

RELS5327 Wisdom in Religious Classics
2023-24 Second Term

Instructor: 周惠賢博士 (Dr. CHOW Wai Yin)

Class Time: Tue 7:00-9:30pm

Email: wychow@cuhk.edu.hk

Classroom: ELB_307

Tel: 3943 1425

1. Course Description

This course provides an academic exploration of the enduring teachings of religious classics from various traditions, including Christianity, Taoism, and Buddhism. By engaging with a curated selection of representative texts and scholarly analyses, students will develop a comprehensive understanding of the defining features and nuances of religious thought. The course will concentrate on key themes such as suffering, happiness, and the pursuit of enlightenment, equipping students with the analytical tools to apply these insights to their personal lives.

2. Learning Outcomes

- To provide students with a comprehensive understanding of religious classics from a variety of traditions.
- To explore key themes and ideas found in religious classics, such as suffering, happiness, and the pursuit of enlightenment.
- To develop students' critical thinking and analytical skills through close reading and interpretation of religious texts.
- To encourage students to apply the insights gained from religious classics to their own lives, fostering personal growth and development.

3. Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topic
1	9/1	Introduction to Religious Classics and the Pursuit of Wisdom <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of the course and its objectives • Introduction to key themes and ideas found in religious classics
2	16/1	The Upanishads: Hindu Wisdom and the Pursuit of Moksha <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading and analysis of selected passages from the Upanishads • Discussion of Hindu concepts such as Brahman (the ultimate reality) and Moksha (liberation)
3	23/1	The Book of Changes (I Ching): Exploring Ancient Chinese Wisdom in Dealing with Changes

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading and analysis of selected passages from the Book of Changes • Discussion of the concepts of yin and yang, changes, and the hexagrams
4	30/1	<p>The Tao Te Ching: Finding Wisdom in Simplicity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading and analysis of selected passages from the Tao Te Ching • Discussion of Taoist concepts such as Wu Wei (non-action) and Yin-Yang
5	6/2	<p>The Zhuangzi: Finding Wisdom in Paradox</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading and analysis of selected passages from the Zhuangzi Inner Chapters • Discussion of Taoist concepts such as "逍遙" (at ease/ freedom) and Paradox
6	13/2	No Class: Lunar New Year Vacation
7	20/2	<p>The Book of Job: Christian Wisdom and the Problem of Evil</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading and analysis of selected passages from the Book of Job • Discussion of Christian approaches to understanding the problem of evil and suffering
8	27/2	<p>The Talmud: Jewish Wisdom and the Pursuit of Justice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading and analysis of selected passages from the Talmud • Discussion of Jewish concepts such as justice, compassion, and the importance of community
9	5/3	<p>Stoic's Meditation: Ancient Greek Wisdom and the Art of Living</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading and analysis of selected passages from Meditations by Marcus Aurelius • Discussion of Stoic concepts such as mindfulness, resilience, and the dichotomy of control
10	12/3	<p>Dante's Paradise: Medieval Christian Wisdom</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading and analysis of selected passages from Dante's Paradise • Discussion of Christian concepts such as grace, redemption, and the afterlife
11	19/3	<p>Guest Lecture: 《般若波羅蜜多心經》The Heart Sutra: Buddhist Wisdom and the Nature of Reality (to be confirmed)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading and analysis of selected passages from the Heart Sutra • Discussion of Buddhist concepts such as Emptiness (Shunyata) and the nature of reality
12	26/3	<p>Journey to the West: Chinese Buddhist Wisdom and the Pursuit of Enlightenment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading and analysis of selected passages from Journey to the West by Wu Cheng'en • Discussion of Buddhist concepts such as the nature of desire, the

		importance of discipline, and the quest for enlightenment
13	2/4	Group Presentations: Group 1-3
14	9/4	Group Presentations: Group 4-6
15	16/4	Zoom Class: Term Paper Consultation

4. Assessment

⑩ Participation and Class/Tutorial Discussions (15%)

- You are strongly encouraged to participate in the various discussions in the class.

⑩ Group Presentation (35%)

- 2-3 students in a group to prepare a 25-min presentation, and follow up questions and discussion. Presenters are encouraged to utilize visual aids (e.g. PowerPoint), and to make their presentations understandable to non-specialists.

⑩ Individual Term Paper (50%)

Here are some guided questions to help you to prepare your group presentation and individual term paper:

- Choose a specific religious classic or text to focus on
 - o What is the significance of this religious text in the context of its religion?
 - o How has this text been interpreted throughout history or in academic circle?
 - o What themes or lessons can be gleaned from the text?
- Analyze the historical and cultural context in which the text was written
 - o What was happening in the society and culture at the time the text was written?
 - o How did the historical context influence the author's writing and the text's meaning?
 - o Can the text be viewed as a response to the historical context in which it was written?
- Examine the religious and philosophical ideas presented in the text
 - o What are the key religious or philosophical concepts in the text?
 - o How do these concepts relate to the broader religious tradition or philosophy?
 - o What is the author's perspective on these concepts, and how does it compare to other perspectives within the same tradition or philosophy?
- Consider the text's impact and relevance today
 - o How has the text influenced religious and philosophical thought throughout history?
 - o What relevance does the text have for contemporary religious and philosophical discourse?
 - o Can the text be applied to contemporary social, political, or ethical issues?

- ⑩ A soft copy of term paper should be handed in both hard and soft copy via VeriGuide at **11.00 pm on 28/4 (Sunday), 2024**. Late submission will be penalized: 10 marks will be deducted for one day of late submission. *Submission after 10 days will be given a zero mark.*

5. Feedback for evaluation

End-of-term university course evaluation will be conducted in class. Students' comments and feedback on the course through e-mails or personal meeting with the instructor are always welcomed.

6. A Facility for Posting Course Announcements

Related course materials are delivered via the platform "BLACKBOARD"
(<http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/eLearning/>)

7. Academic honesty and plagiarism

Students must submit their papers via VeriGuide. Relevant information on academic honesty and plagiarism can be allocated at: <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty>

8. References

General

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