



ASIAN PHILOSOPHY

PHIL 213.001; SUMMER I 2025
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill



COURSE INFORMATION

Credit Hours: 3

Pre or Co-Requisites: N/A

Target Audience: Undergraduates

Meeting Pattern: N/A

Instructional Format: Remote asynchronous

Classroom or Location: Zoom

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Name: Jackson LeViness (he/him/his)

Email Address: jdlev@unc.edu

Office Hours: Fridays from 11am-1pm and by appointment.

Zoom Room ID: 505 983 0640



COURSE CONTENT

Course Description

In this course, we will explore some East and South Asian philosophical traditions, focusing on Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism. Our goal is to build a solid understanding of these schools of thought and how they influenced one another. Throughout the semester, we will tackle fundamental questions such as:

- What constitutes a “good” society?
- How should rulers treat their subjects?
- What is the nature of reality and the self?

We will engage directly with primary texts, including *The Analects*, *The Daodejing*, and key Buddhist sutras, supplemented by secondary readings that place these texts in context. You will have the opportunity to critically assess these ideas, comparing them with contemporary answers to the same questions. No prior experience with philosophy is required, though an open mind and thoughtful participation will be essential.

Course Texts & Materials

There are no required texts. I'll put up all the readings on Canvas. However, if you would like to get your own copies, the texts I'll be pulling from are:



1. *Introduction to Classical Chinese Philosophy* by Bryan W. Van Norden (ISBN 978-1603844680)
2. *Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy* edited by Philip J. Ivanhoe and Bryan W. Van Norden (ISBN 978-0872207806)
3. *Buddhism as Philosophy: An Introduction* by Mark Siderits (ISBN 978-0754653691)
4. *Engaging with Buddhism: Why it Matters to Philosophy* by Jay L. Garfield (ISBN 978-0190204334)
5. *Zen and Japanese Culture* by D.T. Suzuki (ISBN 978-0804815604)
6. *Zen Action, Zen Person* by T.P. Kasulis (ISBN 978-0824807023)

Class Expectations

Given that the summer semester is so condensed, a typical week will require 20 hours of work (though this will vary depending on assignments and time during the term). This includes both active participation in class, as well as reading and other work assigned outside of class (e.g., presentations).

Course Goals & Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

All our philosophy courses aim at the acquisition and nurturing of basic philosophic skills. One of the main goals of our philosophy curriculum is to instill and enable the development of skills that are distinct to philosophy, but which are foundational to all forms of knowledge.

These **basic philosophical skills** involve being able to:

- Think critically;
- Deploy philosophical concepts and terminology correctly, in either a historical or contemporary setting;
- Represent clearly and accurately the views or argument of particular philosophers, in either a historical or contemporary setting;
- Identify the premises and conclusion(s) of a philosophical argument and assess both its validity and soundness;
- Apply a philosophical theory or argument to a new topic, and being able to draw and defend reasonable conclusions about that topic;
- Develop an argument for a particular solution to a philosophical problem in either a historical or contemporary setting;
- Write clearly, precisely, and persuasively in defense of a philosophical thesis;
- Participate in respectful, critical, and reflexive dialogues about difficult philosophical positions;
- Read, interpret, and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of different philosophical texts and the philosophical positions presented in them

History of Philosophy

In addition, PHIL 213 satisfies our history of philosophy requirement for the philosophy major and minor and thereby aims at developing the following learning outcomes:

- Develop knowledge of different philosophical figures, movements, traditions, systems, and schools from the past. Knowledge of these of these figures, movements etc. must also reflect knowledge of their respective historical periods, such as ancient, early modern, 19th century, etc.
- Evaluate primary source material and/or other historical evidence of past philosophical figures and/or systems (e.g., behaviors, events, and social, cultural, economic, and/or political structures); assess divergent or complementary methods, materials, and/or methodologies in interpreting the history of human thought, thinking, and self-understanding.
- Assess, when needed, conflicting historical narratives based on evidence and methodologies.
- Generate and evaluate philosophical arguments based on the analysis of primary and scholarly sources.
- Apply historical methods and knowledge in conjunction with philosophical methods and knowledge in order to make informed judgments about past and current developments in the history of philosophy.

