Syllabus

COURSE OBJECTIVES
In recent Western moral philosophy, “virtue ethics” has been undergoing a renaissance: many philosophers have been attracted to this approach to ethics that emphasizes a person’s character and cultivated dispositions, rather than a rule-centered approach to right and wrong. Since the virtue ethics approach was more popular prior to the 20th century, philosophers have looked back to a variety of historical thinkers for inspiration, including Aristotle, Hume, and Nietzsche. In this course, we will explore the merits of drawing on thinkers from the Confucian tradition to develop virtue ethics. In what ways do Confucian thinkers lend themselves to being understood as virtue ethicists? What new stimuli might Confucianism offer to contemporary philosophers who so far have only drawn on Western sources? Is it fruitful to talk about a contemporary version of Confucianism that can enter into dialogue with both contemporary Western virtue ethicists and their critics?

READINGS
The course will revolve around the reading and discussion of both contemporary works and classical (and a few early-modern) texts from China and Europe. Readings will be from books that I have ordered through Broad Street Books, and numerous articles and book chapters available through Electronic Reserve. The books are:

- Welchman, ed., *The Practice of Virtue*
- Ivanhoe and Van Norden, eds., *Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy*
- Ivanhoe, trans., *Readings from the Lu-Wang School of Neo-Confucianism*

If you have taken PHIL 205 and still have your books, you may read the indicated selections in the edition used for that class — in other words, you do not need to purchase *Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy.*

IN-CLASS PRESENTATIONS AND ON-LINE DISCUSSION
Teams of two students will be assigned to each reading in advance. Each team is responsible for three things:

- Posting a POSITION PAPER on the reading to the class Moodle by noon on the Wednesday before class.
  - The Position Paper should be no more than 500 words long.
  - It should be posted as a regular message, not as an attachment (though you may write it in a word processor and they copy/paste)
  - Please LABEL your Position Paper with “PP: name of text”
IN-CLASS PRESENTATIONS AND ON-LINE DISCUSSION (Cont’d)

- Your Position Paper should accomplish three things:
  - BRIEFLY offer any critical background information, without which the piece cannot be understood.
  - Summarize the main thesis or theses of the piece.
  - Take a position on the accuracy, truth, or insight of the thesis or theses.
- This is a lot to do in (at most) 500 words. Spend some time doing it, so you can do it well!

- Reading and reflecting on relevant CRITIQUES (see below).
- LEADING DISCUSSION of your essay during class.
  - You should begin with a summary of your Position Paper (maximum 5 minutes), making sure to tie your reading to on-going themes of the class.
  - Then you should initiate discussion by either responding to one or more specific issues raised by Critiques, or by suggesting another line of inquiry.
  - It is the responsibility of each team member to see that both of you play significant roles in the process.
  - It is the responsibility of the team to see that justice is done to your reading: that we cover the critical issues, it gets a fair hearing, etc.

All students not on presentation teams for a given week are required to write and post a CRITIQUE on Moodle by noon on the day before class (Thursday):

- Choose one reading/position paper. Write a charitable yet critical discussion of one or more key issues.
- Critiques should be no more than 300 words long; they should be posted AS COMMENTS on the relevant position paper.

In addition to in-class discussion, Moodle also provides the opportunity for further discussion after class. Please feel free to take advantage; such discussion will contribute toward my assessment of your overall participation grade (see below).

CHINESE PHILOSOPHY BOOTCAMP

Some students in the seminar will have had no previous exposure to Chinese philosophy. In order to bring everyone up to the level necessary for our discussions to be fruitful, all students who have not taken PHIL 205 (Classical Chinese Philosophy) are required to participate in a half-day mini-seminar on Chinese philosophy. This has been tentatively planned for Sunday, February 12, 1-4pm.

PAPERS AND GRADES

Two formal writing assignments are required for the course: a 4-page short essay and a research paper of 18 or more pages. I will suggest topics for the former, though you are also free to develop your own topic. Topics will be assigned in class on February 17, and the paper will be due Monday, March 5, 5pm.
There are three steps involved in the research paper: Topic, Rough Draft, and Final Draft.

- The Topic is due by class time on Friday, April 20: you must email me an approximately 400-word discussion of your topic, listing at least 5 sources. Some, but not all, of the sources can be items that have been assigned as required readings for the course.
- The Rough Draft is due by Midnight on the last day we meet: Friday, May 4. It must be at least 9 pages long, up to and including an entire 18+ page draft. The more you give me, the more I’ll give you feedback on.
- The Final Draft will be due at 5pm on the day of the scheduled class exam. (There is no class exam, but there’s a day during finals week scheduled for this class.) We will discuss proper bibliography and citation format at an appropriate time.

The short essay will count for 1/6 of your final grade. The research paper, will count as 3/6. 1/6 will be based on your Position Papers and presentations over the course of the semester. The remaining 1/6 will come from my weekly assessment of your Critiques and in-class and on-line discussion.

OFFICE HOURS AND WAYS TO CONTACT ME
My office is Russell House 216; my office hours will be Tuesday 1:30-3:30. I'm happy to find another time to meet with you if these times won't work; just speak to me after class.

