

College of Charleston
Department of Religious Studies
Fall 2014

RELS 298: THE DAOIST TRADITION
MWF 1-1:50; ECTR 219

Instructor: Dr. Elijah Siegler
Email: sieglere@cofc.edu Office phone: **953-3910**
Office: 4 Glebe St. Entryway C
Office Hours: Mon, Fri 11-1 or by appointment

“Dao called Dao is not Dao.” So begins the most famous Daoist scripture. Then how do we begin to study Daoism, if the tradition itself seems to distrust discursive language? Daoism may be the most misunderstood of the major world religions but studying it accurately and holistically should not be too difficult. Maybe all it takes is “wuwei” (effortless action—a key Daoist concept)? We begin with an overview of the history of Daoism and then study Daoist communities, concepts, practices, rituals and sacred sites. We will also consider Daoism in society today, both Chinese and Western.

This course will fulfill the **General Education Student Learning Outcomes:**
Student Learning Outcome #1: Students analyze how ideas are represented, interpreted or valued in various expressions of human culture.
Student Learning Outcome #2: Students examine relevant primary source materials as understood by the discipline and interpret the material in writing assignments. These two learning outcomes will be assessed by at least three of the Response Papers (worth a total of 15%), which will ask students to analyze primary sources in terms of their religious ideas.

Required texts:

1. *The Daoist Tradition: An Introduction* by Louis Komjathy (**DT**)
2. *The Tao of Pooh* by Benjamin Hoff
3. *Tao Te Ching* by Lao-Tzu translated by Addiss and Lombardo (**TTC**)
4. *Seven Taoist Masters* by Eva Wong (**7TM**)

There are also required short readings on OAKS. Print these out! Please bring the relevant book or printout to class.

Course Requirements:

Participation and attendance in class including in-class writing: **10%**

One 7-10 pp. term paper due in class on November 21: **20%**

Five out of ten 1-2 pp. “Response Papers” based on the readings: 5 x 5%= **25%**

Oral presentation, including PowerPoint, given in class between October 15-20: **4%**

3 out of 4 “surprise” quizzes (announced in class the day before) 3 x 3%= **9%**

Midterm exam (multiple choice, short answer, and essay) on Oct 10: **12%**

Final exam (multiple choice, short answer, and essay) on Dec 8: **20%**

We will review and discuss each assignment before it is due.

Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are violations of our Honor Code that, when identified, are investigated. A student found responsible by the Honor Board for academic dishonesty will receive a XF in the course, indicating failure of the course due to academic dishonesty. Students can find a complete version of the Honor Code and all related processes in the Student Handbook, available online.

Grading Scale: A: 93-100; A-: 90-92; B+: 87-89; B: 83-86; B-: 80-82; C+: 77-79; C: 73-76; C-: 70-72; D+: 67-69; D: 63-66; D-: 61-62 F: 60 or below.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

Wed 8/20: What is this class about?

Fri 8/22: What do we need to know about Chinese language, history and geography?
Read: Handout and/or DT xiii, xix

Mon 8/25: What is the “secret wisdom of the Taoists?”

Read: The Tao of Pooh

Due: Response Paper #1

Wed 8/27: What does it mean to be a Daoist?

Read: “Popular Misconceptions” (on OAKS); DT 10-13, 39-44, 57-60.

Fri 8/29: Daoism in Ancient China

Read DT 17-22; TTC vii-xii

Mon 9/1: Reading the Daodejing

Read TTC, xii-xv, 1-81; DT 46-47

Due: RP #2

Wed 9/3: Translating the Daodejing

Read: TTC xvi- xix; another translation of the Daodejing (skim)

Fri 9/5: What does the Daodejing “Mean?”

