

**College of Charleston  
Department of Religious Studies  
Spring 2022**

**RELS 247: THE DAOIST TRADITION**  
Tues & Thurs 1:40-2:55; Ed Center 219

Instructor: Dr. Elijah Siegler

Email: [sieglere@cofc.edu](mailto:sieglere@cofc.edu) Office phone: **843-953-3910**

Office: 4 Glebe St. 2<sup>nd</sup> floor

Office Hours: Mon 10AM-1PM or by appointment (either in my office or by Zoom)

“Dao called Dao is not Dao” is the first line of the most famous Daoist scripture. So how do we begin to study Daoism? This ancient Chinese tradition may be the most misunderstood of the major world religions but it has struck a nerve with many Westerners. We begin with an overview of the history of Daoism and then study Daoist scriptures, communities, gender roles, rituals, and sacred sites. We will also consider the role Daoism plays in Chinese society today, including how it impacts such issues as medicine, martial arts, popular culture, the environment, and politics. We also examine its globalization.

**Required texts:**

1. *Tao Te Ching* by Lao-Tzu translated by Addiss and Lombardo (**TTC**)  
(ISBN-10: 0-87220-232-1)—make sure you get this edition!
2. *The Tao of Pooh* by Benjamin Hoff
3. *The Daoist Tradition: An Introduction* by Louis **Komjathy**
4. *Dream Trippers* by David **Palmer** and Elijah Siegler
5. *Seven Taoist Masters* by Eva **Wong**

There are also required short readings, numbered 1 to 8, on OAKS. Please 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 on April 25: **20%**

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

Oral presentation, including PowerPoint, given in class the week of March 15: **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 Feb 24: **12%**

Final exam (multiple choice, short answer, and essay) on May 2: **20%**

**Assignments:** We will review and discuss each assignment before it is due. There may also be various opportunities to gain bonus marks by attending relevant lectures and writing short papers about them.

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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.

**NOTE:** THIS CLASS IS (FOR NOW) IN PERSON ONLY. THERE IS NO ZOOM OR OTHER ONLINE OPTION.

## **SCHEDULE OF CLASSES**

Tues 1/11: Will this class reveal the “secret wisdom of the Taoists?” Or is it about something else?

Read: Tao of Pooh

Thurs 1/13: What do we need to know about Chinese language, history and geography?

Read: In-class Handout; Komjathy xiii, xix

Tues 1/18: What does it mean to be a Daoist?

Read: OAKS#1- “Popular Misconceptions”; Komjathy 10-13, 39-44, 57-60; Palmer 1-6, 14-19, 21-26

**Due: Response Paper #1**

Thurs 1/20: Daoism in Ancient China

Read Komjathy 17-22; TTC vii-xii; Palmer 46-50

Tues 1/25: Reading the Daodejing

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

**Due: RP #2**

Thurs 1/27: Translating and Interpreting the Daodejing

Read: TTC xvi- xix; another translation of the Daodejing (skim); Komjathy 83-94

Tues 2/1: Reading the Zhuangzi

Read: OAKS#2- Zhuangzi; Komjathy 61-63

**Due: RP #3**

Thurs 2/3: Daoist History and Revelation  
Read: Komjathy 22-28, 54-57

Tues 2/8: What is the Daoist Universe?  
Read: Komjathy 101-115; Palmer 51, 58  
**Due: RP #4**

Thurs 2/10: Daoist Views on Life and Death  
Read: Komjathy 123-142; OAKS #3- “Ancestors and Ghosts”

Tues 2/15: Daoist Ethics  
**Special Guest: Daoist Scholar Louis Komjathy (on Zoom)**  
Read: Komjathy 145-162; Palmer 105-110  
**Due: RP #5**

Thurs 2/17: Daoist Meditation and Alchemy  
Read: Komjathy 205-223; OAKS #4- “Golden Elixir”  
**Midterm Exam Study Guide Handed Out**

Tues 2/22: Visualization and Movement Practice  
**Midterm Exam Review**

Thurs 2/24: **MIDTERM EXAM**

Tues 3/1: Daoist Diet and Exercise (**Tea will be served!**)  
Read: Komjathy 165-173, 179-184; 94-99, 187-204

Thurs 3/3: Daoist Ritual  
Read: Komjathy 243-260

**SPRING BREAK**

Tues 3/15: Daoist Sacred Places  
Read: Komjathy 115-121, 238-239, 265-274, 275-279, 286-288, 290-298  
**Oral Presentations**

**Wed 3/14: Evening Screening of “A Chinese Ghost Story”**

Thurs 3/17: Daoist Gods and Demons  
Read: OAKS#5- Cahill  
**Oral Presentations, cont.**  
**Due: RP #6**

Tues 3/22: Later Daoist History  
Read: Komjathy 28-34, 64 (from “Eremeticism remained”)-67; Wong xvi- 59

Thurs 3/24: Women in Daoism

Read: Komjathy 75-79; Wong 60-126

Tues 3/29: The Complete Reality School of Daoism

Read: Komjathy 73-75; Wong 127-176; OAKS #6—“Fifteen Teachings”

**Due: RP #7**

Thurs 3/31: Secularization of Daoist Practices

Read: Komjathy 34-36; OAKS #7—“Quiet Sitting”; Palmer 27-30, 138-145

Tues 4/5: Daoism in China Today

Read: Komjathy 305-308; Palmer 101-104, 110-138

**Due: RP #8**

Thurs 4/7: Daoism in the West

Read: Wong xv-xvi; Komjathy 313 (from “The second example”) -315; Palmer 60-100

Tues 4/12: Western Daoists in China

Palmer 146-165, 179-183; Komjathy 303-305

**Due: RP #9**

Thurs 4/14: What does it mean to be a Daoist, revisited?

**Special Guest: Daoist Practitioner Louis Komjathy (on Zoom)**

183-191, 199-213, 217-221

Tues 4/19: The Future of Daoism and Paper Workshop

Read: Palmer 225-250; OAKS #8-- TBD

**Due: Paper Rough Draft**

Thurs 4/21: Final Discussion and Exam Review

Read: Tao of Pooh (Again!); Palmer 251-263, 274-277

4/25: Final Paper Due

Mon 5/2 1PM- 3PM: Final Exam

DO NOT use laptops in class, unless you have a valid reason to do so, which you must discuss with me in advance.

**The Center for Student Learning (CSL)** will provide online academic support services in course content, writing skills, and study strategies. For more information regarding CSL, please visit the CSL website at <http://csl.cofc.edu> or call (843) 953-5635.

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 [snap@cofc.edu](mailto:snap@cofc.edu).

**Mental & Physical Wellbeing:** “At the college, we take every students’ mental and physical wellbeing seriously. If you find yourself experiencing physical illnesses, please reach out to student health services (843.953.5520). And if you find yourself experiencing any mental health challenges (for example, anxiety, depression, stressful life events, sleep deprivation, and/or loneliness/homesickness) please consider contacting either the Counseling Center (professional counselors at <http://counseling.cofc.edu> or 843.953.5640 3<sup>rd</sup> Robert Scott Small Building) or the Students 4 Support (certified volunteers through texting "4support" to 839863, visit <http://counseling.cofc.edu/cct/index.php>, or meet with them in person 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Stern Center). These services are there for you to help you cope with difficulties you may be experiencing and to maintain optimal physical and mental health.”