

Core Curriculum 1110: Classical Cultures (China)

The City University of New York--Brooklyn College
Study Abroad in China Program

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Required Texts

Victor Mair (Ed.). *The Shorter Columbia Anthology of Traditional Chinese Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000 (Translation from the Asia classics)

Ebrey, Patricia B., (Ed.). *Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook*, 2nd Ed., New York: The Free Press, 1993

Course Description

The objective of this course is to familiarize students with the formation of China's worldview of the secular and cosmic, moral and aesthetic, religious orientation, philosophical ideas and literary genres. It introduces classical Chinese thought (e.g., Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism), their historical background and relevance to the globalizing 21st century. We will read and analyze selected texts from antiquity to the 17th Century that represent the essence of these traditions chronologically. The readings will include a substantial selection of philosophical and poetic texts ranging across *Book of Changes*, *Book of Documents*, *Book of History*, *Book of Songs*, *Analects*, *Laozi*, *Zhuangzi*, Han Rhapsody, the wilderness poetry of the Six Dynasties, the poetry of the Tang and Song dynasties, and prose of the Ming and Qing dynasties, etc. This course will focus on close reading of the original (via translation) texts of classics to enrich students' knowledge of the cultural and literary traditions of China and develop students' abilities of critical thinking.

Core Curriculum Goals

1. to read closely and critically literary texts from ancient cultures in English translation;
2. to understand these texts in their social, historical, material, and performance contexts;
3. to relate the cultures which produced these texts to our contemporary culture in its diversity;
4. to speak and write clearly and coherently about the issues that emerge from critical reading and comparison of cultures.

Course Outcomes

1. Students develop skills of conceptual analysis and critical thinking skills of examining, comparing, and assessing cultures. (9)
2. Students will be able to develop a foundation for analyzing philosophical and literary texts of Chinese culture and their relationship to the shaping of the modern China. (3, 13)
3. Students will achieve an understanding of the fundamental ethical issues of human life in a cross-cultural, comparative way. (1)
4. Students can analyze different viewpoints of important theories in Chinese culture with each other and with Western thoughts. (3)
5. Students describe and analyze structural, thematic and other characteristic elements of the various literary texts read in the class, demonstrating an awareness of the possibilities of ambiguity of multiple perspectives.

Methods of Assessment

1. **Class discussion:** Students are required to read the assigned texts before the class in which we discuss them. Students are strongly expected to make contributions to class discussion.

2. **Examination:** final exam. Students are asked to identify and describe basic concepts and to compare and contrast two or more texts belonging to different literary traditions or to different historical periods.
3. **Essays:** two 1,000 word essays constructing arguments about texts which are based on specific textual details
4. **Assignments:** 4 written reports on visits to historical sites and museums (no less than 400 words each)
5. **Informal writing:** Students are asked to write down **questions** and **comments** on the assigned texts in preparation for each class session.

Grading

Participation	20%
Assignments	20% (four written reports on site visits)
Two Essays	30%
Final Exam	30%

Course Activities

1. The program in China is for 4 weeks
2. Class meetings on 14 days, each for 3 hours (in the morning) during 3 weeks stay in Nanjing
3. Four visits to historical cultural sites on four afternoons while in Nanjing
 - a. Confucius Temple and Ancient Civil Examination Hall
 - b. Xuanwu Lake Historic Site of the Cultural Center of the Six Dynasties
 - c. Nanjing Museum & Chaotiangong Daoist Temple
 - d. Jiming Temple: Famous Buddhist site
4. Site visits in other famous cities:
 - a. Beijing: Tiananmen Square, Forbidden City & Temple of Heaven
 - b. Xian: Terra Cotta Army Museum, Shaangxi Province History Museum, Wild Goose Pagoda & Xuanzang Buddhist Statue, & Museum of the Ancient Silk Road
 - c. Suzhou: Humble Administrator's Garden (Confucian Scholar's Residence), Hanshan Cold Mountain Buddhist Monastery
5. Online discussion sessions at portal.cuny.edu

Pre-departure requirements:

