

# CORE 1.1: Classical Cultures (China)

Brooklyn College, *The City University of New York*  
Study Abroad in China

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## Required Texts

1. Victor Mair (Ed.). *The Shorter Columbia Anthology of Traditional Chinese Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000
2. Handouts to be downloaded at the course blackboard website of portal.cuny.edu under "Course Documents"

## **Course Description**

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 selected texts from antiquity to the 15<sup>th</sup> Century that represent the essence of these traditions chronologically. The readings will include a substantial selection of philosophical and poetic texts ranging across *The Book of Songs*, *Analects*, *Laozi*, *Zhuangzi*, Han Rhapsody, wilderness poetry of the Six Dynasties, poetry of the Tang and Song dynasties, prose of the Ming dynasty, etc.

The 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. Introductory study of ancient culture through close reading of a variety of texts. To understand the arts, histories and cultures of the past as a foundation for those of the present.
2. Attention to such questions as literary genre, material and performance contexts, gender, political institutions, religion, philosophy, models of culture and the creation of a classical tradition.
3. Practice in close reading and communication by means of critical writing, class discussion and other methods, such as collaborative group work.

## **Course Outcomes**

1. Students develop skills of conceptual analysis and critical thinking skills of examining, comparing, and assessing cultures.
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. Students will achieve an understanding of the fundamental ethical issues of human life in a cross-cultural, comparative way.
4. Students can analyze different viewpoints of important theories in Chinese culture with each other and with Western thoughts.
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.

## Evaluation

#1 Essay	15%
#2 Essay	15%
Class Presentation	10%
Participation (In-class & Online)	20%
Midterm Exam	20%
Final Exam	20%

## Assignments

1. #1 Essay: Discuss a specific Chinese worldview, belief, or value, by drawing upon textual evidence from the class readings (4-5 pages);
2. #2 Essay: Discuss a specific Chinese literary phenomenon, with argument built upon textual evidence from the class readings (4-5 pages); and
3. Individual Class Presentation: Prepare an outline and talk (5-6 minutes) about how (some) ideas you have discussed in your two essays have relevance to you, your surroundings and the world.

Detailed instructions for the assignments will be explained in class.

# CALENDAR OF CLASS ACTIVITIES

Week	Topics, Readings & Assignments
W1	<p>Introduction to Course Ancient Civilizations &amp; Geographic Features Chronology: dynasties &amp; periods (2100 B.C. – A.D. 1911), pp. 725-726 Map Romanization of Chinese Names: Wade-Giles &amp; Pinyin, pp. 727-731 Chinese Cosmic Views; Formative Period of Chinese Civilization: Shang to Zhou</p> <p><b>Readings:</b> 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>I Ching (Yi Jing, Book of Changes)</i>, pp. 5-11: <i>Chien</i> (Heaven); 2 <i>Kun</i> (Earth); 63 <i>Chi-chi</i>; 64 <i>Wei-chi</i></p>
W2	<p>Earliest Poetry: Northern and Southern Traditions: <i>Shi Jing</i> (10<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C.) and <i>Chu Ci</i> Official collection of folk songs Qu Yuan (Ch'u Yuan, 340-278 B.C.) Techniques of Poetry: <i>Fu</i> (description), <i>Bi</i> (simile &amp; metaphor) and <i>Xing</i> (emotional evocations)</p> <p><b>Readings:</b> <i>Shi Jing</i> (Book/Classic of Odes/Songs), pp. 61-73 Heavenly Questions (from The Songs of Chu, <i>Chu Ci</i>), pp. 192-208</p> <p>Discussion Session of Topics of the Week</p> <p><b>Readings:</b> <i>Shi Jing</i> (Book of Odes), pp. 61-73 Heavenly Questions, pp. 192-208</p>
W3	<p>Philosophy of Communal Survival: Humanism (6<sup>th</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C.) <i>Kuan Tzu (Guangzi)</i>: Proto-Confucianism Disintegration of Zhou dynasty &amp; Confucius (551-479 B.C.)</p> <p><b>Discussing Essay Assignments</b></p> <p><b>Readings:</b> Duties of the Student, pp. 12-16 Confucian Analects, Book 2, pp. 17-20</p> <p>Discussion Session of Topics of the Week</p> <p><b>Readings:</b> Two Brothers of Cheng ... (from The Commentary of Mr. Tso), pp. 308-311 The Stupid Old Man Who Moved a Mountain, pp. 37-38 The Great Announcement (from <i>Shu Jing</i>, the Classic of Documents), pp. 301-304</p>
W4	<p>Confucianism and Other Schools of Thought Mozi (470-391 B.C.): Mohism--Utility, Uniformity &amp; Universal Love Lord Shang (390-338 B.C.): Legalism Mencius (372-289, B.C.), most influential disciple of Confucius Xun Zi (300-237, B.C.) &amp; Dong Zhongshu (179-104 B.C.): Development of Confucianism in the Han Period</p> <p><b>Reading:</b> Heaven, Earth, and Man, pp. 57-60 (P. B. Ebrey in blackboard handouts)</p> <p>Discussion Session of Topics of the Week</p> <p><b>Readings:</b> "Bull Mountain" and "Fish and Bear's Paws" pp. 20-21 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</p>
W5	<p>Confucianism and Other Schools of Thought Discussion Session of Topics of the Week</p> <p><b>Readings:</b> Confucius Teachings, pp. 17-26 (P. B. Ebrey in blackboard handouts) The Classic of Filial Piety, pp. 64-68 (P. B. Ebrey in blackboard handouts) Legalist Teachings, pp. 32-37 (P. B. Ebrey in blackboard handouts)</p>
W6	<p>Individual Existence and Spiritual Freedom: Daoist Tradition (6<sup>th</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> centuries B.C.) Survival in a time of chaos: the Dao, Yin and Yang, non-action/renunciation</p>

