

Course Form for PKU Summer School International 2020

Course Title	Ethics, Strategy and Comparative International Philosophy
Teacher	Reed Dasenbrock
First day of classes	July 13, 2020
Last day of classes	July 24, 2020
Course Credit	3 credit (50 class hours) *Classes are arranged for 0900-1200 from Monday to Friday, plus fieldtrips/classroom discussions for 2 or 3 times a week in the afternoon for 1300-1700 (in total of 20 hours of fieldtrips /classroom discussions)
Course Description	
Objective:	
To introduce students to field of comparative philosophy by pairing Chinese and Western philosophers—Confucius and Aristotle, Machiavelli and Sun-Tzu—working in the fields of ethics and politics and strategy.	
Pre-requisites /Target audience	
There are no pre-requisites. I have taught these writers successfully at every level of the curriculum, so I would leave the choice of the level of the course to PKU.	
Proceeding of the Course	
The course will meet every morning in a seminar format which will be focused on discussions of the assigned reading. (These are labelled in the Class Schedule below as Seminar Session.) The approach will be essentially socratic: I will pose questions which are raised by these texts, and the class as a whole will endeavor to come up with answers to these questions. This approach only works if students have read the material, so there will be a quiz at the beginning of every class session which should be fairly easy if one has read the assignment and impossible if one has not. This should ensure that students have read the material and are ready to discuss it in class.	
In addition to these 10 seminar sessions, we will have 5 additional meetings, 2 field trips, 1 formal debate, 1 workshop session to edit and revise the final paper, and the final exam.	
Assignments (essay or other forms)	
There will be a final exam the last day of the class covering the major topics of the reading and a short essay due the last class which will be a comparison of two of the texts read on a specific issue, thus leading the students to do comparative philosophical analysis.	

Evaluation Details	
Attendance and participation in class, the 8 quizzes, the exam, and the paper will each constitute 25% of the grade.	
Text Books and Reading Materials	
<p><i>The Analects</i> of Confucius, <i>The Nicomachean Ethics</i> of Aristotle, Machiavelli's <i>The Prince</i> and Sun-Tzu's <i>The Art of War</i></p>	
Academic Integrity (If necessary)	
Given the design of the class, all that is necessary to ensure academic integrity in the class will be proctoring of the exam and quizzes.	
CLASS SCHEDULE (Subject to adjustment)	
Seminar Session 1: <i>Title</i> Introduction to Comparative Philosophy	Date: 13 July
Description of the Session: An overview of the course will be provided, followed by an introduction to the field of comparative philosophy. We will then jump right in by working through selected passages of Book 1 of <i>The Analects</i> .	
Questions: Why does <i>The Analects</i> , a discontinuous compilation of anecdotes more than a continuous argument, have the form that it does? Is there a connection between what it says and how it was compiled and is arranged?	
Readings: We will have an in-class discussion of selected passages from Book 1 of <i>The Analects</i> .	
Assignments for this session (if any): Reading assignments will start the second class meeting.	
Seminar Session 2: <i>Title</i> Second Session on <i>The Analects</i>	Date: 14 July
Description of the Session: These key books of <i>The Analects</i> offer the core of Confucius's teaching about personal ethics, the importance of attaining <i>ren</i> and fulfilling one's role-based obligations as a crucial means to this.	
Questions: What is the difference between a <i>junzi</i> and a <i>xiaoren</i> , a noble or gentle man and a petty man? Is this distinction of value today? Can family reverence provide a workable ethical guide to how to live?	

Readings:

Books 2, 4 & 12 of *The Analects*

Assignments for this session:

There will be a quiz at the beginning of the class. This is designed to be fairly easy if one has done the reading, since the primary idea is to create an incentive to do the reading.

Field Trip 1

14 July 1300-1700

Trip to Confucius Temple in Beijing

Description of the Session:

We will go as a class to the Confucius Temple and Imperial Academy in the Dongcheng District of Beijing. This will give us a good sense of how Confucianism or *ru xue* functioned in Imperial China, and there are some informative exhibits in the Temple about the worldwide spread of interest in Confucianism.

Questions:

What do we imagine Confucius himself would have said about his quasi-deification and central role in the Chinese state from at least the Song Dynasty to 1911? And what would he say about the renewal of interest in his thought in our lifetime? What are the similarities and what are the differences between contemporary and neo-classical Confucianism?

Readings:

There will be no specific sections of *The Analects* assigned for this trip, but I will be introducing some material from the commentary tradition to give students a sense of the continuous relevance of Confucius throughout Chinese culture and history.

Seminar Session 3: *Title* Third Session on *The Analects* and

Date: 15 July

Introduction to Aristotle

Description of the Session:

The first part of the discussion today will focus on the larger social implications of Confucian thought. Confucius discusses both the qualities of a successful ruler and a successful counselor to a ruler. The second part will introduce Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, which begins with a consideration of the relationship between ethics and politics.

