

## CAS Core Curriculum: Cultures & Contexts: China

### Foundational Texts of Chinese Civilization

Fall 2014

Mon & Wed, 2-3:15

5 Washington Place, Room 101

Instructor: Xudong Zhang

19 University Place, Room 510

[xz3@nyu.edu](mailto:xz3@nyu.edu)

Office Hours: Tu & Fri 2-3, or by appointment

*Cultures and Contexts: China* is designed to enhance students' understanding of main trends of literary, historiographical, and philosophical development that have shaped Chinese civilization and provided its basic self-understandings for the past two and a half millennia. The course is not a survey of great books, but seeks to bring students to a critical reading of some of the foundational texts which undergird China as a cultural and moral concept. In trying to understand and appreciate these texts, we want to ask why they have commanded such a high degree of attention and respect by generations upon generations of people, who not only inherited these texts as part of their traditions, but strove to redefine these traditions through rigorously rereading and reinterpreting these original texts. Central to our concern is also to ask in what ways these texts continue to speak to us as moderns (or "postmoderns"), and to those outside the real or perceived Chinese world; and in what ways these ancient texts keep informing us when we are brought to the task of thinking and rethinking the question of what it is to be human.

Following the established format of Core Curriculum at NYU, this course is divided into lectures taught by the faculty instructor and recitations led by graduate Teaching Assistants. 30% of the final grade is based on class participation (20% for lectures and 10% for recitations); 20% on weekly response paper (single page, double space, in which the students raise their own questions share their observations to be organized around sharply focused quotations from the designated texts); 25% on the midterm; and the remaining 25% on the final exam. Both exams are in the form of a short essay (5pp).

#### Weekly reading schedule

Sep 3 Introduction

Sep 8 The Analects, part 1

Sep 10 The Analects, part 2

Sep 15 Mencius, part 1

Sep 17 Mencius, part 2

Sep 22 Book of Songs, part 1

Sep 24 Book of Songs, part 2

Sep 29 The Song of the South, part 1  
Oct 1 The Song of the South, part 2

Oct 6 Tao Te Ching, part 1  
Oct 8 Tao Te Ching, part 2

Oct 13 **Fall Recess**

Oct 15 The Book of Chuang Tsu, part 1

Oct 20 The Book of Chuang Tsu, part 2

Oct 22 Records of the Grand Historian, Qin Dynasty, part 1

Oct 27 Records of the Grand Historian, Qin Dynasty, part 2

Oct 29 Records of the Grand Historian, Han Dynasty I, part 1

Nov 3 Records of the Grand Historian, Han Dynasty I, part 2

Nov 5 Records of the Grand Historian, Han Dynasty II, part 1

Nov 10 Records of the Grand Historian, Han Dynasty II, part 2

Nov 12 Thematic Wrap-up: The Noble Commoner or, the Rise of the *Shi*

Nov 17 Thematic Wrap-up: The Notion of Education in Ancient China

Nov 19 Thematic Wrap-up: The Rite of Imperial Order

Nov 24 Thematic Wrap-up: Hermits and Rebels

Thanksgiving Break

Dec 1 Thematic Wrap-up: The Chinese and the Non-Chinese

Dec 3 Thematic Wrap-up: Change and Non-Change in Ancient Chinese Thinking

Dec 10 Conclusion