1. Students must purchase the textbooks before departure; and
2. Before departure, students must complete reading the following major classic works and raise 5 discussion questions about each of the following classics:
 - a. The book of Changes
 - b. Shi Ching, or The Book of Odes, or the Classic of Songs
 - c. The Analects by Confucius
 - d. The Tao Te Ching by Laozi
 - e. The Chuangtzu by Zhuangzi

Course Schedule

Note: Unless otherwise indicated, all readings are from the textbook by Victor Mair

Day 1: Introduction - defining classic cultures

Topics: ancient civilizations of great river valleys; geographic features of China and their influences; formative period of the Chinese civilization; origin of the Chinese language

The Chinese Language (handout to be downloaded from blackboard website) pp. 18-21 by Scott Morton

A Late Shang Divination Record (1600-1028 B.C.), pp. 3-4

Two Bronze Inscriptions of the Western Zhou (1100-771 B.C.), pp. 4-5

I Ching (Yi Jing, Book of Changes), pp. 5 – 11, Chapter 1 Chien (Heaven);

Day 2: From gods to Tian (Heavens) – Chinese cosmic view taking shape

Topics: divination with oracle bones; an atheist perspective and a holistic philosophy of nature; the humanitarian turn from the Shang to Zhou

Heaven, Earth and Man (Ebrey) pp. 57-60

I Ching (Yi Jing, Book of Changes): Chapter 2 Kun (Earth); 63 Chi-chi (Already across the stream); 64 Wei-chi (Not yet across the stream)

An Early Commentary on the Classic of Changes, pp. 10-11

Day 3: Early tradition of poetry (1) – Shi Jing (the northern tradition)

Topics: earliest Chinese poems: tradition of official collection of folk songs; techniques of poetry writing: *Fu* (description), *Bi* (simile and metaphor) and *Xing* (atmosphere and emotional association)

Shi Jing (Book of Odes), pp. 61 – 73.

Day 4: Early tradition of poetry (2) – Shi Jing and Chu Ci (the southern tradition)

Topics: factors of regional differences between the north and the south: geography, religion, history and economy; romantic literary tradition of the south; stylistic features

Heavenly Questions (The Songs of Chu), pp.192-208.

Day 5: Philosophy of communal survival – Confucian humanism

Topics: political disintegration of Zhou dynasty; Confucius' solution – a harmonious society by *Ren* (human heartedness), *Li* (decorum and etiquette) and *Yue* (music and songs); a hierarchical social order on reciprocity relationship.

Confucian Teachings (Ebrey) pp. 17-26

Confucian Analects, Book 2, pp.17 - 20

An Explication of "Progress in Learning," pp. 366-374

The Passing of Kung Sheng from History of the Han, pp. 312-315

Exemplary Sayings, Chapter 2, pp. 316-320

Day 6: Individual existence and freedom - Daoist tradition: Laozi

Topics: survival in a time of chaos; fundamental concepts of *Dao* (the Way): *yin* and *yang*, non-action/renunciation of social reality

Daoist Teachings (Ebrey) pp. 27 -31

Tao Te Ching, pp.32-37

Day 7: Individual existence and freedom - Daoist tradition: Zhuangzi

Topics: simple life, personal freedom from social bondage, relativist view of the universe

Chuang Tzu, pp.22-32

Day 8: Mencius: great successor of Confucius

Topics: Mencius, the most influential disciple of Confucius; development of Confucianism in the Han period.

The Classic of Filial Piety (Ebrey) pp. 64-68.

“Bull Mountain” and “Fish and Bear’s Paws” pp.20-21.

Two Brothers of Cheng (from *The Commentary of Mr. Tso*), pp. 308-311

The Great Announcement (from *Shu Jing, Classic of Documents*), pp. 301-304

Duties of the Student, pp. 12-16

The Stupid Old Man Who Moved a Mountain, pp. 37-38

Field trip 1: Confucius Temple (Afternoon: 3 hours)

(First essay due)

Day 9: Literary achievements of the Han dynasty

Topics: Yue Fu (folk songs) and historiography.

