Spring 2025
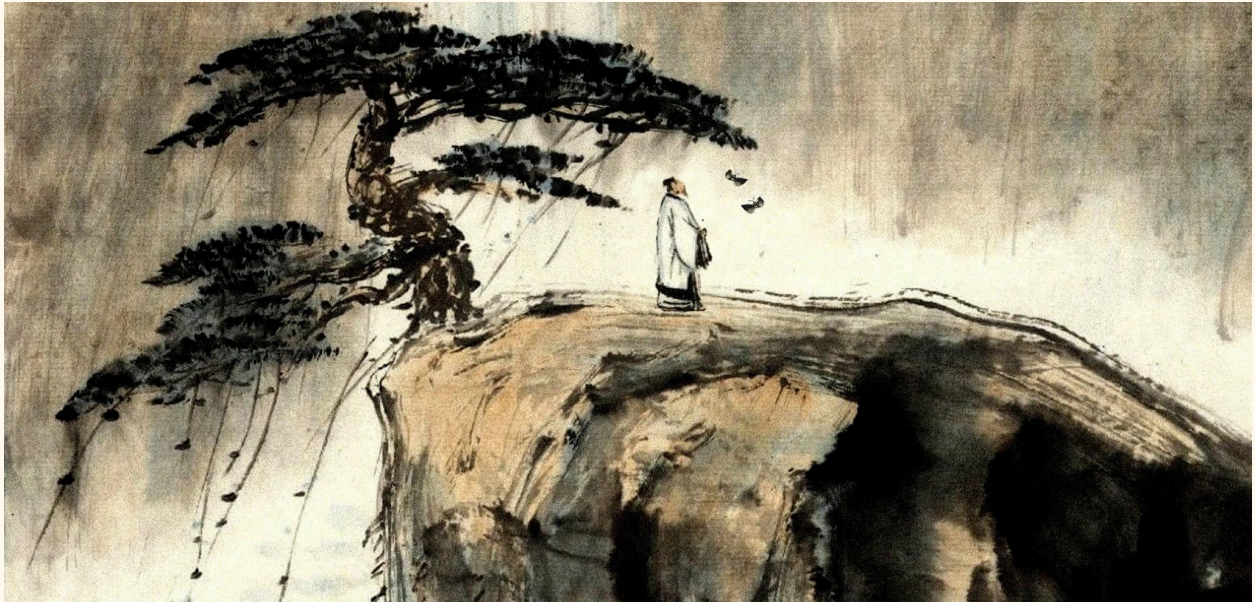MWF 2pm
Bond Hall 217

Prof. Neal Tognazzini
Office: Bond Hall 306b | T 10-11, W 3-4
Email: tognazn@wwu.edu

PHIL 363
Classical Chinese Philosophy

—

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Whereas philosophy in the European tradition begins with Socrates (470-399 BCE), philosophy in the Chinese tradition begins with Kongzi 孔子 (551-479 BCE). Kongzi, also known as Confucius, marks the beginning of the so-called "Classical Period" of Chinese Philosophy, which was a time of intense political conflict among various independent Chinese states, coming to a close in 221 BCE when China was first unified under the Qin dynasty (from which China may get its name). The philosophers we will study this quarter are all, in one way or another, reacting to the political and social realities of their time, and each is searching for, and offering competing interpretations of, the *Dao* 道 (the right way to live and to organize a society).

In addition to Kongzi, we'll also read works attributed to five other philosophers from this time period: Mozi 墨子, Laozi 老子, Mengzi 孟子, Zhuangzi 莊子, and Xunzi 荀子. These figures represent three different philosophical "schools" or traditions in Classical China, two of which continue in some form to this day: Mohism (Mozi), Confucianism (Kongzi, Mengzi, and Xunzi), and Daoism (Laozi and Zhuangzi). We'll end the course by reading a book that dives deeper into the thought of Mengzi in particular.

