Chinese Philosophy and Culture

Course Objectives:

Course Description:
This course will examine Chinese philosophy and Chinese culture by focusing on issues in the following three areas: interpersonal and intrasocietal relations, the relations between human and nature, and the relations between human and supernature. Through examining the major Chinese philosophical traditions - Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism, the course will explore the habit of the Chinese mind. In addition to the traditional Chinese culture and philosophy, the course will also explore contemporary Chinese philosophy.

Course Content:
This course will introduce students to a significant body of philosophical literature from the Chinese tradition, will introduce students to the questions, methods and approaches in the discipline of philosophy, and will emphasize balanced argument, and critical and reflective thought.

The course will engage in the examination of Chinese culture, and explore the encounter between the Western and Chinese culture. The course will have a majority of the content focused on Chinese culture.

Student Outcomes:
Students will acquire knowledge of a significant body of philosophical literature from the Chinese tradition, will gain practice in exploring the questions, methods and approaches in the discipline of philosophy, and will acquire skill in emphasize balanced argument, and critical and reflective thought.

Student will demonstrate an understanding of Chinese culture by describing and analyzing its principal components such as ideas, traditions, institutions and artifacts. Students will also systematically compare cultures, their interactions, and how different cultures have contributed to the contemporary world.

Required Texts:

Grades and Assignments:
Students will be graded on the basis of one midterm take-home test (20%), one final take-home exam (30%), one presentation (15%), one field-trip report (15%), in-class assignments (10%), and class participation (10%).
Student presentation: Students will be divided into several teams, each of which is asked to prepare a presentation on a topic related to the subjects of the course. In these presentations, students are expected to provide information about the topics, make cross cultural comparisons, and guide further discussion. A list of related topics will be available soon.

Field trip and field-trip report: On December 1, students will take a field-trip to visit a local Chinese community. Students are expected to conduct research during the field trip, and to present their findings to the class in the last two sections of the course. This field-trip report is also a team project.

In-Class Assignments: In many classes, students will be asked to prepare a short response to a question based on one of the topics for that day. Each of these in-class assignments earns one point of course credit (1%).

Class participation: Students should read all the assigned materials prior to class, attend class regularly, and participate class discussion actively.

Course Outline:

1.1 Introduction: the comparative methodology
   In-class Assignment 1: A translation exercise.

2.1 A brief history of Chinese culture
   Movie: The Last Emperor.
   Readings:

1. Interpersonal and Intrasocietal Relations
   In this section students will examine Confucian positions on such issues as individual virtues, interpersonal relations, and social justice, as well as how Confucian philosophy affects interpersonal and intrasocietal relations in Chinese society and Chinese American communities. Special attention will be given to the differences and similarities between the Chinese culture and the Western culture regarding the value of competition.

2.2 Confucius and his moral theory
   Readings:
   Confucius. The Analects, Ch. 6-10.

3.1 The moral characters of gentlemen
   In-class Assignment 2: How should we act as a gentleman?
   Readings:
   Confucius. The Analects, Ch. 11-15.

3.2 Moral education
   In-class Assignment 3: Body piercing and the rights of parents.
   Readings:
   Confucius. The Analects, Ch. 16-20.
   Confucius, The Great Leaning. (xerox)
4.1 Filial piety

Student presentation 1: The custom of foot-binding.
Readings:
“Women's virtues and vices”, Chinese Civilization, #17.
“Women and the problems they create”, Chinese Civilization, #38.
“Concubines”, Chinese Civilization, #55.
“Widows loyal unto death”, Chinese Civilization, #56.

4.2 Ancestor worship and family value

Student presentation 2: Ancestral rites.
Readings:
“Genealogy rules”, Chinese Civilization, #72.
“Family instructions”, Chinese Civilization, #54.
“Rules for the Fan lineage's charitable estate”, Chinese Civilization, #36.

5.1 Neo-Confucianism

In-class Assignment 4: What is the most prestigious profession?
Readings:
“Zhi Xi's conversation with his disciples”, Chinese Civilization, #40.
“Two philosophers”, Chinese Civilization, #57.
“A schedule for learning”, Chinese Civilization, #45.

2. Relations between Human and Nature

In this section students will examine Daoist positions on the relations between human and nature, as well as how Daoism influences Chinese medicine and the practice of geomancy, both of which are popular in Chinese American communities. We will give special attention to the differences and similarities between the attitudes of the two cultures toward the environment.

5.2 The context of Daoism

Movie: Taoism - A Question of Balance.
Readings:
Laozi, Dao Te Ching, Introduction, Ch. 1-20.

6.1 The meaning of Dao

Student presentation 3: Chinese landscape paintings.
Readings:
Laozi, Dao Te Ching, Ch. 21-50.

