

College of Charleston
Department of Religious Studies
Summer 2011

RELS 205.T01: SACRED TEXTS OF THE EAST
Study Abroad Course in China
June 7-June 24, 2011

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Course Description

This class, taught in China, features in-depth readings of several important Daoist, Buddhist and Confucian texts. Wherever possible, we will read and discuss texts in the locations where they were written, or used. We will focus on texts that are associated with Laozi, the legendary founder of Daoism, including the Daodejing and several liturgical and theological texts.

Texts to bring to China:

Tao Te Ching by Lao Tzu translated by Addiss and Lombardo, 1993 (TTC)

Chinese religion: an anthology of sources edited by Deborah Sommer (CRAS)

Daoism and Chinese Culture by Livia Kohn (DCC)

God of the Dao by Livia Kohn (GD)

A notebook to serve as your journal

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.

Course Requirements:

Participation 25%

Students are expected to be active in all class discussions, lectures, and class trips.

2-3 pp. Text Analysis 10%

Students will analyze assigned readings (see last page).

Memos 3 x 5% = 15%

Students will complete three out of four 1-2 page assignments (see last page).

Journal 25%

Students will write daily informal notes, focusing especially on how the readings, interviews and site visits add to the themes of the class. Paragraph or point form is fine. Personal opinions and questions are important elements of your journals. You must have

at least one entry per reading unit. I will check the journal two or three times over the course of the trip.

5-6 pp. final essay 25%

Theoretical essay that synthesizes the reading material and travel experiences.
Assignment handed out June 23, due via email by July 2, 5 pm

READING UNITS (and location where reading should be completed)

A. Introduction to Chinese history, geography, language, and cosmology (Charleston, April 26)

DCC ix-x, 1-7, 42-58

B. Confucius, Mozi and the “Hundred Schools” (Charleston, May 5)

TTC vii-xii; CRAS 41-70

Memo #1 due, typed

C. The Zhuangzi (Charleston/ In Flight, June 7-8)

DCC 27-41; CRAS 77-83

Text Analysis Paper due June 7 at the airport (or June 5 via email), typed

D. Early Ritual /Political Texts (Beijing, June 9-10)

CRAS 7-19, 27-39

E. Buddhist Texts (Beijing, June 9-10)

CRAS 119-125, 133-143, 169-173

F. Daodejing (Beijing/Zhengzhou, June 11-12)

DCC 11-25; TTC, xii- end

Memo #2 Due June 11, by hand

G. Mythological Texts (Zhengzhou, June 13)

GD 37-60, 235-253 (recommended: GD 217-234)

Memo #3 Due June 13, by hand

H. Mountain Poetry (Mount Hua, June 16)

CRAS 165-168; 173-174; 233-238

I. Hagiographical Texts (Louguantai, June 18)

GD 255-273

J. Early Immortality and Alchemical Texts (Chengdu, June 19-20)

CRAS 145-151 (*see also RELS 298, unit I*)

K. Revealed Texts (Chengdu/Mount Heming, June 20-21)

GD 275-309

Memo #4 Due June 21, by hand

L. Neo-Confucian/Syncretic Texts (Mount Qingcheng, June 22)

CRAS 183-188

Paper Assignments

Memos should be between 1-2 pages—about 300-600 words long. They should demonstrate a solid understanding of the appropriate readings (listed below) as well as the relevant site visits or lectures. Memos should answer the questions specifically, make interesting connections (comparisons or contrasts) between readings, and provide original insights into the material. You do not need an introduction or conclusion: get right to your point!

The text analysis paper should be double the length of the memo. It should quote more seriously and directly from the reading and present a sustained argument

For both kinds of assignments, you do not need a works cited page but please use in-text citation for direct and indirect quotes sources from the class. Please write clearly and carefully!

Memo #1 due in class in Charleston, May 5

In what is called the hundred schools period (551-233 BCE), during the Chou (Zhou) dynasty, great philosophers debated each other in print, often naming names. What was the debate about? How did Mozi (Mozi) attack Confucius? Do you think Mencius and/or Xunzi (Hsun-Tzu) made a valuable counterattack?

Text Analysis Paper due at the Charleston airport, June 7 (or emailed by June 5)

An American student once called the Zhuangzi (Chuang-Tzu) a “deconstruction of consensus reality.” Do you agree or not? Is there anything that he holds to be “real” or “true”? What is it?

Memo #2 due in Beijing, June 11

The Daodejing (Tao-te-ching) has been interpreted as being a meditation manual, a book of advice to kings, an account of mystical experience, a collection of wise sayings, and a subtle attack on Confucianism. Show how any two of these descriptions fit the text. How do you interpret the Daodejing?

Memo #3 due in Zhengzhou, June 13

TBA

Memo #4 due in Chengdu, June 21

For what reasons might Daoist texts contain references to Confucius, the Buddha, and their respective followers?