

EASTERN PHILOSOPHY

PHIL 234 - FALL 2012

Dr. Christian Coseru
4B Glebe Street, # 205
Phone: 953-1935; **Email:** coseruc AT cofc DOT edu
Office hours: TR 3:00-5:00 p.m. and by appointment

Days & Time: MW 3:20-4:35
Location: ECTR 111

Description. What is the nature of reality? What is the nature of consciousness? What is knowledge? Is free will compatible with determinism? What is virtue? What is the best way to live? In this course we examine how Indian, Chinese, and Buddhist philosophers have addressed these questions, and evaluate their specific methods of inquiry. Where appropriate, we also draw parallels to comparable developments in Western philosophy. We begin by exploring some of the earliest conceptions of self as articulated by Sāṃkhya, Yoga, and Cārvāka philosophers in India. We then proceed to examine the epistemological and ontological tenets of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophers, and their long-standing debate with the Buddhists on such issues as the nature of perceptual and inferential knowledge, personal identity, and the limits of thought. We also examine central issues in Buddhist philosophy of mind and moral psychology, especially the nature of consciousness and intentionality, and the nature and practice of compassion. Our exploration of classical Chinese thought covers Kongzi's and Mozi's analyses of human nature and society, their systematic development by Mengzi and Zhuangzi, and alternative ethical models such as Yang Zhu's egoism and Xunzi's naturalism. Throughout the course we also consider whether Eastern philosophy can be translated using the vocabulary and conceptual resources of Western philosophy, and—when such translation projects prove to be problematic—how best to overcome these linguistic and conceptual barriers.

Aim. The aim of this course is threefold: first, to give you an introduction to some central topics in Indian, Chinese, and Buddhist thought; secondly, to alert you to some widely shared misconceptions about non-Western philosophy; and finally, to help you develop an appreciation for the importance of cross-cultural philosophical reflection.

Required Texts (available at the College Bookstore)

Deepak Sharma	<i>Classical Indian Philosophy: A Reader</i> (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011)	CIP
W. Edelglass and J. Garfield	<i>Buddhist Philosophy: Essential Readings</i> (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009)	BP
Bryan W. Van Norden	<i>Introduction to Classical Chinese Philosophy</i> (Cambridge: Hackett Pub Co, 2011)	ICCP

Recommended Texts

P. J. Ivanhoe and W. Van Norden	<i>Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy</i> (Hackett, Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2001)
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Tentative Reading Assignments

August 22	Introduction: Philosophy East and West.
August 27-29	Indian Philosophy: Between Skepticism and Self-transformation (CIP: 1-13).
September 3-10	Nyāya on Reason, Argumentation, and the Rules of Debate (CIP: 93-140).
September 12	Vaiśeṣika Metaphysics: Categories and the Nature of What There Is (CIP: 141-166)
September 17-19	Buddhist Epistemology: Perception, Inference, and Language (BP: 205-217; 103-115; 186-198).
September 24-26	Early Buddhist Theories of Persons: Self or No-Self? (BP: 265-274)
September 24	FIRST ESSAY DUE IN CLASS
October 1-3	Buddhist Personalism and its Critics (BP: 275-296).
October 8-10	Buddhist Phenomenalism and its Critics (BP: 26-45).
October 15	FALL BREAK
October 17-22	Buddhist Philosophy of Mind: What is the Nature of Consciousness? (BP: 309-333).
October 24	Engaged Buddhism and the Ecological Self (BP: 419-436).
October 24	SECOND ESSAY DUE IN CLASS
October 29-31	Chinese Philosophy: Morality and Nature (ICCP 2-33).
November 5-7	Confucianism: Konzi and Virtue Ethics (ICCP: 1-15; 17-47).
November 12-14	Mohist Consequentialism and Yang Zhu's Egoism (ICCP: 49-81).
November 19	Menzi and Human Nature: (ICCP: 83-100)
November 21	THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY
November 26-28	Laozi and Zhuangzi on Knowing and Not Knowing the Way (ICCP: 121-162)
December 3	Conclusion: Our Views of the World and "Theirs" (ICCP: 220-233)
December 5	FINAL EXAM (12:00-3:00)

Assignments and percentages: first essay/midterm (30% each), second essay (30%), final exam (30%), short papers (4%) participation (6%).

You must bring the assigned text to class. You are expected to read on average 40-50 pages a week.

Grading Scale: Letter (or numerical) grades will be assigned as follows: A+ (97-100), **A (93-96)**, A- (90-92), B+ (87-89), **B (83-86)**, B- (80-82), C+ (77-79), **C (73-76)**, C- (70-72), D+ (67-69), **D (63-66)**, D- (60-62), **F (59 or lower)**.

Attendance: It is essential that you attend classes! More than three unexcused absences will adversely affect your grade and may result in your dismissal from the class.

Honor Code: Lying, cheating, and plagiarism are violations of the Honor Code and are not permitted at the College. Cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be reported directly to the Dean of Students. A student suspected for academic dishonesty will receive a XF in the course, indicating failure based on dishonesty.

Assignments policy: You must complete all assignments in order to obtain a final grade for this course. Failure to take the final exam will result in a grade of F for the entire course. Late (or early) exams will only be arranged if you can show that a real emergency prevents you from taking the exam on the due date.

Disabilities: Please let me know at the beginning of the semester if you require any type of special academic accommodation due to your disability. You must also provide a letter from the Center for Disability Services to that effect. Please inform me of any other special needs you may have. Information about the SNAP program can be found at: <http://spinner.cofc.edu/~cds/?referrer=webcluster&>

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 lectures and the discussion. 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 essay 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. An unexcused midterm or 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 defend (or criticize) it. As a rule, make sure you come to lecture with at least two or three thoughtful questions from the readings.
3. You will continuously learn new and unfamiliar concepts, including Sanskrit and Chinese key philosophical concepts that have no clear 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).