Required Texts (please bring with you to class)
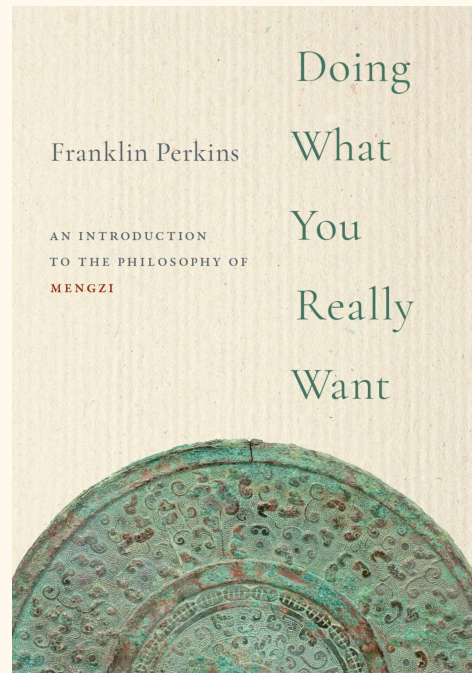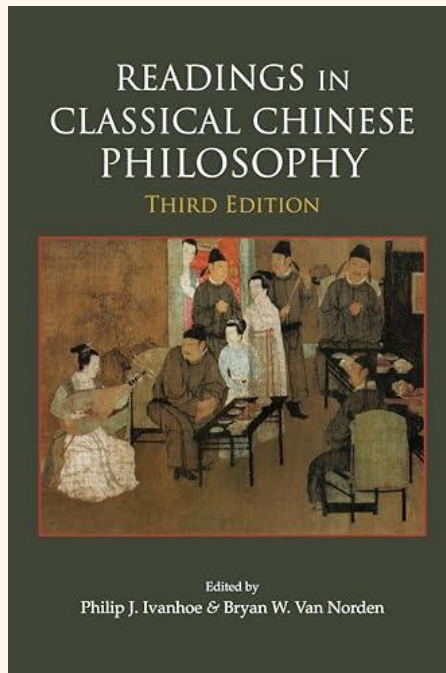
1. *Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy, 3rd edition*, edited by Philip J. Ivanhoe and Bryan W. Van Norden, Hackett Publishing Company, 2023.
   ○ The 2nd edition will work fine, too, but the pagination will be different.

2. *Doing What You Really Want*, by Franklin Perkins, Oxford University Press, 2021.
   ○ The [ebook version of this text](#) is available for free through the Western library website.

3. Other material to be made available on Canvas.

Optional Text

● *Introduction to Classical Chinese Philosophy*, by Bryan W. Van Norden, Hackett Publishing Company, 2011.
   ○ This book contains historical context and some philosophical commentary on the primary source readings we'll be working through together.
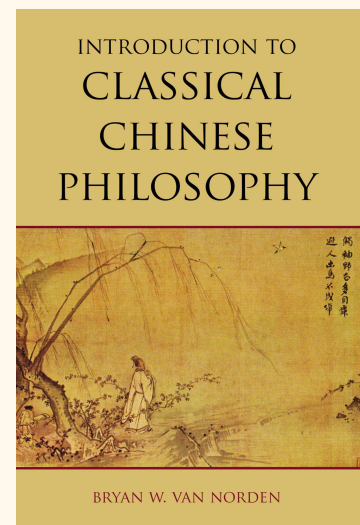
Labor-Based Grading

This course uses a **labor-based grading** system, which means that your course grade depends on the *amount of satisfactory work* you complete, rather than being based on a weighted total of *traditional letter grades* given to each assignment. This means that each of your assignments will be graded as "satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory", and your final letter grade for the course will be determined by how many (and which types of) assignments you submit that receive a "satisfactory" grade.

This system allows you to decide how much (and what kind of) work you want to commit to over the course of the quarter. Within some limits to be outlined below, you can earn a higher grade by putting in more labor, or you can opt for a lower grade in exchange for less labor. But in general, getting the grade that satisfies your goals will simply depend on putting in the effort and hours.

Labor-Based Grading Details

At the beginning of the quarter, every student is assigned a **"default grade"** of B- (B minus). This is your default grade in a very precise sense: *if you receive a satisfactory grade on the default assignments and do not satisfactorily complete any extra labor (and if you don't do anything else to lower your default grade), you will receive a B- in the course.*

To earn a higher grade, you need to complete some combination of extra assignments (outlined below). Whatever combination of extra assignments you choose, you cannot get a bigger boost than 1 ⅓ letter grades. (A grade of B is ⅓ of a letter grade higher than a B-; a grade of B+ is ⅔ of a letter grade higher than B-, and so on.) This means that if your goal is to receive an A, you must:
1. Maintain a default grade of B-
2. Satisfactorily complete the default assignments, and
3. Satisfactorily complete some combination of extra assignments that total 1 ⅓ letter grades.

However, **it is possible for your default grade to drop** below a B-, through some combination of unexcused absences, late assignments, and missed assignments. The following table indicates the number of each of those things that you can have in order for your default grade to be the one listed in that row.

Default Grade	# of Unexcused Absences	# of Late Assignments	# of Missed Assignments
B-	2	2	1
C	3	3	2
D	4	4	3
F	5	5	4

- **Unexcused Absence** = missing more than five minutes of a class meeting for an anticipated/planned/non-urgent reason
- **Late Assignment** = an assignment submitted after the due date but within the next 24 hours
- **Missed Assignment** = an assignment submitted more than 24 hours after the due date.