IDEAs in Action General Education Curriculum

This course is part of the IDEAS in Action General Education curriculum and satisfies either the FC-GLOBAL or the FC-PAST focus capacity.



[FC-GLOBAL]

Student Learning Outcomes:

1. Classify and analyze diverse historical, social, and political exchanges that shape nations, regions, and cultural traditions of the world.
2. Translate among contrasting civic cultures, social values, and moral commitments that characterize differences among peoples and societies, including those beyond the North Atlantic region.
3. Assess ways that political and economic institutions shape contemporary global relations.
4. Explain human and environmental challenges that transcend national borders.

Questions for Students:

1. What forces connect and distinguish the experiences of peoples, societies, and human organization around the world?
2. How can I understand and compare differing worldviews?
3. What connections and differences exist between particular worldviews, experiences, societies, or power structures?
4. What ideas, approaches, and international sources allow scholars to compare societies?

[FC-PAST]

Student Learning Outcomes:

1. Develop knowledge of different spatiotemporal scales, patterns, ideas, figures, and events from the past.
2. Evaluate primary source material and/or other historical evidence of past conditions (e.g., behaviors, events, and social, cultural, economic, and/or political structures); assess divergent or complementary methods, materials, and/or methodologies in interpreting the human past.
3. Assess conflicting historical narratives based on evidence and methodologies.
4. Generate and evaluate arguments based the analysis of primary and scholarly sources.
5. Apply historical methods and knowledge to make informed judgments about the past and the present.

Questions for Students:

1. What events, conflicts, and continuities shaped an era of the human past?
2. What distinctive kinds of evidence do we use to interpret and understand the human past?
3. How have people made decisions and acted in light of historical knowledge?
4. How does the material and historical past survive in the present and affect our perception of both the past and the present?
5. What conditions and processes shape our approach to the human past?

Recurring Capacities

Every focus capacity course includes the following activities:

- **Writing**, totaling at least 10 pages in length or the intellectual equivalent
- **Presenting** material to the class, smaller groups, or the public through oral presentations, webpages, or other means
- **Collaborating** in pairs or groups to learn, design, solve, create, build, or research

These elements – referred to as “recurring capacities” – will help you repeatedly practice crucial skills for future study, life, and career success





COURSE ASSIGNMENTS & ASSESSMENTS

Assignment Descriptions

Class Participation/Lecture Responses

Regular engagement is a foundational requirement of this course. Attendance is expected at all class meetings. In the event of illness, emergencies, or other legitimate conflicts, students must notify me via email in advance.

For the purposes of this course, “attendance” consists of three specific components:

1. **Completing the assigned reading** for the given date (as outlined in the course schedule).
2. **Viewing the full lecture video** corresponding to that day's reading (available on Canvas).
3. **Submitting a brief written response** that includes the following three elements—each of which must reference a *time-stamped moment* from the lecture video (i.e., the approximate minute and second at which the relevant claim occurs):
 - o **A question** prompted by a particular claim made in the lecture.
 - o **A potential objection** to a claim presented in the lecture (this need not reflect your actual view, but should plausibly challenge the claim).
 - o **A description of an interesting implication** of a claim—this might be a philosophical consequence or a broader practical/material implication.

These responses are evaluated on a completion basis, provided they meet the standards above. All three components must be submitted by **Friday at 11:59 PM** each week. Missing any of the components will be recorded as an absence and will result in a **5% deduction from your participation grade per unexcused absence**. Due to the condensed nature of this course, these components are non-negotiable requirements for attendance.

Discussion Days

Each **Friday** (excluding the first Friday of the term) will serve as a discussion day, replacing our usual in-person seminar discussions. On these days, you will engage in structured philosophical dialogue with a peer partner (assignments listed under the “People” tab on Canvas, under “Discussion Day Partners”).

