

# PH3A6-15 Introduction to Chinese Philosophy

**22/23**

**Department**

Philosophy

**Level**

Undergraduate Level 3

**Module leader**

Massimiliano Lacertosa

**Credit value**

15

**Module duration**

10 weeks

**Assessment**

100% coursework

**Study location**

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

---

## Description

### Introductory description

In this module you will analyse and discuss texts by central figures in early Chinese philosophy such as Kongzi (Confucius), Laozi, Zhuangzi, Mozi, etc. After considering the contemporary debate about the legitimacy of Chinese philosophy, we will proceed addressing fundamental problems in early Chinese thought such as: the role of change (yi) in human existence and experience; the definition of human nature as good or evil and the consequences for the community; the ethical implication of the concept of dao; the function of rulership in social control. Through the appraisal of different schools of thought, you will delve in the rich philosophical debate that characterises Chinese society in the pre-imperial period.

### Module aims

This module aims to define the status of Chinese philosophy in relation to Western philosophy and to introduce you to key topics in ancient Chinese philosophy (pre-Qin dynasty).

### 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

The issue of “Chinese Philosophy”: Is there such a thing as Chinese philosophy?

#### Week 2

The historical background for the emergence of philosophy in China. Sima Tan and the classification of pre-Han schools of thought.

#### Week 3

Yijing (Book of Changes): yi (change) in relation to yin and yang .

#### Week 4

Kongzi (Confucius): the Lunyu (Analects).

#### Week 5

A reaction to Confucianism: Mozi and universal love.

#### Week 7

Daojia , Daoism, and the ineffability of dao : the Daodejing and Zhuangzi .

#### Week 8

Daojia , Daoism, and the ineffability of dao : the Zhuangzi .

#### Week 9

Mengzi (Mencius) and Xunzi on human nature.

#### Week 10

Rulership and social control: Hanfeizi and Fajia (Legalism).

### **Learning outcomes**

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

- By the end of the module you will be able to: Demonstrate a theoretical knowledge of the specificities of Chinese philosophy.
- Demonstrate familiarity with the main theoretical differences of ancient Chinese schools of thought and 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.
- Organize philosophical research and engage independently in philosophical debate.

### **Indicative reading list**

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., trans. 1998. The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation. New York: Ballantine Books.

Cua, Antonio S., ed. 2003. Encyclopedia of Chinese Philosophy. New York: Routledge.

Defoort, Carine. 2001. “Is There Such a Thing as Chinese Philosophy? Arguments of an Implicit

Debate." *Philosophy East and West* 51 (3):393-413.

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.

Graham, Angus C. 1986. *Yin-Yang and the Nature of Correlative Thinking*, Singapore: Institute of East Asian Philosophies.

Hall, David L., and Roger T. Ames. 1987. *Thinking Through Confucius*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Henricks, Robert G. 2000. *Lao Tzu's Tao Te Ching: A Translation of the Startling New Documents Found at Guodian*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Hutton, Eric L., trans. 2014. *Xunzi: The Complete Text*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Johnston, Ian, trans., 2010. *The Mozi: A Complete Translation*, New York: Columbia University Press.

Lau, D. C., trans. 2004. *Mencius*. Rev. ed. London: Penguin Books.

Liu, JeeLoo. 2006. *An Introduction to Chinese Philosophy: From Ancient Philosophy to Chinese Buddhism*. Malden, MA; Oxford: Blackwell.

Lynn, Richard John, trans. 1994a. *The Classic of Changes: A New Translation of the I Ching as Interpreted by Wang Bi*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Raud, Rein. 2006. "Philosophies versus Philosophy: In Defense of a Flexible Definition." *Philosophy East and West* 56 (4):618-625.

Wang, Robin R. 2012. *Yinyang: The Way of Heaven and Earth in Chinese Thought and Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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

## **Research element**

Both assessments – video presentation and essay – require research elements.

## **International**

This module addresses the problem of doing Philosophy in a multicultural and international context.

## **Subject specific skills**

Through this module you will acquire

- (a) The ability to understand the distinctive features and aims of the ancient Chinese philosophical tradition;
- (b) The ability to recognise the different schools of thought in the ancient Chinese philosophical tradition;
- (c) The ability to 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.

---

## Study

### Study time

Type	Required
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.

---

## 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 A1

	Weighting	Study time
2500 word essay	80%	
Video presentation	20%	

### Feedback on assessment

Feedbacks will be provided on essays and video presentations.

---

## Availability

## Courses

This module is Optional for:

- UHIA-V1V8 Undergraduate History and Philosophy (with Year Abroad and a term in Venice)
  - Year 3 of V1V8 History and Philosophy (with Year Abroad and a term in Venice)
  - Year 4 of V1V8 History and Philosophy (with Year Abroad and a term in Venice)
- Year 3 of UHIA-V1V7 Undergraduate History and Philosophy (with a term in Venice)
- UPHA-V700 Undergraduate Philosophy
  - Year 2 of V700 Philosophy
  - Year 2 of V700 Philosophy
  - Year 3 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-GV19 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy with Specialism in Logic and Foundations

This module is Core option list B for:

- UMAA-GV17 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy
  - Year 2 of GV17 Mathematics and Philosophy
  - Year 2 of GV17 Mathematics and Philosophy
  - Year 2 of GV17 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 Core option list F for:

- UMAA-GV18 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy with Intercalated Year
  - Year 4 of GV18 Mathematics and Philosophy with Intercalated Year
  - Year 4 of GV18 Mathematics and Philosophy with Intercalated Year

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
- Year 4 of UPHA-VL79 BA in Philosophy with Psychology (with Intercalated year)

This module is Option list B for:

- UPHA-VQ72 Undergraduate Philosophy and Literature
  - Year 2 of VQ72 Philosophy and Literature

- Year 3 of VQ72 Philosophy and Literature
- Year 4 of UPHA-VQ73 Undergraduate Philosophy and Literature with Intercalated Year

This module is Option list C for:

- Year 3 of UHIA-V1V5 Undergraduate History and Philosophy
- Year 4 of UHIA-V1V6 Undergraduate History and Philosophy (with Year Abroad)

This module is Option list D for:

- UHIA-V1V5 Undergraduate History and Philosophy
  - Year 2 of V1V5 History and Philosophy
  - Year 3 of V1V5 History and Philosophy
- Year 4 of UHIA-V1V6 Undergraduate History and Philosophy (with Year Abroad)
- Year 2 of UHIA-V1V7 Undergraduate History and Philosophy (with a term in Venice)