

Readings in Neo-Daoism

YHU 3368/Philosophy
Semester 1, AY 2022-23
Tuesdays and Fridays, 14:30-16:00

Instructor: Christine Abigail L. Tan

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Office hours: Tuesdays and Fridays (Please make an appointment in advance via:

<https://calendly.com/christine-tan-office-hours/consultation>)

Pre-requisite:

YCC1113 Philosophy and Political Thought 1; or with the permission of the instructor.

Course Rationale:

This course is an overview of Neo-Daoist philosophy (*Xuanxue* 玄学), which marked a renewed interest in Daoism during Wei and Jin dynasties. Particular attention will be paid to dominant concepts at the time such as individualism, the nature of being and nonbeing, sageliness (both moral and social), as well as varying syntheses of Confucian and Daoist ideas. The course takes on a dominantly philosophical overview, but also touches on the religious aspects which cannot be removed from the character of the movement. It is an exploration of the new concepts and frameworks articulated by these thinkers their innovative use of metaphysics, epistemology, and aesthetics to address the social issues of the time. Furthermore, we will also look at the emerging commentarial tradition, which was integral to the development of Chinese philosophy after the pre-Qin period. By the end of the course, students are expected to understand the unique contributions of *Xuanxue* scholars in Chinese philosophical discourse, as well as reflect on the contemporary implications of these innovative yet overlooked philosophical frameworks.

Assessments:

Unit essays (~700 words each; 40% of your final grade)

These essays are meant to be “critical analysis” essays. You are expected to summarise and critically analyse the arguments and contributions made by your chosen author or philosopher from units 2-4, making up a total of 3 essays.

See **due dates below**

Collaborative notes/annotations (15% of your final grade)

You will mostly be given handouts for each week, which will serve as your skeletal notes. These handouts will be provided **except** for weeks 7, 8, 9, 12, and 13. For these weeks, you will have to collaboratively create class notes together with your classmates. These notes should be modelled after the structure of your regular handouts. Half of your grade will come from your individual contribution, and the other half will be the class' grade as a whole. (The platform we will use for this will be linked via Canvas)

This is **due 24 hours before the first seminar of each assigned week (14:30 on Mondays)**

Final Paper (2500 words; 30% of your final grade)

Your final essay is your term paper, which is the culmination of what you have learned during the course. This is a formal research paper, so you are expected to critically engage with ideas discussed during the course, as well as evaluate them, in order to make your own thesis and defend it with textual and logical support. This is **due Friday, 2 December**

Seminar participation (15% of your final grade)

As this is a small seminar course, your full participation is expected. However, do ensure that your engagements are informed, prepared, and respectful. Do also note that being able to listen to, as well as meaningfully respond to, what others are saying is an important part of participating in a conversation.

Required Books:

- Chai, David, ed. 2020. *Dao Companion to Xuanxue (Neo-Daoism)*. 1st ed. Cham, Switzerland: Springer Nature. [DCX]
- Chan, Alan K. L., and Yuet-Keung Lo, eds. 2011. *Philosophy and Religion in Early Medieval China*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press. [PRMC]
- Ziporyn, Brook. 2003. *The Penumbra Unbound: The Neo-Taoist Philosophy of Guo Xiang*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press. [PU]

(other readings are e-Reserve materials which can be found on our Canvas page)

Readings and Schedule:

Week 1, starting 9 August

T: no classes: National Day

Unit 1: What is Neo-Daoism (Wei-Jin Xuanxue)?

F: PRMC 1-7

Week 2, starting 16 August

T: Yü, Ying-shih. "Individualism and the Neo-Daoist Movement in Wei-Jin China". *Chinese History and Culture: Sixth Century B.C.E. to Seventeenth Century*, edited by Michael S. Duke, New York Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press, 2016, pp. 134-165. <https://doi.org/10.7312/yu--17858-011>

F: Balazs, Etienne, "Nihilistic Revolt or Mystical Escapism: Currents of Thought in China during the Third Century A.D.," in Etienne Balazs, *Chinese Civilization and Bureaucracy*, H. M. Wright, trans., Arthur Wright, ed. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1964, pp. 226–254.

Week 3, starting 23 August:

T-F: Rošker, J.S. "The Metaphysical Style and Structural Coherence of Names in Xuanxue" in DCX 33-54

Optional: D'Ambrosio, P. J. (2016) Wei-Jin Period Xuanxue 'Neo-Daoism': Re-working the Relationship Between Confucian and Daoist Themes. *Philosophy Compass*, 11: 621– 631. <https://doi.org/10.1111/phc3.12344>

Unit 2: Dao and Nothingness in the Early Wei dynasty

Week 4, starting 30 August: He Yan

T-F: Chan, Alan K.L., “Sage Nature and the Logic of Namelessness: Reconstructing He Yan’s Explication of Dao,” in PRMC pp. 23–52; Excerpts from *Wuming lun* (*Critical Discussion on the Nameless*) and *Dao lun* (*Critical Discussion on Dao*)

Optional: D’Ambrosio, P. “He Yan’s ‘Essay on Dao’ and ‘Essay on the Nameless.’” In DCX 167-183

Week 5, starting 6 September: Wang Bi (on Laozi)

T-F: Chua, Jude S.M., “Tracing the Dao: Wang Bi’s Theory of Names,” in PRMC 53–70; Excerpts from Lynn, R. J. (trans.) ~~*The Classic of The Way And Virtue: A New Translation of The Tao-Te Ching of Laozi As Interpreted by Wang Bi*~~. New York, NY: ~~Columbia University Press, 1999.~~

