

PHIL 5341 – GREAT FIGURES: PLATO AND MENGZI – FALL 2024

INSTRUCTOR	Howard Curzer	HOURS	TR 2:00-3:30
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REQUIRED TEXTS				
Author	Title	Translator	Publisher	ISBN
Plato	<i>Meno</i>	Grube	Hackett	9780915144242
Plato	<i>Protagoras</i>	Lombardo and Bell	Hackett	9780872200944
Plato	<i>Laches and Charmides</i>	Sprague	Hackett	9780872201347
Mengzi	<i>Mengzi</i>	Van Norden	Hackett	9780872209138
Sophocles	<i>Sophocles I</i>	Grene	Chicago	9780226311517
RECOMMENDED TEXTS				
Confucius	<i>Analects</i>	Slingerland	Hackett	9780872206359

COURSE DESCRIPTION

At about the time when Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle were founding Western philosophy in ancient Greece, Confucius, Mengzi, and Laozi were founding Eastern philosophy in ancient China. The two philosophic traditions feature surprising similarities, but there are interesting differences as well. We will try to grasp some of the starting points of each tradition through a comparison and contrast of the moral theories of Plato and Mengzi.

These two figures have lots in common. Plato and Mengzi were the first system-builders in their respective traditions. They both wrote dialogues rather than essays. They were both concerned with the nature of virtue and the methods of virtue-acquisition. On the other hand, they grounded their systems in different ways, wrote dialogues in different styles, offered different lists and descriptions of virtues, and offered different methods of virtue-acquisition.

REQUIREMENTS

- Enormous amounts of delightful, but difficult **reading** will be assigned each week. Try to get the reading for each week done before the week begins. Advice: Read everything twice. Get the big picture first and the details on the second reading.
- Class **attendance** is required. After the first 5 absences, students will be penalized 3.33% of their final grade for each absence. This is 1/3 of a letter grade (e.g. the difference between a B+ and an A-). Officially approved trips and religious holidays are the only excused absences. All absences for other reasons after the first 5 will be penalized. Students with long-term problems should discuss exceptions with me. Advice: Do not use up your absences casually; save them for emergencies.
- Class **participation** is required. Each student has a responsibility to contribute to the learning project. Advice: When I write you a letter of recommendation, do you want me to state that you typically have nothing useful to say in class? Impress me; come to every class armed with interesting comments and questions.

- Each student will submit **two 1-page homework assignments** designed to improve reading and writing skills. Each of these homework assignments will be worth 10% of the final grade. These assignments will be easy, and graded on a pass/fail basis. All students who complete the assignments will receive full credit. Late submissions will be accepted without penalty for one week.
- Each student will submit **two 10–15-page papers**. Each of these papers will be worth 40% of the final grade. Late submissions will be accepted. After the first 5 late days throughout the semester (not 5 days per paper), papers will be penalized 1/3 letter grade for every day late (including weekend days). Advice: Your first thoughts are unlikely to be your best thoughts; start early and write at least two drafts. Don't be late.

HELP

- If you must **leave during class**, please tell me before the class begins and sit near the door. Attendance will sometimes be taken in the middle of class.
- If you were **unable to attend class**, please do not ask me what we covered in class. Borrow another student's notes, instead.
- Many students feel extremely overwhelmed, depressed, anxious, enraged, and/or confused at some points in their college career. There is no shame in seeking professional help. Free **psychological support** is available from the Student Counseling Center:
<http://www.depts.ttu.edu/sec/>.
- Accurate, sophisticated **information** about philosophical topics is available from the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*: <http://plato.stanford.edu/>. Avoid CliffsNotes, Monarch Notes, Spark Notes, and so on. These are filled with inaccuracies.
- My class is open to **guests**. In particular, since childcare is sometimes an issue, **children** (including babies) are welcome. Please don't overdo it, and try to minimize disruption of the class.
- Texas Tech policies concerning academic honesty, special accommodations for students with disabilities, student absences for observance of religious holy days, and COVID-19: <https://www.depts.ttu.edu/tlpdc/RequiredSyllabusStatements.php>
- Texas Tech policies concerning discrimination, harassment, sexual violence, civility, plagiarism, LGBTQIA, and food insecurity:
<https://www.depts.ttu.edu/tlpdc/RecommendedSyllabusStatements.php>

WEEKLY READING

Week	Dates	Author	Reading / Assignments
0	8/22		No reading
1	8/27, 8/29	Plato Nehamas	<i>Meno</i> “Meno’s Paradox & Socrates as a Teacher”
2	9/3, 9/5	Plato Weiss	<i>Meno</i> “The Road to Larisa”
3	9/10, 9/12	Mengzi Ivanhoe	Xuan, <i>Mengzi</i> 1A, 1B, 2B2, 2B9, 4B3, 5B9 “Confucian Self Cultivation and Mengzi’s Notion of Extension”
4	9/17, 6/19	Mengzi	Xuan, <i>Mengzi</i> 1A, 1B, 2B2, 2B9, 4B3, 5B HOMEWORK #1
5	9/24, 9/26	Plato Santas	<i>Protagoras</i> “Plato’s Protagoras and Explanations of Weakness”
6	10/1, 10/3	Plato Weiss	<i>Protagoras</i> “Hedonism in the Protagoras and the Sophist’s Guarantee”
7	10/8, 10/10	Mengzi Van Norden	Gaozi, <i>Mengzi</i> 6A <i>Virtue Ethics and Consequentialism in Early Chinese Philosophy</i> 214-227, 278-301
8	10/15, 10/17	Mengzi	Gaozi, <i>Mengzi</i> 6A PAPER #1
9	10/22, 10/24	Plato Santos	<i>Laches</i> “Socrates at Work on Virtue and Knowledge in Plato’s Laches”
10	10/29, 10/31	Mengzi Ivanhoe	Gongsun Chou, <i>Mengzi</i> 2A “Mengzi’s conception of courage”
11	11/5, 11/7	Mengzi Shun	<i>Mengzi</i> 3A, 1B13-15, 3B, 4A, 4B “Mencius’ Criticism of Mohism: An Analysis of Meng Tzu 3A5”
12	11/12, 11/14	Mengzi McRae	<i>Mengzi</i> 3A, 1B13-15, 3B, 4A, 4B “The Cultivation of Moral Feelings and Mengzi’s Method of Extension”
13	11/19, 11/21	Sophocles	<i>Antigone</i> HOMEWORK #2
14	11/26, 12/3	Mengzi	Wan Zhang, <i>Mengzi</i> 5A, 5B
15			PAPER #2