Your responsibilities are twofold:

1. **Submit three substantive questions** that emerged for you over the week's readings. These should engage with philosophical issues or problems raised by the material—i.e., questions that invite reflection, analysis, or interpretation (not factual inquiries such as “When was *Arrival* released?”). These are due by **Thursday at 11:59 PM**.
2. **Respond to your partner's three questions** with thoughtful, good-faith attempts to clarify, explore, or further develop the issues they raise. You are not expected to provide definitive answers, but you should aim to promote understanding and intellectual progress—for yourself and your discussion partner. These are due by **Friday at 11:59 PM**.

Again, these are graded on a completion basis, assuming they meet the philosophical and substantive expectations outlined above.

Syllabus Quiz

A short multiple-choice quiz on key components of the syllabus is available on Canvas. This is an open-syllabus quiz—you are free to consult the document while taking it, and you may retake it as many times as needed. Your **highest score by the end of the second week** of class will count as your final grade for the quiz. The expectation is that everyone achieves full marks.

Explanations

You will record brief video explanations (no longer than **5 minutes**) of key philosophical concepts from the course. I will provide a list of options from which you may choose. Each explanation must be pitched to a particular audience (e.g., a young child, a friend unfamiliar with philosophy), and you must make use of **a creative analogy or metaphor** that helps convey the concept in a clear and engaging way.



These assignments will be evaluated on four criteria:

1. Clarity of explanation;
2. Appropriateness of the explanation for the chosen audience;
3. Accuracy and depth of philosophical understanding;
4. Creativity and pedagogical value of the chosen metaphor or analogy.

Collaborative Final Presentations

In lieu of a traditional exam, your final project will be a **collaborative group presentation** (groups of three, randomly assigned at the start of the course). Your group will select a topic **not previously covered in class**, and deliver a **10–15 minute presentation** exploring the issue.

Detailed instructions will be provided as the term progresses. The university mandates that asynchronous online courses offer a submission window on **Friday, June 20, from 3–6pm**. You are encouraged to complete your presentation in advance, but the official submission deadline is **Friday, June 20, by 6pm**.

Assessment	Final Grade (%)
Class Participation/Attendance (including Canvas posts, totaling around half a page per day)	30%
Discussion Day (including Canvas posts, totaling around a page per session)	15%
Explanations	30% (4x7.5%)
Syllabus Quiz	5%
Collaborative Final Presentations	20%

Grading Scale & Schema

Late Work

Late work be docked 1/3 of a letter grade for each calendar day (or part of a day) that they are late. Work that is inaccessible or unreadable (e.g., issues with the file) will be considered as not submitted.

Reasonable requests for extensions will only be considered if they are made at least 72 hours in advance of the paper due date. No exceptions will be made except in cases of unforeseeable events/emergencies/etc. Because of the shortness of the summer term, I will have to be relatively strict both (1) about applying this rule, and (2) how long I can allow extensions for.

Grading Scale

Numeric Grade (%)	Letter Grade
93.5 and above	A
89.5 – 93.4	A-
86.5 – 89.4	B+
82.5 – 86.4	B
79.5 – 82.4	B-
76.5 – 79.4	C+
72.5 – 76.4	C
69.5 – 72.4	C-
66.5 – 69.4	D+
59.5 – 66.4	D
59.4 and below	F

Table a: Grading Scale Table



COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: Intro and Syllabus

Class (Date/Week)	Topic(s)	Readings Due
W May 14	Syllabus	
R May 15	Intro	ICCP CH 1
F May 16	Kongzi	ICCP CH 2

Table b: Week 1 Schedule

Week 2: Confucius

Class (Date/Week)	Topic(s)	Readings Due
M May 19	Kongzi	<i>The Analects</i> Books 1 and 2
T May 20	Kongzi and Virtue Ethics	<i>The Analects</i> Book 3; ICCP CH 3
W May 21	The Mohists	ICCP CH 4; <i>Mozzi</i> CH 16 and 25
R May 22	Yangism	ICCP CH 5; "Robber Zhi"
F May 23	Begin next unit (Mengzi)	ICCP CH 6; Mengzi: 2A6, 4B28, 6A6, 6A8, 6A10, 7A15, 7A35, 7B31