- Readings:**  
 Tao te ching, pp. 32-37  
 Chuang Tzu, pp. 22-32  
 Discussion Session of Topics of the Week
- Readings:**  
 Tao te ching, pp. 32-37  
 Chuang Tzu, pp. 22-32  
 Daoist Teachings, pp. 27-31 (P. B. Ebrey in blackboard handouts)
- W7** Literary Achievements of Han dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 221): *Fu* (rhapsody), *Yue Fu* & Historiography  
**Essay #1 Due**  
**Readings:**  
 The Owl, pp. 208-211  
 Folk Songs and Ballads, pp. 241-270  
 Discussion Session of Topics of the Week
- Reading:**  
 Seven Stimuli, pp. 211-229
- W8** **Mid-Term Examination**  
 Discussion Session of Topics of the Week  
 Literature during Six Dynasties (3<sup>rd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> centuries) & Buddhism  
**Readings:**  
 Literary Selections, pp. 46-51  
 Songs of My Soul, pp. 74-76  
 Poem on the Wandering Immortal, p. 77  
 Poems, pp. 81-84
- W9** Literary Consciousness in Time of Disunity (3<sup>rd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> centuries)  
 Mahayana Buddhism  
 “Fields-and-Gardens” and “Rivers-and-Mountains” Poetry  
 Metaphysical Discourse  
**Readings:**  
 Rhapsody on Whistling, pp. 229-235  
 The Return, pp. 235-237  
 Magic Cinnabar, pp. 265-266  
 Preface to Collected Poems from the Orchid Pavilion, pp. 351-353  
 A Poem on Wandering at the Stone Gate, with Introduction, pp. 392-395  
 The Establishment of the White Horse Temple, pp. 395-396  
 Discussion Session of Topics of the Week  
**Readings:**  
 Buddhist Doctrines and Practices, pp. 97-104 (P. B. Ebrey in blackboard handouts)  
 Tao Ch’ien, The Peach Blossom Spring, pp. 364-366  
 Xie Ling-yün, On My Way from South Mountain to North Mountain, p. 80  
 Meng Haoran, pp. 88-90  
 Wang Wei, pp. 90-92, p. 270
- W10** Tang Dynasty (618-907) - Golden Age of Chinese Poetry  
 Daoist romanticism; Confucian Humanism; Social Realism; Egoless Ego; Symbolism  
**Readings:**  
 Li Po (Li Bai), pp. 92-96  
 Du Fu, pp. 97-100  
 Discussion Session of Topics of the Week  
**Readings:**  
 Po Chu-yi, pp. 270-278  
 Han Shan, pp. 107-111
- W11** Poetic Innovations of the Song Dynasty (960-1126)  
 De-sublimated wilderness; mundane aspect of life  
 Fusion of empirical world and “inner pattern” of nature  
**Essay #2 Due**  
**Readings:**  
 Su Dongpo, pp. 119–121, pp. 158–160, pp. 238–240  
 Li Yu, pp. 153–155  
 Discussion Session of Topics of the Week  
**Readings:**  
 Mei Yao-chen, pp. 116–117

- Li Ching-chao, pp. 165–169
- W12** **Due:** Presentations (Group 1)  
 Revitalizing Classic Prose  
 Surge of criticism and appeal for conciseness & directness of pre-Chin prose style  
**Readings:**  
 Preface to “Ascending the Pavilion of King Teng”, pp. 333-341  
 Preface to the “Foolish Brook Poems,” pp. 353-355  
 Postface to a Catalog on a Collection of Bronze and Stone Inscriptions, pp.355-358  
 The Three Zither, pp. 375-376  
 Discussion Session of Topics of the Week  
**Readings:**  
 Discourse on Nourishing Life, pp. 359-363  
 A Record of the Pavilion of an Intoxicated Old Man, pp. 376-377  
 Brush Talks from Dream Brook, pp. 377-378  
 Liu Ching-ting the storyteller, pp. 378-380  
 Professional Matchmakers from Dream Memories of West Lake, pp. 380-381  
 Account of a Peach-Stone Boat, pp. 382-384  
 The Vocal Mimic, pp. 384-385  
 Observing the Tidal Bore (from Reminiscences of Wu-lin), pp. 405-406
- W13** **Due:** Presentations (Group 2)  
 Tradition of Story-telling; Legends; Ghost & Strange Stories and Novels  
**Readings:**  
 Intrigues of the Warring States, pp. 471-474  
 The Donkey of Chien, pp. 474-475  
 A New Account of Tales of the World, pp. 476-478  
 Biographies of Transcendents, pp. 479-480
- W14** **Due:** Presentations (Group 3)  
 Tradition of Story-telling; Legends; Ghost & Strange Stories and Novels  
**Readings:**  
 Search for the Supernatural, pp. 480-485  
 Strange Tales from Make-Do Studio, pp. 485-495  
 Discussion Session of Topics of the Week  
**Readings:**  
 The Journey to the West, Chapter 7, pp. 566-580  
 Water Margin, Wu Sung Beats the Tiger, pp. 581-591  
 A Burial Mound for Flowers (from Dream of Red Towers), pp. 591-604
- W15** **Due:** Presentations (Group 4)  
 Characteristics of classic Chinese culture  
 Political system & corresponding cultural tradition  
 Chinese characters for cultural unity  
 Discussion Session of Topics of the Week

**Final Exam**