

Daoist Philosophy
YHU 4278/Philosophy
Semester 1, AY 2024-25

Instructor: Christine Abigail L. Tan

E-mail: christine.tan@nus.edu.sg

Office: RC3-02-05A, Cendana College

Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays (Please make an appointment in advance via: <https://calendly.com/christine-tan-office-hours/consultation>)

Course Rationale:

This is a course on the two primary texts of Daoist philosophy, as well as the primary editors and commentators of the texts. We will read both the *Daodejing* and *Zhuangzi* in-depth, as well as look at approaches to these texts in current scholarship. By the end of the course, students are expected to have gained knowledge of the primary issues and concepts in Daoist philosophy.

Assessments:

- **Journal Critique** (~1500 words; **20%** of your final grade each)

Your task for this essay is to evaluate a journal article of your choice (one which we have read) in terms of the effectiveness of its argument, that is, whether or not it is plausible and why. More specific instructions will be posted on Canvas at least two weeks before the due dates.

This is **due on 18 September and 30 October**

- **Final Paper** (4000 words; **40%** 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 1 December, 2023**

- **Seminar participation** (**20%** 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 Readings:

Laozi. 2023. *Daodejing*. Translated by Brook Ziporyn. New York, NY: WW Norton.

Zhuangzi. 2020. *Zhuangzi: The Complete Writings*. Translated by Brook Ziporyn. Cambridge, MA: Hackett Publishing.

Course Structure/Schedule:

Week	Required readings T – F	Assessments due
Prototypes: (Re-)Inventing Philosophy		
1 Mon, 12 Aug – Fri, 16 Aug	Daodejing 1-37	Liu, X. Laozi's Philosophy: Textual and Conceptual Analyses. In: Liu, X. (eds) <i>Dao Companion to Daoist Philosophy</i> . Springer, Dordrecht, 2015. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-90-481-2927-0_4

2 Mon, 19 Aug – Fri, 23 Aug	<i>Daodejing</i> 37-81	Cline, Erin M.. “Two Interpretations of De in the <i>Daodejing</i> .” <i>Journal of Chinese Philosophy</i> 31 (2004): 219-233.	
3 Mon, 26 Aug – Fri, 30 Aug	Yan, Hektor K. T. “A Paradox of Virtue: The <i>Daodejing</i> on Virtue and Moral Philosophy.” <i>Philosophy East and West</i> 59, no. 2 (2009): 173–87. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40213566 .	Agustoni, M.B. The Laozi and Anarchism. <i>Dao</i> 22, 89–116 (2023). https://doi.org/10.1007/s11712-022-09868-2	
4 Mon, 2 Sep – Fri, 6 Sep	Zhuangzi, ch. 1	Tan, C.A.L. “Freedom In”: A Daoist Response to Isaiah Berlin. <i>Dao</i> 22, 255–275 (2023). https://doi.org/10.1007/s11712-023-09881-z	
5 Mon, 9 Sep – Fri, 13 Sep	Zhuangzi, ch. 2	Williams, J.R. The Radiance of Drift and Doubt: Zhuangzi and the Starting Point of Philosophical Discourse. <i>Dao</i> 16, 1–14 (2017). https://doi.org/10.1007/s11712-016-9531-9	
6 Mon, 16 Sep – Fri, 20 Sep	Zhuangzi, ch. 3	Moeller, Hans-Georg. "The King's Slaughterer—or, The Royal Way of Nourishing Life." <i>Philosophy East and West</i> 70, no. 1 (2020): 155-173. https://doi.org/10.1353/pew.2020.0009 .	Journal Critique #1 (18 September)
Sat, 21 Sep – Sun, 29 Sep	Recess Week		
7 Mon, 30 Sep– Fri, 5 Oct	Zhuangzi, ch. 4	Lai, Karyn. “Freedom and Agency in the Zhuangzi: Navigating Life’s Constraints.” <i>British Journal for the History of Philosophy</i> 30, no. 1 (2022): 3–23. doi:10.1080/09608788.2021.1994366.	
8 Mon, 7 Oct – Fri, 11 Oct	Zhuangzi, ch. 5	Møllgaard, Eske J. "Sage-Knowledge and Equality in the <i>Zhuangzi</i> ." <i>Journal of Daoist Studies</i> 7, no. 7 (2014): 147-162. https://doi.org/10.1353/dao.2014.0005 .	
9 Mon, 14 Oct – Fri, 18 Oct	Zhuangzi, ch. 6	Chong, Kim-chong. “The Concept of ‘Zhen’ 真 in yhe ‘Zhuangzi.’” <i>Philosophy East and West</i> 61, no. 2 (2011): 324–46. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23015316 .	
10 Mon, 21 Oct – Fri, 25 Oct	Zhuangzi, ch. 7	Wong, David B. “Zhuangzi and the Obsession with Being Right.” <i>History of Philosophy Quarterly</i> 22, no. 2 (2005): 91–107.	

		http://www.jstor.org/stable/27745016 .	
11 Mon, 28 Oct – Fri, 1 Nov	Wagner, Rudolf G. <i>The Craft of a Chinese Commentator: Wang Bi on the Laozi</i> . Albany, NY: State University of New York, 2000. Pp. 82-106	Hong, H. The Metaphysics of Dao in Wang Bi's Interpretation of Laozi. <i>Dao</i> 18, 219–240 (2019). https://doi.org/10.1007/s11712-019-09657-4	Journal Critique #2 (30 October)
12 Mon, 4 Nov – Fri, 8 Nov	Lynn, Richard John. <i>Zhuangzi: A New Translation of the Sayings of Master Zhuang as Interpreted by Guo Xiang</i> . New York: Columbia University Press, 2022. Pp. 3-66	Ziporyn, Brook. "The Self-So and Its Traces in the Thought of Guo Xiang." <i>Philosophy East and West</i> 43, no. 3 (1993): 511–39. https://doi.org/10.2307/1399580 .	
13 Mon, 11 Nov – Fri, 15 Nov	Conclusion	Consultations	
Final paper due: 1 December			

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. Please notify me in advance if you cannot make it to class. There will be no penalty for **absences**, but keep in mind that this will affect your participation grade. Each class that you do not attend is a class where you miss the opportunity to participate.
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. In some extenuating circumstances however, I may grant extensions even without an AD note if requested in advance, and within a reasonable timeframe.

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