Some Examples
- If you have three late assignments, your default grade drops to a C. You can still get as high as a B+, however, if you complete some appropriate combination of extra assignments.
- If you have four late assignments, your default grade drops to a D. You can still get as high as a C+, however, if you complete some appropriate combination of extra assignments.
- If you have five unexcused absences, your default grade drops to an F. This means that in order to pass the class, you must complete some extra assignments. Even here, though, your highest possible grade is a C-.

Two Important Notes
1. Your default grade drops once you exceed the number listed in any one of the columns, even if your number in the other columns is lower than the maximum. So, for example, even if you have zero unexcused absences, your default grade immediately drops to a C once you have three late assignments.
2. There are two scenarios in which your default grade will drop to an **unrecoverable F**, regardless of extra labor:
   a. You reach 7 or more unexcused absences
   b. You fail to submit any one of the default assignments (i.e., all default assignments must be submitted in order to pass the class).

Labor Required to Receive the Default Grade

Attendance
You are expected to prepare for, attend, and be mentally present in every class session. As outlined above, however, you are allowed two unexcused absences without any penalty.

Weeklies
Throughout the quarter you will maintain a Google Doc containing your ongoing reflections on the reading that we are doing. By the end of the day each Wednesday, you'll add another page (~300 words) to the document based on your engagement with the texts we have been reading that week. These weeklies can be like informal journal entries, but they should contain some substantive engagement with the course texts. To submit them, you'll first assign me the role of "Editor", and then you'll copy and paste a link into Canvas. (You can submit a new Google Doc each week if you want, or you can build a single document and share the same link each week. If you have questions about how to use Google Docs, just let me know. All WWU email addresses can be used with Google Workspace.)

Each weekly will be graded on a 2-point scale, where a satisfactory grade is 1 or 2 points. If you score 0 points on a submitted weekly, you will be given one opportunity to resubmit it within 48 hours, before the 0 becomes permanent. Two or more permanent 0s on submitted weeklies will drop your default grade one tier.

Checkpoint Exam
Once we are done reading the primary texts, on Monday May 19th we will have an in-class blue book exam, where I'll ask you to write short answers to three questions (chosen from a list you will receive in advance). Each answer will be graded on a 2-point scale. A satisfactory grade on the exam as a whole is 3 or more points. If you score fewer than 3 points, your default grade will drop one tier.

Perkins Reading Quiz
Once we are done reading the Perkins book, you will take an online reading quiz that will be due at the end of our scheduled final exam time slot at 5:30pm on Thursday June 12th. It will consist of multiple choice and T/F questions about the content of the Perkins book, and it is both open-book and open-note. A satisfactory grade on the quiz is 60% or higher. If you score lower than 60%, your default grade will drop one tier.

Opportunities for Extra Labor

There are four categories of extra labor, depending on how much of a boost they will give to your grade. These assignments can be turned in at any point in the quarter *except during finals week*. All extra labor must be completed and submitted by the Friday of the last week of classes. (One exception: if you choose to write the expository essay or the research paper, you may have until the end of our final exam time slot to submit those.)

⅓ OF A LETTER GRADE BOOST

Attendance/Punctuality
Ending the quarter with zero unexcused absences, and zero late or missed assignments.

Longer Weekly
At most once during the quarter, you can choose to write a longer, more in-depth weekly (~600 words), where you demonstrate even more serious engagement with the course texts than usual. (This can take the place of your usual weekly that week.) Be sure to compose and submit using Google Docs, as with our regular weeklies.

Full Effort on Exam or Quiz
You can receive a boost for either of the following, but not for both: (a) receiving a full 6 points on the checkpoint exam, or (b) scoring 90% or higher on the Perkins reading quiz.

⅔ OF A LETTER GRADE BOOST

Han Feizi
Chapter 10 of our primary course text contains the writings of one philosopher – Han Feizi – who we will not read together. For this assignment, you'll read that chapter and then write a reading reflection that is the equivalent of a "longer weekly" (see above) about it. Be sure to compose and submit using Google Docs, as with our weeklies.

Lit Report
For this assignment, you'll locate a contemporary philosophical article (http://philpapers.org is a good resource) that brings the ideas of a Classical Chinese Philosopher into conversation with some philosophical topic of contemporary concern. You'll read the article and then write a ~500-word synopsis of it, as if to someone who hasn't read it. Be sure to compose and submit using Google Docs, as with our weeklies.