My phone number is x3654; my email address is sangle@wesleyan.edu.
Philosophy 341

Confucianism and Virtue Ethics

Spring 2012

Reading Schedule

WESTERN VIRTUE ETHICS


Required Readings
• None

Scheduling
• Bootcamp (2/12)
• Three Fridays in April

Additional Readings
• Welchman, *The Practice of Virtue*, “Introduction” [PURCHASE]
• Slote, “Agent-Based Virtue Ethics,” in Slote & Crisp, eds., *Virtue Ethics*

[2] Fri, Feb 3 — Western Tradition(s)

Required Readings
• Aristotle, selections from *Nicomachean Ethics* (in Welchman, 2-37) [PURCHASE]
• Hume, selections from *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (in Welchman, 84-107)

Additional Readings
• Seneca, Hutcheson, and Nietzsche selections in Welchman

[3] Fri, Feb 10 — Virtue Ethics Revival

Required Readings

Additional Readings
• Other essays in Slote & Crisp, eds., *Virtue Ethics*

[SUNDAY, Feb 12, 1-4pm — Chinese Philosophy Bootcamp]

CONFUCIANISM

[4] Fri, Feb 17 — Kongzi (Confucius) and the Analects

Required Readings
• Ivanhoe and Van Norden, eds., *Readings...*, Chapter One (Kongzi), selections* [PURCHASE]
• Yu, *The Ethics of Confucius and Aristotle*, ch. 1 [ERES]
Assignment
• Short Essay topics assigned (Due 3/5, 5pm)

Additional Readings
• Van Norden, *Virtue Ethics and Consequentialism in Early Chinese Philosophy*

[5] Fri, Feb 24 — Mengzi (Mencius)

Required Readings
• Ivanhoe and Van Norden, eds., *Readings...*, Chapter Three (Mengzi), selections*
• Van Norden, *Virtue Ethics and Consequentialism in Early Chinese Philosophy*, pp. 325-59 [MOODLE]

Additional Readings
• Yu, *The Ethics of Confucius and Aristotle*

[6] Fri, March 2 — Xunzi

Required Readings
• Ivanhoe and Van Norden, eds., *Readings...*, Chapter Six (Xunzi), selections*
• Stalnaker, *Overcoming Our Evil*, ch. 6 (151-96) [ERES]

Additional Readings
• Kline and Ivanhoe, eds., *Virtue, nature, and moral agency in the Xunzi*

[Deadline] Monday, March 5, 5pm: Short Essay Due

[7] Fri, March 9 — Neo-Confucianism

Required Readings
• Ivanhoe, trans., *Readings from the Lu-Wang School of Neo-Confucianism* [PURCHASE]
• Angle, “Wang Yangming as a Virtue Ethicist,” in Huang, ed., *The Dao Companion to Neo-Confucianism* [MOODLE]

Additional Readings
• Angle, *Sagehood: The Contemporary Significance of Neo-Confucian Philosophy*

COMPARATIVE ISSUES

[8] Fri, March 30 — Methodology (asymmetry; incommensurability; relativism)

Required Readings
• MacIntyre, Alasdair, "Incommensurability, Truth, and the Conversation Between Confucians and Aristotelians About the Virtues", in Eliot Deutsch ed., *Culture and Modernity*
• Shun, “Studying Confucian and Comparative Ethics” [MOODLE]
• Angle, “Piecemeal Progress: Moral Tradition Respect and Rooted Global Philosophy,” in Chris Fraser, Dan Robins, and Timothy O’Leary, eds., *Ethics in Early China*

Additional Readings
• Angle, “Making Room for Comparative Philosophy: Davidson, Brandom, and Conceptual Distance,” in Bo Mou, ed., *Davidson’s Philosophy and Chinese Philosophy: Constructive Engagement*

[9] Cancelled
[10] Wed, April 11, 4-7pm — Psychology and Situationism: Contributions and Challenges
Required Readings
• Slingerland, “The Situationist Critique and Early Confucian Virtue Ethics,” *Ethics* 121:2 [MOODLE]

Additional Readings
• Doris, *Lack of Character*
• Sarkissian, “Minor Tweaks, Major Payoffs: The Problems and Promise of Situationism in Moral Philosophy” [unpublished]

Required Readings
• Tessman, “Regretting the Self One Is” from *Burdened Virtues: Virtue Ethics for Liberatory Struggles*, ch. 1 [ERES]
• Walsh, “Varieties of Moral Luck in Ethical and Political Philosophy for Confucius and Aristotle” [MOODLE]

Deadline
• Research Paper Topic due

Additional Readings
• Yu, “The highest good and external goods” from *The Ethics of Confucius and Aristotle: Mirrors of Virtue*, ch. 6 [ERES]
• Williams, “Moral Luck,” in *Moral Luck*
• Nagel, “Moral Luck,” in *Mortal Questions*
• Nussbaum, *Fragility of Goodness*, pp. 1-8, 322-340
• Ivanhoe, “Filial Piety as a Virtue”

[12] Wed, April 25, 4-7pm — Deontology and Role Ethics
Required Readings
• Lee Ming-huei, “Confucianism, Kant, and Virtue Ethics” [MOODLE]
• Ames and Rosemont, “Where the Early Confucians Virtuous?,” in Fraser et. al., eds., *Ethics in Early China* [MOODLE]
• Im, “Mencius as Consequentialist”

Additional Readings
• Ames, *Confucian Role Ethics: A Vocabulary*
• Wang, “Are Early Confucians Consequentialists?”
• Angle, “The *Analects* and Moral Theory”

[13] Fri, May 4 — Student Presentations
Required Readings
• None

Deadline
• Research Paper Rough Draft Due by MIDNIGHT

Additional Readings
• None

[Deadline] Date of scheduled exam: Research paper final draft due