Table c: Week 2 Schedule

Week 3: Mengzi, Daoism, and Zhuangzi

Class (Date/Week)	Topic(s)	Readings Due
M May 26	HOLIDAY (no class)	
T May 27	Laozi	ICCP CH8; ZAZP CH 3
W May 28	Zhuangzi	ICCP CH 9
R May 29	Zhuangzi	Zhuangzi CHs 1, 2 and 7
F May 30	Zhuangzi	Zhuangzi CHs 13, 22, 23, 26

Table d: Week 3 Schedule

Week 4: Buddhism

Class (Date/Week)	Topic(s)	Readings Due
M June 2	Introduction	BAP CH1
T June 3	Basic Teachings of the Buddha	BAP CH2; "Setting in Motion..."; "The Fire Sermon"
W June 4	Buddhist Metaphysics	BAP CH6; EB CH2
R June 5	Buddhist Metaphysics	EB CHs 2 and 3
F June 6	The Self	BAP CH 3

Table e: Week 4 Schedule



Week 5: More Buddhism

Class (Date/Week)	Topic(s)	Readings Due
M June 9	The Self	EB CH 4
T June 10	Mahayana Buddhism	BAP CH 7; ZAZP CH 2
W June 11	Buddhist Ethics	BAP CH 4; EB CH 9
R June 12	Zen Buddhism	ZJC CHs 1 and 3
F June 13	Zen Buddhism	ZAZP CH 1

Table f: Week 5 Schedule

Week 6: Buffer Space

Class (Date/Week)	Topic(s)	Readings Due
M June 16	Buffer	TBD
T June 17	LDOC	TBD
W June 18	--READING DAY--	
R June 19	--READING DAY--	
F June 20	Final Presentations	Due by 6pm

Table g: Week 6 Schedule



POLICY STATEMENTS

Academic Policies

University Class Attendance Policy

University Policy: As stated in the University's [Class Attendance Policy](#), no right or privilege exists that permits a student to be absent from any class meetings, except for these University Approved Absences:

1. Authorized University activities: [University Approved Absence Office \(UAAO\)](#) website provides information and [FAQs for students](#) and [FAQs for faculty](#) related to University Approved Absences
2. Disability/religious observance/pregnancy, as required by law and approved by the [Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office](#) (EOC)
3. Significant health condition and/or personal/family emergency as approved by the [Office of the Dean of Students](#), [Gender Violence Service Coordinators](#), and/or the [Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office](#) (EOC).

Code of Conduct

All students are expected to adhere to University policy and follow the guidelines of the UNC Code of Conduct. Additional information can be found at <https://studentconduct.unc.edu/>.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use Policy

Instructors should specify the details of AI Use Policies for the particular course, either by indicating that: Use of generative AI tools of any kind is not permitted in this course. Any use of these tools will be considered an instance of academic dishonesty and will be referred to the Honor System.



Syllabus Changes

The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus including project due dates and test dates. These changes will be announced as early as possible.

Acceptable Use Policy

By attending the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, you agree to abide by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill policies related to the acceptable use of IT systems and services. The Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) sets the expectation that you will use the University's technology resources responsibly, consistent with the University's mission. In the context of a class, it's quite likely you will participate in online activities that could include personal information about you or your peers, and the AUP addresses your obligations to protect the privacy of class participants. In addition, the AUP addresses matters of others' intellectual property, including copyright. These are only a couple of typical examples, so you should consult the full [Information Technology Acceptable Use Policy](#), which covers topics related to using digital resources, such as privacy, confidentiality and intellectual property. Additionally, consult the [Safe Computing at UNC](#) website for information about data security policies, updates, and tips on keeping your identity, information, and devices safe.

Data Security & Privacy

UNC-Chapel Hill is committed to fulfilling its responsibilities of transparency as a state-sponsored institution of higher learning, protecting certain types of information, and using information Carolina collects only for appropriate purposes. Consult the [UNC-Chapel Hill Privacy Statement](#) for additional information.

