

# Philosophy 2120: Asian Philosophies

Spring 2025: Jan 6 - April 23

## **Instructor Information:**

*Instructor:* Erich Jones

*Email:* jones.7269@osu.edu

*Office:* University Hall 337E

*Office Hours:* TR 11:00 am - 12:00 pm

*Class Location:* MacPherson 2017

*Class Time:* TR 9:35-10:55 am

*Delivery Method:* In-Person

## **General Information:**

**GE: Literature (legacy); Diversity: Global Studies (legacy); Literary, Visual & Performing Arts Foundation (new); and Historical and Cultural Studies Foundation (new)**

## **Course Description:**

This class will explore the philosophical tradition of Buddhism and trace its course from India to China, then to Korea, and finally Japan culminating in the Kyoto School, discussing the evolution that Buddhist philosophy underwent during its history as well as devoting attention to other philosophical traditions that influenced it, particularly Daoism. We'll focus on questions such as "what does it mean to have no self?", "what do buddhists mean when they say that everything is empty?", as well as "what is nirvana/enlightenment like?" and "what does Buddhism have to say about contemporary moral problems?". While we will be engaging this philosophical tradition on its own terms, we will also be interrogating it with Western concerns in mind, coming to see the value of cross-cultural philosophy and the syncretic methodology of East Asian Philosophy.

## **Learning Objectives**

Students will be able to:

- Reconstruct arguments faithfully
- Critically evaluate arguments
- Create and clearly communicate arguments
- Present and clearly discuss the central features of Asian Philosophical Traditions
- Compare and contrast the features of Asian Philosophical Traditions with Western Philosophical Thought

### **Class Policies and Format**

- **Readings:** Whenever a reading is assigned for a class session, you are expected to read it thoroughly and come prepared to engage in a discussion on it in class. You do not *need to* purchase any reading material for this course (e.g. textbooks). PDFs of all readings will be uploaded to Carmen Files or provided through links to websites.
- **Discussion:** Much of this course will be discussion driven. Content from three sources will drive in-class discussions. The first is, of course, the readings and my own critical take on them. The second is student reading response posts on the readings (see Assignments and Credit). I will try to incorporate as many student comments and questions from the reading response into my lectures as possible. Third, in-class student comments and questions. For this to work out smoothly, students are expected to come prepared for a discussion on the readings for *any given class*. Note that *both* attendance and participation in this course are graded (see Assignments and Credit).
- **Discussion Etiquette:** Students are expected to interact with their peers in a respectful manner and to engage with each others' ideas in ways that foster learning and mutual understanding. Our goal is to debate the merits and demerits of *ideas*, not of *people*.
- **Changes to syllabus:** I will give at least a week's notice if I decide to change the syllabus. Usually my reasons for changing the syllabus will be that I have found a reading that I find to be more interesting, or I have found a reading that better fits the class' interests. If the syllabus does change, I will make an announcement and upload a revised version of the paper.

### **Attendance Policy:**

Attendance is required, as it counts towards your final grade. In order to have an excused absence, I'll need a sufficiently good reason from you. Sufficiently good reasons are things

such as, but not limited to, medical emergencies, the deaths of loved ones, and issues with apartments (such as a pipe suddenly bursting). I do not consider dentist appointments, routine checkups, or high plane ticket prices to be good reasons for an absence.

That said, attendance is only part of the attendance policy. It is possible to get full points despite missing classes if you actively participate in class by asking questions on a regular basis.

### **Email Policy:**

If I receive an email, I'll do my best to respond to it within 24 hours, and within 48 hours on weekends. Depending on my workload, these times may and will vary, and you may have to send follow up emails if I don't get back to you within 24/48 hours.

### **Electronics Policy:**

**Absolutely no use of electronics** is permitted in class. Disruptive usage will result in being marked as absent without excuse, harming your final grade, and I reserve the right to ask you to leave the classroom if I find your usage too distracting. I understand that emergencies come up, so if you must use your cell phone please leave the classroom first.

## **Assignments & Credit**

- **Course Requirements & Grading:** Your overall course grade will be assigned on the basis of the following components (percentage of overall grade in parenthesis):
  - *Papers:* There will be two papers, 3 - 5 and 5 - 6 pages in length, respectively. You are permitted to use any class lecture notes or readings for this paper. You must submit your own work in your own words, and you are not permitted to work with other students on your paper (see section below on "Academic Misconduct" for more). Instructions on proper citation and guidelines, along with information on the topics and due date, will be distributed later in the course. (50% of the final grade)
  - *Weekly Reading Responses:* A reading response summarizes an argument from one of the week's readings and poses an objection to the argument made in the week's readings, OR asks a question about the reading and tries to answer the question. Should be at least two paragraphs long (a paragraph is about 4 ~ 5 sentences at least) or a page at most. The purpose of this assignment is to get students used to writing and articulating points made in the reading, as well as getting comfortable writing about their own ideas and using this as an opportunity to try ideas out. There will be reading responses due every week of the semester unless otherwise marked on the class schedule (30% of the final grade).

