Politics is like an ocean. Day to day events are the waves recorded by journalists. American politics or international relations are like the currents. What captures the ocean flows of politics, as it were? Political philosophy, the study of the deepest aspects of politics such as ontology and human nature.

In this course, we will create a dialogue between the best minds of the West and China. The course begins by explaining how Xi Jinping is increasing China’s influence in the world while invoking the name of Confucius. Then, we will read Plato’s Republic and four of the most important thinkers in ancient China: Confucius, Mencius, Xunzi, and Hanfeizi. We will then move to read four important modern Western philosophers: Machiavelli, Rousseau, Wollstonecraft, and Mill. The course ends by entering a conversation among contemporaries about the relationship between Chinese and Western politics and thought.

Course learning objectives:
By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

- Understand the main authors, books, and arguments in classical Chinese political thought.
- Understand the main authors, books, and arguments in classical and modern Western political thought.
- Stage a conversation between Chinese and Western political thinkers between issues such as justice, law, ethics, and philosophy.
- Connect the history of ideas with contemporary political debates.

Required Texts

Machiavelli, The Prince (Yale) ISBN-10: 0226500438
Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (Yale) ISBN: 9780300176476

Course Requirements
(1) Response papers. Each student will write 6 response papers of 600-900 words each. The paper should

- Have a title indicating a topic and thesis, e.g. “Confucius and the problem of how to encourage filial piety”
- Begin with a quote of a sentence or a few sentences from the assigned reading.
- Explain how the passage sheds light on a current event, how it compares to the argument of another author (can be but doesn’t have to be an author we read this semester), or explores how it fits into the argument of the larger text.
- Give a short presentation about your paper in class to spark discussion.

(2) Midterm. I will distribute six questions a week ahead of the midterm and randomly select two on the day of the exam. Answer both in one hour. You may study in groups, but the exam is closed-book.

(3) Final. Same format as midterm.

(4) Research paper. Each student will write a 3000 word essay comparing and contrasting a European and a Chinese thinker on a topic such as what is the proper role of women in society, whether politicians are bound by the rules of morality, or should society protect freedom of speech. Cite a few academic secondary sources for each thinker. The paper should have a title that indicates your topic and thesis, a 2 paragraph introduction explaining why your research question is politically timely and philosophy interesting, sections with subheadings on each thinker, and a conclusion in which you argue what you think.

(5) Class participation. Students should attend every class having read the material and ready to talk. Buy the books and bring the one with the readings to class.

Grade Distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Response papers</td>
<td>6x5 = 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research paper</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To understand university policies on academic rights and responsibilities, sexual harassment, services for students with disabilities, and other important topics, please see the undergraduate faculty handbook.

Class schedule

Course Schedule

1. August 31 – No class. I’m at the American Political Science Association Conference in Boston.

The Questions of the Course
2. September 4 – China: friend or foe?
   • Articles from the New York Review of Books: Who is Yi?, The Red Emperor, The Chinese World Order, China—The Struggle at the Top, China-The Superpower of Mr. Xi
   • Skim: Xi Jinping, Secure a Decisive Victory in Building a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects and Strive for the Great Success of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, Delivered at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China October 18, 2017
   • Read recent articles about China in The Economist, e.g. Can Xi Jinping make use of the power he has accumulated?

3. September 11 – Chinese philosophy or Chinese thought?
   • Nicholas Tampio, Not all things wise and good are philosophy” Aeon, September 13, 2016.

The Foundation of European Political Philosophy

5. September 14 – Plato, The Republic, Books III-VI

The Foundations of Chinese Political Thought

   • First paper due.

10. October 2 – Mengzi (Mencius)
11. October 5 – Mengzi (Mencius)
12. October 9 – Midterm
13. October 12 – *Xunzi*

14. October 16 – *Xunzi*

15. October 19 – *Han Feizi*

16. October 23 – *Han Feizi*

**Modern European Thought**


21. November 9 – Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, Dedication, Chapters 1-6

22. November 13 – Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, Chapters 7-12


**Contemporary Debates about China and the West**

25. November 27 – Daniel Bell on why Confucius is better than Socrates
   • “A Critique of Critical Thinking”
   • “Reconciling Socialism and Confucianism? Reviving Tradition in China”

26. November 30 – Jian Qing on a religious Confucian constitutional order
   • *A Confucian Constitutional Order*, Introduction, Chapters 1, 2

27. December 4 – Sungmoon Kim on Confucian democracy
   • “Confucian Citizenship? Against Two Greek Models”
   • “Pragmatic Confucian Democracy: Rethinking the Value of Democracy in East Asia”

28. December 7 – Sor Hoon-Tan on Confucian liberal democracy
• “Confucian Democracy as Pragmatic Experiment: Uniting Love of Learning and Love of Antiquity”
• “Why Equality and Which Inequalities? A Modern Confucian Approach to Democracy”

29. Final exam: Thursday, December 20, 1:30pm