

CHIN 2110: Classical Culture Of China

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

Instructor: Yonggang Huang, Ph.D.

Required Text

Course package: CHIN 2110 Classical Culture of China. (To be purchased at the Far Better Printing Center, by the east side gate of Brooklyn College)

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 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 300 words each)
5. **Informal writing:** Students are advised to write down **questions** and **comments** on text for preparation of each class session.
6. Students are required to keep daily journals to document observations of phenomena related to the course topics.

Side Trip to Yangzhou

In addition to Beijing, Xi'an and Nanjing, Yangzhou is also an important site for understanding modern Chinese history. We strongly recommend that each student in this class should plan for some additional fees for transportation, admissions and tour guide with the side trip to Yangzhou not covered in the regular program.

Grading

Participation	20%
Presentation & journals	20%
Two Essays	30%
Final Exam	30%

Schedule of the class meetings and the location may not be announced until the group's arrival in China and may be subject to change, sometimes at short notice. The class may meet on weekend and evenings if necessary.

The instructor reserves the right to make necessary adjustments in the class schedule and evaluation in response to the changing situation during the course of the program in China.

As this course is part of the study abroad program, your program participation will account for 10% of the grade; students are strongly advised that their behavior and attitude during the trip will affect their final grade for the course. At the conclusion of the program, Professor Lu, as the program director, will review the coursework and behavior of each student in the course with the instructor when the final grade is determined.

Course Activities

1. The program in China is for 3 weeks, with many site visits, lectures and class discussions, plus online work
2. Class meetings in Nanjing are to be scheduled, each for 2 and 1/2 hours (in the morning)
3. Site visits to historical cultural sites on four afternoons while in Nanjing
 - a. Confucius Temple and Ancient Civil Examination Hall
 - b. Xuanwu Lake Historical Site of the Cultural Center of the Six Dynasties
 - c. Nanjing Museum
 - 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 Stature, & Museum of the Ancient Silk Road
 - c. Suzhou: Humble Administrator's Garden (Confucian Scholar Residence), Hanshan Cold Mountain Buddhist Monastery

Course Schedule

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

Look for information online (I-Ching/Yi Jing/Zhou Yi) and write down questions as evidence of research.

I Ching (Yi Jing, Book of Changes), pp. 1 – 9, Chapter 1 Chien (Heaven); Look for information I-Ching/Yi Jing/Zhou Yi online and write down questions as evidence of research.

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

Chapter 2 Kun (Earth); pp. 10-14 ; Look for information online and write down questions as evidence of research.

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. 16 – 32.

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

pp. 33-46; Look for information of Chu Ci online and write down questions as evidence of research.

Heavenly Questions (The Songs of Chu); pp.73-78.

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 Analects, Book 2, pp.47 – 54, Look for information online and write down questions as evidence of research.

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

Tao Te Ching, pp.55-60; Look for information online and write down questions as evidence of research.

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. 65-72; Look for information online and write down questions as evidence of research.

Day 8: Mencius: great successor of Confucius

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

“The Stupid Old Man Who Moved a Mountain”, “Bull Mountain” and “Fish and Bear’s Paws” pp.60-64; Look for information online and write down questions as evidence of research.

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. 79– 90.

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

pp. 94-96. Look for information (Wei-Jin period/Northern and Southern Dynasties) online and write down questions as evidence of research.

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.

pp.97-107. Look for information online (Tao Yuanming(TaoChien)/ Xie Ling-yun) and write down questions as evidence of research.

Field trip 3: Nanjing Museum (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

pp.108 – 135; Look for information online(Tang poems) and write down questions as evidence of research.

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.

pp. 136 – 152; Look for information online (**Song Ci**) and write down questions as evidence of research.

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.

Look for information online and write down questions as evidence of research. "A Record of the Pavilion of an Intoxicated Old Man"

(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