translation). Such material will require careful reading on your part and your active participation in class discussions.

(2) Class discussions are also crucial to understanding the readings and knowing what is being emphasized in the course. You should take good notes of class discussions. Be sure to read as much of the assigned material as possible before class, take notes of class discussions, and then review the notes and readings together. You are strongly encouraged to ask questions at the beginning of each class meeting about anything you subsequently discovered in reviewing your notes and readings that you found unclear or needing further elaboration. Instead of providing a predigested set of “facts,” the role of the professor is to assist in your own exploration and learning about China’s Classics.

(3) The course will not attempt to educate through entertainment, and the informal lectures and discussions will follow a traditional format. Class will either be stimulating or boring depending largely on the amount of preparation and class participation you invest in your own learning. Help make the course interesting to all of us!

### **SOME SILC & UNIVERSITY REGULATIONS:**

(1) **Incompletes:** If a personal crisis requires you to request an incomplete, you should submit a written request to the professor and complete a form available at the SILC Student Advising Office. If you disappear from the course without withdrawing or filing proper paperwork, the only grade option is unfortunately an E.

(2) The CLAS Curriculum Committee and Faculty Senate have approved the following revised **Academic Integrity Statement** to be included on all course syllabi:

*Academic honesty is expected of all students in all examinations, papers, laboratory work, academic transactions and records. The possible sanctions include, but are not limited to, appropriate grade penalties, course failure (indicated on the transcript as a grade of E), course failure due to academic dishonesty (indicated on the transcript as a grade of XE), loss of registration privileges, disqualification and dismissal. For more information, see <http://provost.asu.edu/academicintegrity>.*

(3) **Disability Accommodations:** Qualified students with disabilities who will require disability accommodations in this class are encouraged to make their requests to me at the beginning of the semester either during office hours or by appointment. **Note:** Prior to receiving disability accommodations, verification of eligibility from the Disability Resource Center (DRC) is required. Disability information is confidential.

**Establishing Eligibility for Disability Accommodations:** Students who feel they will need disability accommodations in this class but have not registered with the Disability Resource Center (DRC) should contact DRC. Their office is located on the first floor of the Matthews Center Building, and their hours are 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday. DRC staff can also be reached at: 480-965-1234 (V), 480-965-9000 (TTY). For additional information, visit: [www.asu.edu/studentaffairs/ed/drc](http://www.asu.edu/studentaffairs/ed/drc).

(4) **University Deadlines:** Drop/add deadline August 24

Withdrawal from course November 2

(5) **Absences:** Students participating in university-sanctioned activities need to notify the professor prior to missing class. You are responsible for getting notes of the lecture from classmates. If you are going to be away when a required paper is due, please turn it in before leaving.

## CLASS SCHEDULE & Reading Assignments:

- 8/18 Introduction: Sages & the Classics  
Mote, *Intellectual Foundations of China*, Chapter 3 (Emailed Background).

### Reviving and Reconstructing the Classical Tradition

- 8/23 Gardner, Introduction, pp. 3-56, Chu Hsi's [Zhu Xi] *Learning to be a Sage*.  
8/25 Gardner, Introduction, pp. 57-81.  
**8/30 FIRST PAPER DUE: Brief Essay on Your Conception of Learning**  
8/30 Chu Hsi on Learning and Knowledge, Chapters 1, 2, 3.  
9/1 Chu Hsi on How to Read the Classics, Chapters 4, 5.  
9/6 Chu Hsi on Taking Action on What You Have Learned, Chapters 6, 7.  
**9/8 Class Debate on Chu's Program of Learning**

### Exploring the Mencius

- 9/13 Bloom, *Mencius*, Introduction;  
9/15 *Mencius*, Book I, Part A  
9/20 *Mencius*, Book I, Part B  
9/22-27 *Mencius*, Book II, Part A  
**9/29 SECOND PAPER DUE: Chu's Conception of Learning**  
9/29 *Mencius*, Book II, Part B  
10/4 *Mencius*, Book III, Part A  
10/6 *Mencius*, Book III, Part B  
**10/10-11 Fall Break**  
**10/13 REVISED SECOND PAPER DUE**  
10/13 *Mencius*, Book IV, Part A  
10/18 *Mencius*, Book IV, Part B  
10/20 *Mencius*, Book V, Part A  
10/25 *Mencius*, Book V, Part B  
10/27 *Mencius*, Book VI, Part A  
11/1 *Mencius*, Book VI, Part B  
11/3 *Mencius*, Book VII, Part A  
11/8 **VOTE!** *Mencius*, Book VII, Part B  
**11/10 Class Debate on the Mencius**

### Exploring the Laozi

- 11/15 Richard Lynn's Introduction to the *Laozi*, 3-18, 30-41.  
**11/17 THIRD PAPER DUE**  
11/17 *Laozi*, pp. 51-86.  
11/22 *Laozi*, pp. 86-118.  
**11/24 Thanksgiving**  
11/29 *Laozi*, pp. 119-166.  
12/1 *Laozi*, pp. 167-191