6.2 The meaning of “wu wei”

In-class Assignment 5: The chimpanzee who beats experts.
Readings:
Laozi, Dao Te Ching, Ch. 51-80.

7.1 Chinese medicine
In-class Assignment 6: Organ recipient says donor’s beat goes on.

Readings:
“Precepts of the perfect truth Daoist sect”, Chinese Civilization, #34.

7.2 The eight trigrams and geomancy
Student presentation 4: The practice of Feng Shui.
Readings:
“The errors of geomancy”, Chinese Civilization, #27.

8.1 Mid-term test (10/20)

3. Relations between Human and Supernature
In this section students will examine Buddhist positions on the relations between human and supernature, and how it affects the behavior patterns of both native Chinese and Chinese Americans. We will highlight the differences and similarities between Buddhism and Christianity regarding supernature.

8.2 The origin of Buddhism
Movie: Little Buddha.
Readings:
Keown. Buddhism, Ch. 1 - Ch. 2.
“A pilgrim's visit to the Five Terraces Mountains”, Chinese Civilization, #31.
“Buddhist doctrines and practices”, Chinese Civilization, #22.

9.1 Reincarnation
In-class Assignment 7: Test the notion of rebirth.
Readings:
Keown. Buddhism, Ch. 3.
Buddhist Scriptures, “A description of Nirvana”. (xerox)
Buddhist Scriptures, “The Skandhas and the chain of causation”. (xerox)

9.2 Enlightenment
In-class Assignment 8: The noble truths and the myth of the cave.
Readings:
Keown. Buddhism, Ch. 4.
Buddhist Scriptures, “The sermon on the four noble truths”. (xerox)
Buddhist Scriptures, “The fire-sermon”. (xerox)
Buddhist Scriptures, “The eightfold path”. (xerox)

10.1 Zen Buddhism and meditation
Student presentation 5: The practices of meditation.
Readings:
Keown. Buddhism, Ch. 5 – Ch. 6.
Buddhist Scriptures, “The relics of the Buddha”. (xerox)
Buddhist Scriptures, “Mindfulness in meditation”. (xerox)
Buddhist Scriptures, “The platform scripture”. (xerox)
10.2 Buddhist ethics

Student presentation 6: Buddhist gods.
In-class Assignment 9: The moral status of human embryos.
Readings:
Keown. *Buddhism*, Ch. 7 - Ch. 9.
Florida, “Buddhist approach to abortion”, (xerox)
“Tales of ghosts and demons”, *Chinese Civilization*, #23.
“Proverbs about Heaven”, *Chinese Civilization*, #60.
“Funeral processions”, *Chinese Civilization*, #81.

4. Chinese Philosophy and Culture in the 20th Century

In this section students will examine the development of Chinese philosophy and culture in the twentieth century. Special attention will be given to the history of Chinese immigrants in the US, their connection to the native culture, their adaptation to the new homeland, and their contributions as a minority group.

11.1 The Opium War and the first encounter with the west

Student presentation 7: Zheng He and his voyages.
Readings:
“Liang Qichao on his trip to America”, *Chinese Civilization*, #73.
"Placards posted in Guangzhou", *Chinese Civilization*, #68.

11.2 Contemporary Chinese philosophy: The moderate approach

Readings:
"Ridding China of bad customs", *Chinese Civilization*, #74.
"Rural education", *Chinese Civilization*, #75.
“The spirit of the May Fourth Movement”, *Chinese Civilization*, #77.

12.1 Contemporary Chinese philosophy: The radical approach

Student presentation 8: Mao’s little redbook.
In-class Assignment 10: The method of class analysis.
Readings:
“Land reform”, *Chinese Civilization*, #86.
"Peng Dehuai's critique of the Great Leap Forward", *Chinese Civilization*, #89.
"Lei Feng, Chairman Mao's good fighter", *Chinese Civilization*, #91.

12.2 Academic Conference (11/19); no class

13.1 Contemporary Chinese philosophy: The pragmatic approach

Readings:
"Red guards", *Chinese Civilization*, #93.
"Economic liberalization and new problems for women", *Chinese Civilization*, #97.
"Peasants in the cities", *Chinese Civilization*, #98.
"Defending China's socialist democracy", *Chinese Civilization*, #100.

13.2 Thanksgiving Break; no class (11/26)

14.1 Field trip - Si Lai Temple and China town (12/1)

14.2 Field trip reflection
15.1 Field trip reports
15.2 Field trip reports

(This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructors).

California Lutheran University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations to students with various documented disabilities (physical, learning, or psychological). If you are a student requesting accommodations for this course, please contact your professor at the beginning of the semester and register with the Coordinator for Students with Disabilities (Pearson Library, Center for Academic Resources, Ext. 3260) for the facilitation and verification of need. Faculty will work closely together with you and your coordinator to provide necessary accommodations.