



PKU 1: Comparative Philosophy: China and the West

Hosted by Peking University

Course dates: 4 – 29 July, 2011

Students must arrive by 2 July, 2011

Course Description

As China rises on the economic, political, and cultural horizons, the importance of Chinese culture and Chinese identity for a secure world in the 21st Century increases. Chinese philosophy has always been a popular choice for students wishing to learn more about China.

During the first week of the course, we will do a close reading of two of the early dialogues of Plato: the Euthyphro and the Phaedo. In Plato, we will discover much that resonates with the common sense, the cultural assumptions, and the worldview we associate with Western culture. We will explore the vocabulary of Plato's metaphysical realism and its influence on the Western philosophical narrative. In particular, we will concern ourselves with the beginnings of Western moral theory.

The remaining 3 weeks of the course will be given over to Plato's "Chinese cousin", Confucius, reading representative texts of the Confucian and Daoist traditions. You will gain different perspectives – looking beyond Chinese philosophical traditions and texts literally, and apply cultural context and nuances to understand its true meaning. We will use several sources – the Book of Changes, Traditional Chinese Medicine, and Tang Junyi on Chinese natural cosmology – to establish a lens through which to read these canonical texts.

We will read from the Lunyu 论语, the Zhongyong 中庸, the Xiaojing 孝经, and the Daodejing 道德经, not just as "Chinese philosophy," but as integral to world philosophy. It can be argued that Confucius has influenced the lives of more people than any other historical human being. In particular, we will develop a Confucian ethical theory called "role ethics."

Students may take this course concurrently with the Chinese Politics and Public Policy course offered by Peking University.

Peking University will also offer an optional Chinese Language Course to those who are interested. It will be taught by experienced teachers from the International College of Chinese Language Studies (PKU) and offered to the students with primary Chinese level.

Target Audience

Senior undergraduate and graduate students.

Delivery Method, Exams & Learning Outcomes

The class meets 3 times for a total of 8 hours per week. This course will be conducted in English.

Students will be given a reading assignment and a question for each session. The first 10 minutes of the class will require a written response to this question on Monday and Wednesday. On Friday for 3 weekends, students will be given a take-home question, and will be required to submit a 1000-1250 (4-5 pages) paper on the first class of the following week. Classroom assignments are worth 5 points each (8 X 5 = 40) and the take-home are worth 20 points each (3 X 20 = 60), making a total of 100 points.

There are no prerequisites. By the end of the course, students will acquire an ability to make objective cultural comparisons by assessing the underlying assumptions of the Platonic tradition and the classical Chinese narrative. They will develop a philosophical vocabulary that distinguishes metaphysical realism from an early Chinese process cosmology.

Where you will stay

Zhongguanyuan Global Village: <http://www.pkugv.com/>

Costs

Tuition fee: RMB10,000

The tuition covers a package of up to 2 academic courses and 1 optional Chinese language course, and a series of cultural visits in Beijing.

Accommodation: RMB100-150/day

Estimated text books: Reading material will be provided

Estimated living expenses: RMB1000-1500

Further Information

Students are required to acquire a valid health/accident insurance which can cover their stay in China before they come to Peking University .

Other useful information can be found online but most are written in Mandarin. Visit www.go2map.com for the regional map. Another useful website is www.bjbus.com.cn for public transportation schedules. www.dianping.com and www.fantong.com are two popular sites for good restaurants.