Questions:

How does the Confucian focus on role ethics and family reverence work in the context of a whole society, a nation or even the world? Can the principles Confucius developed in the context of small kingdoms in ancient China be applied today? Aristotle grounds his ethics in the notion that happiness is the aim of human life: what would Confucius have said about this view?

<p>Readings: Books 13-15 of <i>The Analects</i>, as well as a number of passages from earlier books (6:20-30, 7:22, 8:13, 9:4 and 9:8); Book 1 of the <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>.</p>									
<p>Assignments for this session: There will be a quiz at the beginning of class.</p>									
Seminar Session 4: <i>Title</i> First Session on the <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>	Date: 16 July								
<p>Description of the Session: The essence of Aristotle’s ethical theory is the notion of the Aristotelian mean, that virtue is a mean between two extremes. We will focus on this key concept in this session, contrasting it to notions of morality based on religious systems as well as to Confucianism.</p>									
<p>Questions: Aristotle and Confucius alike are focused on virtue, and they are frequently compared because of this. However, honor is another key Aristotelian term: how does that change what Aristotle means by virtue?</p>									
<p>Readings: Books 2 & 3 of the <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>.</p>									
<p>Assignments for this session: There will be a quiz at the beginning of class.</p>									
<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">Field Trip 2: Trip to National History Museum</td> <td style="padding: 5px; text-align: right;">16 July 1300-1700</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="padding: 5px;"> <p>Description of the Session: We will visit the National History Museum in Tian’an’men Square. The major permanent exhibition of the Museum is a panorama of Chinese history, dynasty by dynasty, from Xia and Shang to the present. Our focus will be on the early dynasties that Confucius revered up to the Spring and Autumn and Warring States period in which Confucius and Sun-Tzu lived.</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="padding: 5px;"> <p>Questions: How does an increase in knowledge about the material objects—from fine art to weapons to utilitarian objects—enrich our understanding of these ancient Chinese texts?</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="padding: 5px;"> <p>Readings: No required readings for this trip, but I will encourage students to read the introductory material to the editions of <i>The Analects</i> and <i>The Art of War</i> to enrich their contextual understanding.</p> </td> </tr> </table>		Field Trip 2: Trip to National History Museum	16 July 1300-1700	<p>Description of the Session: We will visit the National History Museum in Tian’an’men Square. The major permanent exhibition of the Museum is a panorama of Chinese history, dynasty by dynasty, from Xia and Shang to the present. Our focus will be on the early dynasties that Confucius revered up to the Spring and Autumn and Warring States period in which Confucius and Sun-Tzu lived.</p>		<p>Questions: How does an increase in knowledge about the material objects—from fine art to weapons to utilitarian objects—enrich our understanding of these ancient Chinese texts?</p>		<p>Readings: No required readings for this trip, but I will encourage students to read the introductory material to the editions of <i>The Analects</i> and <i>The Art of War</i> to enrich their contextual understanding.</p>	
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Seminar Session 5: <i>Title</i> Second Session on <i>The Nicomachean Ethics</i>	Date: 17 July								
<p>Description of the Session: Aristotle distinguishes between an individual having a good ethical framework and that individual actually being good; he is far more conscious than Confucius is of the possibility of weakness of the will. We will focus on the role of will and intention in Aristotle, as well as the connection he draws between virtue and pleasure and pain, and then summarize the results of the week we have spent in classical Chinese and Greek ethics.</p>									

Questions:

How is weakness of the will possible? Is someone who doesn't act in accord with his or her ethical beliefs as morally culpable as an immoral person (i.e., someone who acts in accord with his or her flawed beliefs)? Is virtue pleasurable, as Aristotle suggests, or does virtue consist of turning away from pleasure, as religious systems of morality tend to insist.

Readings:

Books 7 & 10 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*

Assignments for this session:

The customary quiz for this session will ask students to compare Confucius and Aristotle on some specific points, so as to assist the process of integrating the material.

Seminar Session 6: <i>Title</i> Introduction to Machiavelli	Date: 20 July
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Description of the Session:

This session will begin by framing the issues of the second week of the course, as the ethical-political focus of the first week will give way to a political-strategic focus. We will focus in this discussion on Machiavelli's overall project, a comparative political philosophy/history which lays the foundation for modern political science.

Questions:

Does Machiavelli have a method in his comparative case studies of successful and unsuccessful princes? What values undergird his analysis? How does his famed political realism compare to Aristotle's?

Readings:

Chapters 1-6 of *The Prince*.

Assignments for this session:

There will be a quiz at the beginning of class.

Seminar Session 7: <i>Title</i> Second Session on Machiavelli	Date: 21 July
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Description of the Session:

The chapters assigned for this session contain the most famous, controversial, indeed shocking parts of *The Prince* in which he asserts that a successful prince must commit evil acts while seeming to be good.

Questions:

There has been 500 years of debate about how this section of *The Prince* is to be taken, so the questions to explore are multiple: Does Machiavelli mean what he seems to say? How do we square that with any conventional system of morality? Is Machiavelli immoral or just a realist? Is his advice good advice on a pragmatic dimension, even if hard to see as "good"? How would either Confucius or Aristotle respond to the arguments of *The Prince*?