Optional: Wagner, Rudolph. *Language, Ontology, and Political Philosophy in China: Wang Bi’s Scholarly Exploration of the Dark (Xuanxue)*. Suny Series in Chinese Philosophy and Culture. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003. 83-147

Week 6, starting 13 September: Wang Bi (on Yijing)

T: Yung-T’ung, T’ang, and Walter Liebenthal. “Wang Pi’s New Interpretation of The I Ching and Lun-yu.” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 10, no. 2 (September 1947): 124-161; supplementary reading written by instructor (available on Canvas)

F: “General Remarks on the Changes of the Zhou [*Zhouyi Lueli*], by Wang Bi” in Lynn, R. J. (trans.) *The Classic of Changes: A New Translation of the I Ching as Interpreted by Wang Bi*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.

Second unit essay due Monday 26 September, 11:59p.m.

RECESS WEEK: Saturday, 18 September – Sunday, 26 September

Unit 3: Spontaneity and Self-cultivation in the Wei Dynasty

Week 7, starting 27 September: Ji Kang (collaborative notes)

T-F: Hsi K’ang and Henricks, R. G., “Music Has in It Neither Grief Nor Joy,” in *Philosophy and Argumentation in Third-century China: The essays of hsi k’ang*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983. Pp. 71-106

Optional: Middendorf, Ulrike. “The Sage without Emotion: Music, Mind, and Politics in Xi Kang” in PRMC 135-172; Rošker, Jana S. “Ji Kang’s Essay ‘Music Has In It Neither Grief Nor Joy’ (聲無哀樂論) And The Structure (理) Of Perception.” *Philosophy East and West* 64, no. 1 (2014): 109–22.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/43285882>.

Week 8, starting 4 October: Ruan Ji (collaborative notes)

T-F: Reed Andrew Criddle. (2007). Rectifying Lasciviousness through Mystical Learning: An Exposition and Translation of Ruan Ji’s “Essay on Music.” *Asian Music*, 38(2), 44–70. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4497055>; Holzman, D. “Society and Solitude,” in *Poetry and Politics: The Life and Works of Juan Chi, A.D. 210–263*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977. pp. 110-136.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511759918.010>

Optional:

Holzman, D. "Confucian essays and a strange understanding of Chuang-tzu." In *Poetry and Politics: The Life and Works of Juan Chi, A.D. 210–263*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977. pp. 88-109
<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511759918.009>;
Chai, D. (2020). Ruan Ji's "On Comprehending the Zhuangzi," in DCX 209-228

Third unit essay due Monday 10 October, 11:59p.m.

Unit 4: Debates on Being and Necessity in the Jin Dynasty

Week 9, starting 11 October: Pei Wei (collaborative notes)

T-F: Chan, A.K.L. "Re-envisioning the Profound Order of Dao: Pei Wei's 'Critical Discussion on the Pride of Place of Being'" in. DCX 325-241; Excerpts from *Chong You Lun* 崇有論

Week 10, starting 18 October: Guo Xiang

T: Ziporyn, Brook. 2003. PU 65-84; 99-124

Optional: Tan, Christine Abigail (2021) "Guo Xiang's Ontology of *Zide*," *Monumenta Serica*, 69:1, 1-17, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02549948.2021.1910141>

F: no classes: wellbeing day

Week 11, starting 25 October: Guo Xiang

T-F: Tan, Christine Abigail. (forthcoming/draft) *Freedom's Frailty: Self-Realization in the Neo-Daoist Philosophy of Guo Xiang*. 88-103; 135-162 (copies provided by instructor)

Fourth unit essay due Monday 30 October, 11:59p.m.

Unit 5: Religion and Philosophy in the Jin dynasty

Week 12, starting 1 November: Ge Hong (collaborative notes)

T: Ware, J. R. (Ed.). *Alchemy, Medicine and Religion in the China of A.D. 320: The Nei Pien of Ko Hung*, MIT Press: Cambridge and London, 1966. 53-67 (chapter 3) and 226-243 (chapter 14)

Optional: Pregadio, F. "Seeking Immortality in Ge Hong's *Baopuzi Neipian*," in DCX 427-456

F: Michael, T. "Ge Hong's Evolving Discourse on *You* and *Wu* and its Roots in the *Daodejing*," in DCX 457-478

Week 13, starting 8 November: Zhi Dun (collaborative notes)

T: Zhang, E.Y. "Zhi Dun on Freedom: Synthesizing Daoism and Buddhism." In DCX 501-523

Conclusion

F: Concluding Reflections

Final paper due Friday 2 December, 11:59p.m.

Course Policies:

1. Academic dishonesty is strictly prohibited. Plagiarism and cheating in any form will not be tolerated and will result in an automatic failing grade. Please cite all your sources, whether directly quoted or paraphrased. Do familiarize yourself with Yale-NUS's policies on academic integrity to know more: <http://studentlife.yale-nus.edu.sg/policies/academic-integrity/>
2. As our seminar is small and requires engaged discussion, you are expected to attend and participate in all seminar meetings. Absences will be disruptive and will affect your participation grade on a sliding scale.
3. Please observe the prescribed deadline for the submission of all your requirements. Late submissions are accepted with an Assistant Dean's note; otherwise, it will be docked one step (e.g., A to A-, A- to B+, etc.) per day.

The instructor reserves the right to modify this syllabus at her discretion.