FULL LETTER GRADE BOOST

Expository Essay

For this assignment, you will write a 1500-word expository essay on one of the classical Chinese philosophers discussed in class, where you explain, with textual evidence, the distinctive viewpoint of that philosopher, as if to someone who has not taken our class. Be sure to compose and submit using Google Docs, as with our weeklies.

1 ⅓ LETTER GRADE BOOST

Research Paper

If you are a philosophy major who is interested in an even deeper dive into Classical Chinese Philosophy, you can choose to write a full-blown research paper (of at least 2000 words) on a topic of your choosing, *so long as it is approved by me first*.

CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE

I'm open to considering extra assignments that you come up with yourself, so feel free to pitch me an idea. Your pitch needs to be in an email to me, and you need to be specific about how much labor it will require, what the output will be, and how much of a letter grade boost you think it should earn you. You will only get credit for this assignment if I explicitly approve it first.

IMPORTANT NOTE on writing: You are prohibited from using ChatGPT or any AI-powered software to help you with any of the above writing assignments. As a way of disincentivizing the use of AI, all assignments that involve the submission of at-home writing must be both *composed* and *submitted* using Google Docs. Do not compose in a different program and then copy and paste your text into Google Docs: rather, *you must compose from the beginning* using Google Docs. A complete submission involves "sharing" the document with me and giving me the role of "Editor". You'll also post the link to your document in the assignment submission area on Canvas. Let me know if you have any questions about how to accomplish this (or watch this brief YouTube video).

Q&A

How can I keep track of my grade?

I'll keep track of attendance, late assignments, missed assignments, and grades on our course Canvas page: http://canvas.wwu.edu. You'll also use Canvas to submit many of your assignments, so be sure you are checking it frequently.

Do you accept late work?

In the case of weeklies, yes. See the table on p. 4 above for more information. The checkpoint exam and the Perkins reading quiz, however, must be submitted on the days and times indicated above.

What should I do if I miss class?

As noted above, attendance is part of your grade for this course. If you do miss class for some reason, however, you should contact a classmate to ask for notes so that you don't fall behind. Once you have reviewed notes from a classmate, you are welcome to come visit me in my office to ask any residual questions.

What's the best way to contact you?

Email is the best way to contact me, either directly to tognazn@wwu.edu or through the Canvas interface. You are welcome to email me at any time, but in general I only reply to email on weekdays between 8am and 5pm. Please sign your name to your emails so I don't have to decipher who you are.

Am I allowed to use ChatGPT or any other AI-powered software?

No, you are not allowed to use AI to complete any portion of any of your assignments for this course. Using AI-powered software to help you complete your assignments counts as *cheating*, and submitting AI-generated answers as your own counts as *plagiarism*. Both are serious violations of academic integrity, and will earn you a zero in the course, in addition to an official report to the university. For more details about academic honesty at Western, see https://academichonesty.wwu.edu/. Although instructors should make every effort to ensure that students are aware of the policies for academic dishonesty, it is the responsibility of students to read, understand, and uphold the standards of academic honesty.

If I end up with an 89.7% in the course, will you round that to an A-?

No, I don't round final grades, though I do build the idea of rounding into some parts of my grading scheme. Here is the grading scheme that I use:

92.5-100	A	72.5-77.4	C
90-92.4	A-	70-72.4	C-
87.5-89.9	B+	67.5-69.9	D+
82.5-87.4	B	62.5-67.4	D
80-82.4	B-	60-62.4	D-
77.5-79.9	C+	0-59.9	F

What should I do if I need classroom accommodations or other non-academic support during the quarter?

Classroom accommodation related to documented disabilities should be established within the first week of class and arranged through the Disability Access Center.

Western also encourages students to seek **assistance and support** at the onset of an illness, difficulty, or crisis.
- For medical support, contact the Health Center.
- For emotional or psychological support, contact the Counseling Center.
- In the case of a safety concern, please contact the University Police.
- In the case of a family or personal crisis, please contact the Dean of Students.
- To seek confidential support related to sexual violence, please contact Survivor Advocacy Services.
- To report sexual violence, please contact University Police, Bellingham Police, and/ or Western's Civil Rights and Title IX Compliance Office. Note that faculty are responsible employees who are required to report sex discrimination, including sexual violence that they learn about to the Title IX Coordinator.

You can find other syllabus policies about integrity, accommodation, student services, and more at this site. Note that this syllabus may be revised as needed to ensure the educational quality and fairness of the course. Any changes will be announced in class.