Readings:

Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Chapters 13-19.

Assignments for this session:

There will be a quiz at the beginning of class and some class time devoted to the paper due the last session.

In-Class Activity 1: A Debate

21 July 1300-1700

Description:

Readers of Machiavelli have been divided from the very beginning about the impact of his thought. Although he is often seen as the founder of political science and was an important influence on republican thinking in the English and American revolutions, he was from the beginning regarded by many with horror as a kind of devil. In this session, the entire class will engage in a formal debate on whether *The Prince* is an evil work or not. The class will meet at 1300, organize themselves into two teams, do debate preparation and then at 1500 or so when ready, engage in a formal debate.

Questions:

The fundamental question which has exercised readers of *The Prince* in the nearly 500 years since it was published is the question the class will debate. The strategies to defend Machiavelli are multiple, while the attack is a little more straightforward, but it will be left up to the class what approaches they take.

Readings: The most relevant parts of *The Prince* are the parts assigned for the Seminar Session during the morning.

Seminar Session 8: *Title* Final Session on Machiavelli

Date: 22 July

Description of the Session:

The Prince ends in the very different spirit from the middle chapters read for Session 7, as the final two chapters focus on the dire state of Italy in Machiavelli's time and seem genuinely concerned about constructing an ideal social order, not just a quest for power.

Questions:

Whatever provisional answers we may have come to at the end of Session 7 are likely to be challenged anew by the shift in tone at the end of *The Prince*. Which is the 'real' Machiavelli? Is that the right question to ask? What does he wish us to take away from the final chapters?

Readings:

Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Chapters 25-26. The reading assignments for the final 3 classes will be lighter than the first 7 so that the students can focus on their paper.

Assignments for this session:

In addition to the regular quiz, anyone writing the paper on his or her own topic needs to run the topic by me by the end of this session.

Seminar Session 9: *Title* First Session on Sun-Tzu

Date: July 23

Description of the Session:

We will begin with an introduction to Sun-Tzu, which will require some explanation of how the Chinese tradition of strategic thought intersects with *ru xue* and the received model of the *san jiao*. Sun-Tzu's hallowed place in strategic thought across East Asia is comparable to Confucius's role in some ways, except that he is perhaps even more of a global figure.

Questions:

Students have difficulty grasping Sun-Tzu, not because what he says is difficult but rather because he is much more abstract than the others we are reading. So our first questions will have to do with how to read this enigmatic text, and the commentary tradition is very helpful in this respect.

Readings:

Sun-Tzu, *The Art of War*, Chapters 1-3. This is not much to read at all, but the edition I plan to order has a clean text at the front and then a text with extensive selections from the commentary tradition (descending from Cao Cao and others). This will give us an opportunity to discuss the commentary tradition in Chinese culture (which of course is even more extensive in the case of Confucius and the Four Books), a mode of transmission so different from that found in Western thought.

Assignments for this session:

This will be the last day a quiz is given, and we will also discuss the exam scheduled for the next day.

In-Class Activity 2: Workshopping the Paper July 23 1300-1700

Description of the Activity:

The students have a paper due the next day. They will bring their paper in its current state to this workshop and we will work, individually, in pairs and small groups, and as a class as a whole to edit, revise and improve their papers.

The Reason why this is valuable:

It is my experience that undergraduates uniformly, no matter what university they attend, no matter if they are native speakers of English or perfectly fluent speakers, have a great deal to learn about the production of standard academic prose in English. My degrees are all in English, so I have paid attention to the quality of the written expression of student work—not just the ideas—all my career, and have learned a great deal about the habits that distinguish successful academic writers from others. One session can make a real difference, I find.

Readings:

There are no required readings for this in-class activity, although I will provide the class with a few texts which will help them be more effective writers.

Seminar Session 10: *Title:* Final Session on Sun-Tzu and Final Class

Date: 24 July

Description of the Session:

We will wrap up our discussion of Sun-Tzu, our discussion of strategy, and the course as a whole.

Questions:

The questions we will have posed concerning Machiavelli can all be posed about Sun-Tzu: is he immoral or amoral or a moral thinker of extreme subtlety? He is perhaps even more focused on deception than Machiavelli: what is the role of deception in *The Art of War*?

Readings:

Sun-Tzu, *The Art of War*, Chapters 4-6 & 13

Assignments for this session:

The final paper is due.

Final Session: The Final Exam

July 24 1300-1700

Before the actual exam begins, I want to do something perhaps a little unusual that I have found helpful in courses such as this one that introduce a good deal of new material, particularly new concepts, in a short amount of time. Just before the exam, we will have a review session in which students can ask any question about any aspect of the course. For my part, I will focus on clarifying concepts and will avoid anything that is likely to provide any answers to the questions on the exam. When students run out of questions or at 1500, whichever comes first, we will start the exam, which will be an essay exam aiming at getting students to synthesize the material and connect some of the dots which may not have been connected in class.