- o Attendance/Participation: Attendance is required, as it counts towards your final grade. I will only excuse absences for sufficiently good reasons. Sufficiently good reasons are things such as, but not limited to, medical emergencies, the deaths of loved ones, and issues with apartments (such as a pipe suddenly bursting). I do not consider dentist appointments, routine checkups, or high plane ticket prices to be good reasons for an absence. That said, attendance is only part of the attendance policy. It is possible to get full points despite missing classes if you actively participate in class by asking questions on a regular basis. (10% of the final grade)
- o *Interest Report*: Students will be asked to write up a short paper (2-3 pgs) discussing a topic that they are interested in that relates to at least one of the themes of the class. For example, the topic could be AI, and the connection to our themes could be how Japanese philosophy treats the question of whether or not a robot could be conscious. (10% of final grade).

**ALL ASSIGNMENTS MUST BE TURNED IN BY APRIL 16TH: NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED PAST THAT DATE**

### **Grading scale**

93-100: A  
90-92.9: A-  
87-89.9: B+  
83-86.9: B  
80-82.9: B-  
77-79.9: C+  
73-76.9: C  
70-72.9: C-  
67-69.9: D+  
60-66.9: D  
Below 60: E

**I will not round up anyone's final grade if asked, out of fairness to the class.**

**NOTE: SYLLABUS IS TENTATIVE AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE**

Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment
Jan 7	Syllabus, Expectations, etc...	No Reading	No Reading Response Due This Week.
Jan 9	Why Philosophy?	The Bet	
Jan 14	Why Study Asian Philosophy?	Chapter 1 of Van Norden, pgs 12 - 29	Reading Response 1 Due Jan 19th
Jan 16	Against Relativism	The Challenge of Cultural Relativism	
Jan 21	Confucianism	Chapter 1 in Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy, Intro and Books 1 & 2	RR 2 due Jan 26th
Jan 23	Confucianism	Chapter 1 in Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy, Books 4, 6 & 8	
Jan 28	Mencius	Chapter 3 in <i>Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy</i> , Intro and Books 1, 2, & 4	RR 3 due Feb 2nd
Jan 30	Mencius	Chapter 3 in <i>Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy</i> , books 4, 6, & 7  Excerpt from <i>Mengzi</i>	

Feb 4	Mozi	Chapter 2 in <i>Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy</i> , Intro, chapters 8, 11, and 16  Passage 3A5 on page 140 of PDF	RR 4 due Feb 9th
Feb 6	Mozi	Chapter 2 in <i>Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy</i> , chapters 20, 26, 35.	
Feb 11	Daoism	<i>Zhuangzi</i> , pgs 19 - 21, 141 - 142	<b>Midterm Paper due Feb 16th</b>
Feb 13	Daoism	<i>Zhuangzi</i> , pgs 40 - 41, Chapter 8, 48 - 51, 145 - 146	
Feb 18	The Buddha's First Sermon & Dependent Origination	<i>Setting In Motion The Wheel Of The Dharma Samyutta Nikaya</i> , Sutta 56, Section 11, Pg. 1843.  <i>Nidānasamyutta, Samyutta Nikaya</i> , Book II, Sutta 12, Pg 533. (Stop on Pg 540).	RR 5 due Feb 23rd

Feb 20	The Buddha Answers Challenges	<i>Kaccanagotta Sutta</i> <i>Samyutta Nikaya</i> , Book 2, Sutta 15, Pg 544.  <i>Cūlamālunkya</i> <i>Sutta, Majjhima</i> <i>Nikaya</i> , Sutta 63, Pg 533.  <a href="#">The Buddha as Physician</a>	
Feb 25	Zen Buddhism	<i>Opening the Hand of Thought</i> , chapter 2, “The Meaning of Zazen”  <i>Platform Sutra</i> , pgs 4 - 6, 13 - 18, 36 - 38.	RR 6 due Mar 2nd

Feb 27	Zen Buddhism	<p><i>Two Zen Classics:</i></p> <p>The Buddha Holds Out A Flower</p> <p>When You Meet A Man Of The Way</p> <p>Joshu's Oak Tree</p> <p>Kyogen's Man Up In A Tree</p> <p>Nansen Cuts The Cat In Two</p> <p><i>The Zen Teaching of Homeless Kodo:</i></p> <p>Teachings: 3, 10, 17, 35, 39, 40, 49, 51, 68</p>	
Mar 4	No-Self Day 1	<p>Chapter 3 of Siderits' Buddhist Philosophy</p> <p>Optional: <a href="#">IEP - Personal Identity</a></p>	RR 7 due Mar 9th
Mar 6	No-Self Day 2	<p>Pannatippanha.</p> <p><i>Vajira Sutta</i> <i>Samyutta Nikaya</i>, Book 1, Sutta 10, Pg 229.</p> <p>Optional: Non-Self I, Non-Self II</p>	