Folk Songs and ballads, pp. 241 – 270

Day 10: Literary consciousness in time of disunity and Buddhism in China

Topics: disintegration of political order; intellectuals seeking protection from Daoism; metaphysical discourse; Buddhism entering Chinese life; growing consciousness with genre of literature and division of philosophy, history and literature

Buddhist Doctrines and Practices (Ebrey) pp. 97-104

Songs of My Soul, pp. 74 – 76.

Poems, pp. 77-79.

The Return, pp. 235 – 237.

Field trip 2: Xuanwu Lake: Historical site of the cultural center of the Six Dynasties (Afternoon: 3 hours)

Day 11: Emergence of “the fields-and-gardens” and “rivers-and-mountains” poetic tradition

Topics: Tao Ch’ien’s fields-and-gardens poetry; wilderness in Xie Ling-yün’s “rivers-and-mountains” poetry; Buddhist/landscape poets; imagism; poetic mood of quietude.

The Peach Blossom Spring, Tao Ch’in, pp. 364 – 366

Three poems, Meng Haoran, pp. 88 – 90
Three poems, Wang Wei, 90 – 92
Silant at Her Window, Wang Chang-ling p.90

Field trip 3: Nanjing Museum & Chaotiangong Daoist Temple (Afternoon: 3 hours)

Day 12: Golden Age of Chinese poetry - great poets of the Tang dynasty

Topic: Li Po's Daoist romanticism; Du Fu's Confucian humanism and social realism; Po Chu-i's egoless ego and other poets

Li Po, p. 94
Du Fu, pp. 97 – 100.
Chang Ji, p. 100.
Po Chu-yi, pp. 270 – 278.
Liu Zongyuan, pp.106 -07

Field trip 4: Jiming Temple-Famous Buddhist site (Afternoon: 3 hours)

Day 13: Further growth - poetic innovations of the Song dynasty

Topic: de-sublimated wilderness; mundane aspect of life; fusion of empirical world and "inner pattern" of nature.

Su Dongpo, pp. 119 – 121, 158 – 160, 238 – 240.
Li Yu, pp. 153 – 155.
Li Ching-chao, pp. 165 – 169.

Day 14: Going back to the roots – the revitalizing of classic prose

Topics: *Han Fu became extravagant in style and empty in content; surge of criticism and appeal for conciseness and directness of pre-Chin prose style.*

A Record of the Pavilion of an Intoxicated Old Man, pp. 376 – 377.

(Final exam and second essay due)

University's policy on Academic Integrity:

"The faculty and administration of Brooklyn College support an environment free from cheating and plagiarism. Each student is responsible for being aware of what constitutes cheating and plagiarism and for avoiding both. The complete text of the CUNY Academic Integrity Policy and the Brooklyn College procedure for implementing that policy can be found at this site: <http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/bc/policies>. If a faculty member suspects a violation of academic integrity and, upon investigation, confirms that violation, or if the student admits the violation, the faculty member MUST report the violation."

Bibliography:

- 1 Birch, Cyril. *Anthology of Chinese Literature: From Early Times to the Fourteenth Century*. New York: Grove Press, Inc. 1965
- 2 De Bary, William Theodore. *Source of Chinese Tradition*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999
- 3 Ebrey, Patricia B., Ed..*Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook, 2nd Ed.*,New York: The Free Press, 1993
- 4 Mair(a), Victor trans. *Tao Te Ching*. New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell, 1990

- 5 Hinton, David. *Mountain Home: The Wilderness Poetry of Ancient China*. New York: New Directions Book, 2005
- 6 Lau, D.C., trans. *Mencius*. London: Penguin Books, 2003.
- 7 McRae, John, trans. *Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*. Berkeley: (Numata Center for Buddhist Translation), 2000
- 8 Owen, Stephen, *An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1997
- 9 Red Pine. *The Heart Sutra*. New York: Counterpoint, 2005
- 10 Waley, Arthur, trans. *The Book of Songs*. New York: Grove Press, 1996
- 11 Watson, Burton, trans. *Chuang Tzu: Basic Writings*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996. Watson, Burton, trans. *The Columbia Book of Chinese Poetry*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1984