Learning Outcomes

The philosophy department expects its courses to help students develop and hone a wide range of skills, including the abilities to think critically, read actively, and write analytically. This course also helps to satisfy the department expectation that students will be able to demonstrate knowledge in the core areas of philosophy, including history of philosophy. The specific learning outcomes for this course are:

1. Present and explain the views and arguments discussed in our course texts and class meetings
2. Correctly attribute the views and arguments to the right philosophers
3. Critically evaluate the views and arguments presented in our course texts and class meetings
4. Demonstrate an understanding of the relevance of the course topics to other topics in philosophy
5. Demonstrate and improve critical thinking, active reading, and analytical writing skills

General University Requirements

This course is designated as an **ACGM GUR**, which means it involves an exploration of diverse perspectives. This course, in particular, is designed to help students develop an understanding of the history and culture of societies beyond the Western tradition. GUR courses also provide students with foundational knowledge and opportunities to develop, integrate, and extend their core capacities in a range of literacies. This course will emphasize communication, interpretation, and critical reflection.
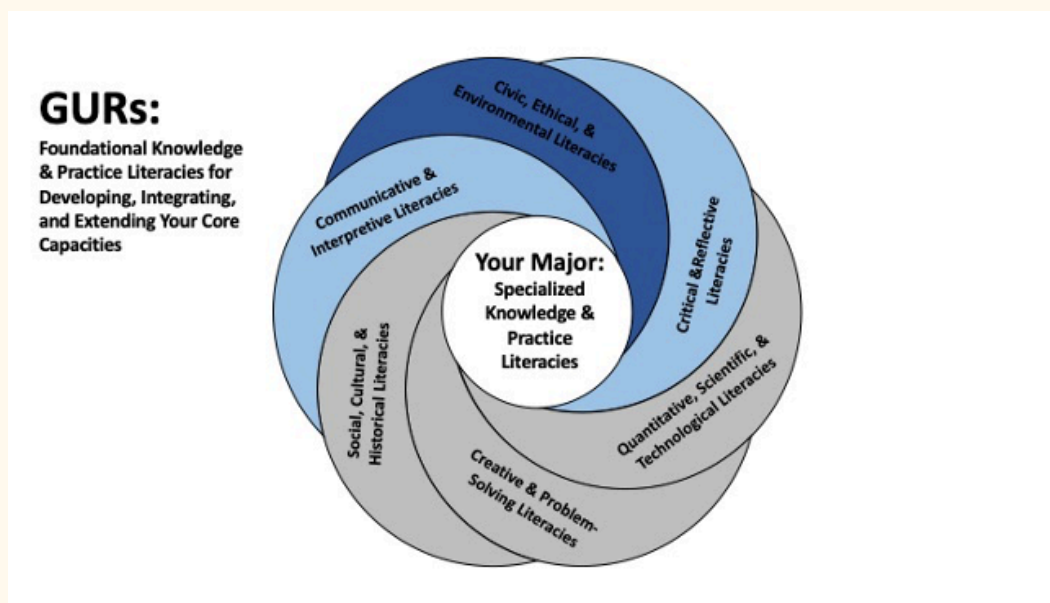
COURSE SCHEDULE (subject to change)

4.2	Course introduction
4.4	Historical Background
4.7	Kongzi *(RCCP*, ch. 1)
4.9	Kongzi - **Weekly 1 Due**
4.11	Kongzi
4.14	Mozi *(RCCP*, ch. 2)
4.16	*No Class* - **Weekly 2 Due**
4.18	*No Class, but video*
4.21	Laozi *(RCCP*, ch. 6)
4.23	Laozi - **Weekly 3 Due**
4.25	Laozi
4.28	Mengzi *(RCCP*, ch. 4)
4.30	Mengzi - **Weekly 4 Due**
5.2	Mengzi

5.5	Zhuangzi *(RCCP*, ch. 8)
5.7	Zhuangzi - **Weekly 5 Due**
5.9	Zhuangzi
5.12	*No Class, but video (RCCP*, ch. 9)
5.14	Xunzi - **Weekly 6 Due**
5.16	Xunzi
5.19	Checkpoint Exam in class
5.21	Perkins, ch. 1 - **No Weekly Due**
5.23	Perkins, ch. 2
5.26	*No Class – Memorial Day*
5.28	Perkins, ch. 3 - **Weekly 7 Due**
5.30	Perkins, ch. 4
6.2	Perkins, chs. 5-6
6.4	Perkins, ch. 7 - **Weekly 8 Due**
6.6	Perkins, ch. 8 - **Extra Labor Due**

**Perkins Reading Quiz/
Expository Essay (if applicable)/
Research Paper (if applicable)
Due   R 6.12 @ 5:30pm**