

# PH387-15 Finding a Way Through Life: Daoism and Chinese Philosophy

21/22

**Department**

Philosophy

**Level**

Undergraduate Level 3

**Module leader**

Massimiliano Lacertosa

**Credit value**

15

**Module duration**

9 weeks

**Assessment**

100% coursework

**Study location**

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

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## Description

### Introductory description

This module will introduce you to philosophical Daoism, one of the most important schools of thought in Chinese philosophy. In particular, you will learn how, for Daoism, finding a way (a dao ) through life is both a matter of self-cultivation and political decision.

### Module aims

The principal aim of this module is to introduce you to the political and ethical dimensions of the Daoist tradition in Chinese Philosophy. Through the analysis of Laozi's political view in the Daodejing, Zhuangzi's idea of self-cultivation and the influences of Daoism in Sun Tzu's The Art of War and in the legalist Hanfeizi, this module will explain how Daoist concepts such as wuwei and ziran do not only offer the possibility to find a way for living well but they also suggest a different way of conceiving law and politics.

### Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be

covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

Week 1

Preliminary remarks on the specificity of Chinese philosophy

Week 2

The political view of the Daodejing

Week 3

Norms and knowledge in the Daodejing

Week 4

Norms and knowledge in the Zhuangzi

Week 5

Zhuangzi, skill stories and aesthetic awareness

Week 7

The Daoist influence in Sun Tzu's Art of War

Week 8

The dao of the ruler in the Hanfeizi

Week 9

Daoism and environmental ethics

Week 10

Concluding remarks: finding dao through life, finding life through dao.

## Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- demonstrate a theoretical knowledge of the different components (ethics, law and politics) of Daoist philosophy.
- Demonstrate familiarity with the specific character of Daoist philosophy in relation to both Chinese and Western philosophical traditions.
- Communicate clearly and substantively in speech and in writing on the questions addressed in the module.
- Critically assess the key claims and arguments of the core texts, and the debates to which they have given rise.
- Organise philosophical research and engage independently in philosophical debate.

## Indicative reading list

Allinson, Robert E. 1989a. *Chuang-Tzu for Spiritual Transformation: An Analysis of the Inner Chapters*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Ames, Roger T., trans. 1993. *Sun-Tzu: The Art of Warfare: The First English Translation Incorporating the Recently Discovered Yin-ch'üeh-shan Texts*. New York: Ballantine Books.

Ames, Roger T., and David L. Hall, trans. 2003. *Daodejing: "Making This Life Significant": A*

Philosophical Translation. New York: Ballantine Books.

Ames, Roger T., and Henry Rosemont, Jr. 2013. "On Translation & Interpretation in Comparative Studies – With Special Reference to Classical Chinese." *Comparative Studies of China and the West* 1:25-32.

Cheng, Chung-ying. 1989. "Chinese Metaphysics as Non-metaphysics: Confucian and Taoist Insights into the Nature of Reality." In *Understanding the Chinese Mind: The Philosophical Roots*, edited by Robert E. Allinson, 167-208. Hong Kong; Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Clarke, J.J. 2000. *The Tao of the West: Western transformations of Taoist thought*. London; New York: Routledge.

Coutinho, Steve. 2014. *An introduction to Daoist Philosophies*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Graham, A. C., trans. 1981/1989. *Chuang-tzŭ: The Seven Inner Chapters and Other Writings From the Book Chuang-tzŭ*. London; Boston; Sydney; New Zealand: Unwin Paperbacks.

Kjellberg, Paul, and P. J. Ivanhoe. 1996. *Essays on Skepticism, Relativism, and Ethics in the Zhuangzi*. New York: State University of New York Press.

Lai, Karyn. 2007. "Ziran and Wuwei in the Daodejing: An Ethical Assessment." *Dao. A Journal of Comparative Philosophy* 6 (4):325–337.

Loy, David. 1985. "Wei-Wu-Wei: Nondual Action." *Philosophy East and West* 35:73–86.

Moeller, Hans-Georg. 2009. *The Moral Fool: A Case for Amorality*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Watson, Burton, trans. 2003. *Han Feizi: Basic Writings*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Wu, Kuang-ming. 1990. *The Butterfly as Companion: Meditations on the First Three Chapters of the Chuang-Tzu*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

## **Subject specific skills**

Through this module you will acquire the ability to (a) understand the distinctive features and aims of the Daoist tradition and its influence in Chinese philosophy; (b) recognise and interpret specific concepts in the Daoist texts and compare them with both Western and Chinese philosophical traditions; (c) pursue independent philosophical research.

## **Transferable skills**

Through this module you will acquire (a) The ability to communicate information (verbally and in written form) to people both expert and non-expert in the field; (b) The ability to analyse, evaluate, critique and apply complex information gathered from reading, reflection, reasoning or communication; (c) The ability to effectively manage schedules and deadlines.

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## **Study**

## **Study time**

<b>Type</b>	<b>Required</b>
Lectures	9 sessions of 2 hours (12%)
Seminars	8 sessions of 1 hour (5%)
Private study	124 hours (83%)
Total	150 hours

## Private study description

Private study and reading.

## Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

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## Assessment

You do not need to pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Students can register for this module without taking any assessment.

### Assessment group A

	<b>Weighting</b>	<b>Study time</b>	<b>Eligible for self-certification</b>
<b>Assessment component</b>			
2500 word essay Essay	80%		Yes (extension)

Reassessment component is the same

**Assessment component**

Video presentation	20%		Yes (extension)
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Reassessment component is the same

## Feedback on assessment

Feedback on essays will be provided on the feedback form for the essay, addressing standard

areas of evaluation and individual content. Students will also receive individual feedback on the video presentations.

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## Availability

### Courses

This module is Optional for:

- UPHA-V700 Undergraduate Philosophy
  - Year 2 of V700 Philosophy
  - Year 3 of V700 Philosophy
- Year 4 of UPHA-V701 Undergraduate Philosophy (with Intercalated year)
- Year 4 of UPHA-V702 Undergraduate Philosophy (with Work Placement)

This module is Core option list A for:

- Year 3 of UMAA-GV17 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy
- Year 3 of UMAA-GV19 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy with Specialism in Logic and Foundations

This module is Core option list B for:

- Year 2 of UMAA-GV17 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy
- Year 2 of UMAA-GV19 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy with Specialism in Logic and Foundations

This module is Core option list C for:

- Year 4 of UMAA-GV19 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy with Specialism in Logic and Foundations

This module is Option list A for:

- UPHA-VL78 BA in Philosophy with Psychology
  - Year 2 of VL78 Philosophy with Psychology
  - Year 3 of VL78 Philosophy with Psychology

This module is Option list B for:

- Year 2 of UHIA-V1V5 Undergraduate History and Philosophy
- UPHA-VQ72 Undergraduate Philosophy and Literature
  - Year 2 of VQ72 Philosophy and Literature
  - Year 3 of VQ72 Philosophy and Literature