Grade Appeal Process

If you have any concerns with grading and/or feel you have been awarded an incorrect grade, please discuss it with me as soon as possible. If we cannot resolve the issue, you may talk to our director of undergraduate studies or department chair.

Services & Student Support Policies

Equal Opportunity and Compliance - Accommodations

[Equal Opportunity and Compliance Accommodations Team](#) ([Accommodations - UNC Equal Opportunity and Compliance](#)) receives requests for accommodations for disability, pregnancy and related conditions, and sincerely held religious beliefs and practices through the University's Policy on Accommodations. EOC Accommodations team determines eligibility and reasonable accommodations consistent with state and federal laws.

Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS)

UNC-Chapel Hill is strongly committed to addressing the mental health needs of a diverse student body. The [Heels Care Network](#) website is a place to access the many mental health resources at Carolina. CAPS is the primary mental health provider for students, offering timely access to consultation and connection to clinically appropriate services. Go to the [CAPS website](#) or visit their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health building for an initial evaluation to learn more. Students can also call CAPS 24/7 at 919-966-3658 for immediate assistance.

Title IX Resources

Any student who is impacted by discrimination, harassment, interpersonal (relationship) violence, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, or stalking is encouraged to seek resources on campus or in the community. Reports can be made [online to the EOC](#) or by contacting the [University's Title IX Coordinator](#), Elizabeth Hall, or the [Report and Response Coordinators](#) in the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office. Please note that I am designated as a Responsible Employee, which means I must report to the EOC any information I receive about the forms of misconduct listed in this paragraph. If you'd like to speak with a confidential resource, those include Counseling and Psychological Services and the [Gender Violence Services Coordinators](#). Additional resources are available at [safe.unc.edu](#).

Policy on Non-Discrimination

The University is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and to ensuring that educational and employment decisions are based on individuals' abilities and qualifications. Consistent with this principle and applicable laws, the University's [Policy Statement on Non-Discrimination](#) offers access to its educational programs and activities as well as employment terms and conditions without respect to race,



color, gender, national origin, age, religion, genetic information, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Such a policy ensures that only relevant factors are considered, and that equitable and consistent standards of conduct and performance are applied.

If you are experiencing harassment or discrimination, you can seek assistance and file a report through the Report and Response Coordinators (email reportandresponse@unc.edu or see additional contact info at safe.unc.edu) or the [Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office](#). Please note that I am designated as a Responsible Employee, which means that I must report to the EOC any information I receive about harassment or discrimination. If you'd like to speak with a confidential resource, those include Counseling and Psychological Services and the University's Ombuds Office.

Diversity Statement

I value the perspectives of individuals from all backgrounds reflecting the diversity of our students. I broadly define diversity to include race, gender identity, national origin, ethnicity, religion, social class, age, sexual orientation, political background, and physical and learning ability. I strive to make this classroom an inclusive space for all students. Please let me know if there is anything I can do to improve. I appreciate any suggestions.

Undergraduate Testing Center

The College of Arts and Sciences provides a secure, proctored environment in which exams can be taken. The [Undergraduate Testing Center](#) works with instructors to proctor exams for their undergraduate students who are not registered with ARS and who do not need testing accommodations as provided by ARS. In other words, the Center provides a proctored testing environment for students who are unable to take an exam at the normally scheduled time (with pre-arrangement by your instructor).

Learning Center

Want to get the most out of this course or others this semester? Visit UNC's [Learning Center](#) to make an appointment or register for an event. Their free, popular programs will help you optimize your academic performance. Try academic coaching, peer tutoring, STEM support, ADHD/LD services, workshops and study camps, or review tips and tools available on the website.

Writing Center

For free feedback on any course writing projects, check out UNC's [Writing Center](#). Writing Center coaches can assist with any writing project, including multimedia projects and application essays, at any stage of the writing process. You don't even need a draft to come visit. To schedule a 45-minute appointment, review quick tips, or request written feedback online, visit the [Writing Center's website](#).