

# EASTERN PHILOSOPHY- PHIL 234

## FALL 2008

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**Office hours:** Mon/Wed 3:30-5:30 p.m. and by appointment

**Days & Time:** MW 2:00-3:15

**Location:** EC 111

Who am I? What is the nature of the self? Is ultimate reality one or many? Are our actions governed by strict causal/karmic principles? Is absolute freedom possible? Is enlightenment possible? What counts as a reliable source of knowledge? What is the best way to reform an individual or a society? What is duty? Can justice be taught? In this course we will examine the answers that Indian, Chinese, and Buddhist philosophers have given to these (and several other) questions. We will also explore their methods of inquiry and the types of evidential support they marshal in defense of their theories, and note, where appropriate, parallel developments in the West. We begin with the *Upaniṣads* and their view of the self, and continue with a close examination of two seminal Indian texts, the *Yoga-sūtras* of Patañjali and the *Bhagavad-gītā*; then, following an overview of the basic tenets of Buddhist Abhidharma philosophy, we will let Nāgārjuna and Vasubandhu acquaint us with Buddhist dialectics and a unique type of pragmatic idealism; next, we discover the Nyāya metaphysical dualism and its redoubtable method of analytical inquiry; we conclude our survey of classical Indian philosophy with a lively Buddhist-Nyāya debate about *what there is* and *how we come to know it*. Our exploration of classical Chinese thought covers the central metaphysical and ethical doctrines of Confucius and Lao Tzu (and of their principal disciples Mencius and Chuang Tzu); in addition, we will also follow the course of Buddhist thought in China and examine its impact on both Taoism and Confucianism (paying special attention to the Neo-Confucian synthesis of Chu Hsi). Finally, for a window into the current state of play in the dialogue between East and West we turn to the memorable and insightful dialogue between philosopher Jean-François Revel and his scientist-turned-Buddhist monk son Matthieu Ricard (in the *The Monk and the Philosopher*). The aim of this course is threefold: first, introduce you to the philosophical sophistication of Indian, Chinese, and Buddhist thinkers, second, alert you to common assumptions and misconceptions about the nature and scope of their philosophical programs, and finally, foster an aptitude for genuine cross-cultural philosophical reflection.

### Required Texts (available at the College Bookstore)

F.E. Baird & R.S. Heimbeck,	<i>Asian Philosophy</i> (Pearson, Prentice Hall)	AP
Mark Siderits,	<i>Buddhism as Philosophy</i> (Hackett)	BP
J-F Revel & M. Richard,	<i>The Monk and the Philosopher</i> (Schocken, Random House)	MP

### Recommended Texts

J.N. Mohanty	<i>Classical Indian Philosophy</i> (Boston, Rowmann & Littlefield, 2000)
P.J. Ivanhow	<i>Ethics in the Confucian Tradition</i> (Cambridge, Hackett, 2002)

*Additional readings, handouts, class presentation will be available on WebCT*

### Tentative Reading Assignments

August 27	Introduction: Philosophers and Gymnosophists
September 1-3	Origins and Scope of Indian Philosophy (AP: vii-viii, 3-7; BP: 1-10); Upaniṣads: the Self, Karma, and the Path of Knowledge (AP: 9-18, 21-30; 36-38; 41-69)
September 8-10	Philosophy and Orthodoxy: Schools, Methods, Views, and Arguments (AP: 135-149, 150-187)
September 15-17	Philosophy as a Path: Knowledge, Yogic Practice, and Realization (AP: 188-199; 200-224)
<b>September 22</b>	<b>FIRST IN CLASS ESSAY EXAM</b>
September 24	Introducing Buddhist Theory and Practice (AP: 83-117)
September 29-October 1	Nāgārjuna and the Middle Way (AP: 79-118); Vasubandhu, Logic, and Idealism (BP: 146-179)
October 6	A Nyāya Interlude (BP: 85-104)
<b>October 8</b>	<b>MIDTERM EXAM</b>

October 13	<b>FALLBREAK</b>
October 15	Buddhist Epistemology (BP: 208-230);
October 20-22	Buddhist Ethics and Dialectics (BP: 69-85; 180-207);
October 27-29	Introducing Confucianism: ethics, cultivation, and human nature (AP: 281-294, 296-352)
November 3	Introducing Taoism: the way, the wanderer, and her shadow (AP: 361-390)
November 5	<b>SECOND IN CLASS ESSAY EXAM</b>
November 10-12	Chuang Tzu's Dream and Taoist Aesthetics (AP: 391-432, WebCT readings)
November 17-19	Buddhism in China: mind, meditation, and paradox (AP: 433-443, 444-495)
<b>November 19</b>	<b>PAPER DUE IN CLASS</b>
November 24	(En)Counters: Chu Hsi's Neo-Confucian Synthesis (AP: 497-540)
November 26	<b>THANKSGIVING</b>
December 1-3	In Conversation: The Buddha's Way and the Philosopher's Cogito (MP, chapter 1-7)
December 3	Probing the Mind: Meditation and the Frontiers of Science (MP, chapters 10, 16, 18, 19)
<b>December 12</b>	<b>FINAL EXAM (12:00 - 3:00)</b>

**Assignments and percentages:** two in class essay exams (15% each), midterm (15%), paper (30%), final exam (20%), participation (5%).

**You must bring the assigned text to class.** You are expected to read on average 50-60 pages a week.

### Requirements

1. It is essential that you attend classes! Four unexcused absences will adversely affect your grade and may result in your dismissal from the class.
2. If you fail to bring the assigned readings to class you will not be able to follow the discussion of particular passages. You are encouraged to annotate and add marginal comments to all texts discussed in class.
3. Keep in mind that the reading assignments in the syllabus are tentative. Expect changes throughout the semester. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to find out how far we have gotten in the current reading assignment.
4. Exam and paper due dates are clearly marked in the syllabus. Add them to your calendar and make sure you don't miss or arrive late for an exam. Failure to take the in class essay and midterm exams will result in a grade of 0 for that exam. An unexcused final exam absence will result in a grade of F.
5. Late (or early) exams will only be given if you can show that a real emergency prevents you from taking the exam on the due date.

### Expectations

1. Make sure you read the entire assignment before the lecture. Coming to class unprepared, apart from annoying your colleagues, will also adversely affect your participation grade.
2. This is a philosophy class and you are expected to reflect on what you are reading. It is not enough to identify a particular philosophical claim. You should be prepared to argue for or against it. As a rule, make sure you come to lecture with at least two or three thoughtful questions from your readings.
3. You will continuously learn new and unfamiliar concepts, including Sanskrit and Chinese words that have no precise equivalents in English. It is your responsibility to construct a glossary of all the technical terms with appropriate definitions (the meaning of the word or concept, the viewpoint or school of thought it represents, the context of its usage, etc. – all of which will be given in lecture, so pay attention).
4. I expect you to take the questions raised in the course description seriously. Some of the Eastern philosophers we will read are also contemplatives with a personal history of inner exploration. They provide an example for how best to integrate philosophical reflection, meditation, and the pursuit of virtue. Their ideas have profoundly shaped the ethos of the Indian and Chinese civilizations.