Syllabus

World Cultures: Traditions of China and Japan (V55.0506)

Instructor: Prof. Roberts
Office Location: 715 B'way, 3rd floor; Office Hours:
CHECK BOOK PRICES WITH AMAZON.COM. FIRST 5 READINGS ON RESERVE.

Readings, Topics, and Problems


Why has the author chosen a time frame of 15 years?
When does Kieu's pre-incarnation, Dam Tien, leave the narrative?
Do Confucian or Buddhist values prevail in the end?

Assignment: One page paper describing any character and his or her role in the plot.

FIRST EXAM: 40 minutes on the 4th or 5th Day of Class, after a half hour review.


Sayings and dialogues of Confucius and / or his followers (and their followers) from the late 6th century B.C. down (perhaps) to the late 5th century B.C.

Note terms: junzi (superior man, literally ruler's son), ren (benevolence, perfect virtue, humanity), li (ritual, ceremony, etiquette, forms and formalities), yi (righteousness, honor, duty, service, The Code), xiao (filial piety or devotion). The Analects has almost 500 passages divided into 20 short books. Read all. Book 4 consists of direct quotes from Confucius (except 4.15); book 12 concentrates on the art of governing; book 13 defends government service against the recluse hermaphrodites. Sample of noteworthy passages: 1.1, 1.2, 1.10, 1.11, 1.16, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.19, 2.21, 2.23, 3.3, 3.6, 5.5, 5.9, 5.11, 5.15, 6.20, 6.21, 6.26, 7.1, 7.21, 7.22, 7.23, 9.2, 8.8, 9.12, 9.13, 9.16, 9.17, 9.29, 14.23, 24, 25, 36, 37, 41, 5.10, 16.22.

Why does Laozi make the gender issue so prominent?
How does the shengren (sage, wise man) compare with the junzi of the Analects?


A set of 81 philosophical poems on ethics, government, aesthetics, cosmology, and cosmogony attributed to Laozi (Old Master), generally critical of Confucian positions. Portions contemporary with (or slightly later than) the Analects. Terms: wuwei (non-action, action through inaction), wansu (ten thousand things) dao (the Way).

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14th century Japanese Buddhist monk explores the concept of the identity of nirvana and samsara that underlies a religion of observation. Terms: zen, satori.

5. FULL PERIOD EXAM FOLLOWING REVIEW CLASS. EXAM COVERS READINGS 2-4. SUBMIT 2-PAGE ESSAY ON READING #2, #3, OR #4. OR ANSWER TAKE-HOME QUESTIONS.


Comedy, history, and tragedy by the 18th century Japanese playwright. Terms: makoto (sincerity), giri (honor), and shinju (love suicide). Certain modern themes foreshadowed. Read all four plays.


Mid-18th century novel describing elite life before the onslaught of the West.


9. SECOND FULL PERIOD EXAM COVERING READINGS #5, #6, AND #7. SUBMIT TWO-PAGE ESSAY COMPARING ANY TWO CHARACTERS FROM THE LAST 3 READINGS.


Fusion of Russian anti-hero with the prophecy of a samurai at a time when Japan's political reform had not been finalized.
11. Lu Xun's *True Story of Ah Q* translated by Yang Xianyi. 1921.

China's hopes for gaining equality among the nations were raised during WWI but dashed by the post-war actions of the Western Powers and Japan, setting the stage for mass protest in China (1919) and the birth of the Communist Party.

12. FINAL EXAM WILL COVER LAST TWO READINGS.