Read: DT 83-94

Mon 9/8: Reading the Zhuangzi
Read: Zhuangzi (on OAKS); DT 61-63
Due: RP #3

Wed 9/10: Daoist History and Revelation
Read: DT 22-28, 54-57

Fri 9/12: Catch-up Discussion

Mon 9/15: What is the Daoist Universe?
Read: DT 101-115
Due: RP #4

Wed 9/17: Daoist Views on Life
Read: DT 123-137

Fri 9/19: Daoist and Popular Views on Death
Read: DT 137- 142; "Ancestors and Ghosts" (on OAKS)

Mon 9/22: Daoist Ethics
Read: DT 145-162
Due: RP #5

Wed 9/24: What do Daoists Eat?
Read: DT 165-173, 179-184

Fri 9/26: What Is Daoist Practice?
Read: DT 94-99, 187-204

Mon 9/29: What is Daoist Meditation?
Read: DT 205-216
Due: RP #6

Wed 10/1: What Is Internal Alchemy?
Read: DT 216-223; "Golden Elixir" (on OAKS)

Fri 10/3: Visualization and Movement Practice

Mon 10/6: Scripture Study
Read: DT 225-234

Wed 10/8: Exam review, catch up discussion

Fri 10/10: Midterm

Mon 10/13: Daoist Influences on Chinese Art
Read: 281-286

Wed 10/15: Daoist Mountains and Grottoes
Read: DT 265-274, 279 (from "By way of conclusion")

Oral Presentations

Fri 10/17: Daoist Gods and Altars
Read: DT 115-121, TBA (on OAKS)

Oral Presentations, cont.

Mon 10/20: Daoist Temples and Liturgy
Read: DT 238-239, 275-278, 286-288, 290-298

Oral Presentations, cont.

Wed 10/22: Daoist Ritual
Read: DT 243-260

Thurs 10/23 @ 3:30: A Public Lecture on Daoist Body Maps by Louis Komjathy

Fri 10/24: A conversation with Louis Komjathy

Mon 10/27: Later Daoist History
Read: DT 28-34, 64 (from "Eremiticism remained")-67; 7TM xvi- 59

Due: RP #7

Wed 10/29: Women in Daoism
Read: DT 75-79; 7TM 60-126

Fri 10/31: "Complete Reality" Daoism
Read: DT 73-75; 7TM 127-176; "Fifteen Teachings" (on OAKS)

Due: RP #8

Mon 11/3: Fall break

Wed: 11/5: Paper Workshop
Due: Paper-in-Progress

Fri 11/7: Secularization of Daoist Practices
Read: DT 34-36; "Quiet Sitting" (on OAKS)

Mon 11/10: Daoism in China Today
Read: DT 305-308; "Rise of the Tao" (on OAKS)

Due: RP #9

Wed 11/12: Screening: *A Chinese Ghost Story*

Fri 11/14: Daoism in Hong Kong and Taiwan
Read: DT 308-310

Mon 11/17: Daoism in Popular Chinese Culture
Read: Cahill (on OAKS)
Due: RP #10

Wed 11/19: Daoism in the West
Read: 7TM xv-xvi; DT 313 (from “The second example”) -315; Siegler (on OAKS)

Fri 11/21: Western Daoists in China
Read: Palmer (on OAKS)
Final Paper Due

Mon 11/24: The Future of Daoism
Read: TBA

Wed 11/26: Thanksgiving Break

Fri 11/28: Thanksgiving Break

Mon 12/1: Final Discussion and Exam Review
(Re-)Read: Tao of Pooh

Mon 12/8 noon- 3: Final Exam

Note: Students with documented disabilities who have been approved to receive accommodation through SNAP should feel free to discuss this during office hours. For more information, contact Disability Services at 953-1431.

A good resource for how to write a religious studies paper:
<http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/religious-studies/>

Visit the **Center for Student Learning** for help with study strategies, speaking & writing skills, and course content. They offer tutoring, Supplemental Instruction, study skills appointments, and workshops. Students of all abilities have become more successful using these programs throughout their academic career and the services are available to you at no additional cost. For more information regarding these services please visit the CSL website at <http://csl.cofc.edu> or call (843)953-5635.