Mar 11 - Spring Break, No Class			Enjoy Spring Break!
Mar 13 - Spring Break, No Class			
Mar 18	Free Will Day 1	<a href="#">IEP article on Free Will</a> Read as much as you can get through!	RR 8 due Mar 23rd
Mar 20	Free Will Day 2:	Buddhist Paleo-Compatibilism pgs 73 - 77  Optional: Repentance as a Bodhisattva Practice,	
Mar 25	Socially engaged Buddhism and contemporary issues	Chapters 1 of <i>Buddhist Ethics: A Very Short Introduction</i>  Optional: skim through <i>Buddhist Ethics</i> .	RR 9 due Mar 30th
Mar 27	Socially Engaged Buddhism and Contemporary Issues	“Suicide and Euthanasia”	
Apr 1	Shintoism	Excerpts from the <i>Kojiki</i> , Chapters 1 - 7 (they’re very short, don’t worry)  <i>Animism and Philosophy of Religion</i> , pgs 287 - 289 (Old Animism)	RR 10 due Apr 6th

		<i>Essentials of Shinto</i> ,pg 63 - 67	
Apr 3	Shintoism	<i>Animism and Philosophy of Religion</i> , Pgs 107 - 110 (Animism as a Philosophical Stance)  <i>Essentials of Shinto</i> , pg 342, Shinto and Ethics.	
Apr 8	Bushidō	Book 1 of the <i>Hagakure</i> , pgs 43 - 61	
Apr 10	Bushidō	“Bushido and Philosophy: Partings the Clouds, Seeking the Way”pgs 4 - 12.	No RR due; Interest Report Due Apr 13
Apr 15	TBD	TBD	
April 17 - Last Day of Class	Review day Fill out SEIs	No Reading	No RR Due <b>All Missing Work Due Apr 16</b> Final Paper due Apr 23

*Historical or Cultural Studies Foundation [New GE]*

**General Education Legacy:**

**Literature:**

Goals

Students evaluate significant texts in order to develop capacities for aesthetic and historical response and judgment; interpretation and evaluation; and critical listening, reading, seeing, thinking, and writing.

Expected Learning Outcomes

1. Students analyze, interpret, and critique significant literary works.

2. Through reading, discussing, and writing about literature, students appraise and evaluate the personal and social values of their own and other cultures.

This class satisfies these ELOs because students will be asked to read original material from Asian philosophical thinkers, and be asked to compare and contrast the great philosophical works of Western philosophy with those of Asian philosophy.

### **Diversity: Global Studies**

Goals

**Students understand the pluralistic nature of institutions, society, and culture in the United States and across the world in order to become educated, productive, and principled citizens.**

Expected Learning Outcomes

- Global Studies
  1. Students understand some of the political, economic, cultural, physical, social, and philosophical aspects of one or more of the world's nations, peoples and cultures outside the U.S.
  2. Students recognize the role of national and international diversity in shaping their own attitudes and values as global citizens.

Through the materials in this class, students will encounter systematic thinking from Asian philosophical sources that challenges the student's belief. This class will enable the student not only to be able to rehearse what the basic tenets of Buddhism are, for example, but also be able to articulate in what ways cross cultural encounters shape their beliefs and values.

**New GE:**

### **Literary, Visual, and Performing Arts:**

Goals:

1. Successful students will analyze, interpret, and evaluate major forms of human thought, cultures, and expression, and demonstrate capacities for aesthetic and culturally informed understanding.
2. Successful students will experience the arts and reflect on that experience critically and creatively.

Expected Learning Outcomes:

Successful students are able to:

- 1.1. Analyze and interpret significant works of visual, spatial, literary, and/or performing arts and design.

- 1.2. Describe and explain how cultures identify, evaluate, shape, and value works of literature, art, and design.
- 1.3. Evaluate how artistic ideas influence and shape human beliefs and the interactions between the arts and human perceptions and behavior.
- 1.4. Evaluate social and ethical implications in literature, visual and performing arts, and design.
- 2.1. Engage in informed observation and/or active participation within the visual, spatial, literary, or performing arts and design.
- 2.2. Critically reflect on and share their own experience of observing or engaging in the visual, spatial, literary, or performing arts and design.

This class satisfies these ELOs because students will be asked to read original material from Asian philosophical thinkers, particularly parts of the Pali Canon and the significant works of Mahayana Buddhism, and discuss how they shape how individuals in the east view issues, be they perennial or contemporary. Students will be able to present the core ideas discussed in these great works, and engage with them in both a charitable and critical fashion.

### **Historical OR Cultural Studies**

#### **Goals - Cultural Studies:**

1. Successful students will evaluate significant cultural phenomena and ideas to develop capacities for aesthetic and cultural response, judgment, interpretation, and evaluation.

#### **Expected Learning Outcomes - Cultural Studies:**

Successful students are able to:

- 1.1. Analyze and interpret selected major forms of human thought, culture, ideas, or expression.
- 1.2. Describe and analyze selected cultural phenomena and ideas across time using a diverse range of primary and secondary sources and an explicit focus on different theories and methodologies.
- 1.3. Use appropriate sources and methods to construct an integrated and comparative perspective of cultural periods, events, or ideas that influence human perceptions, beliefs, and behaviors.
- 1.4. Evaluate social and ethical implications in cultural studies.

Through the materials in this class, students will encounter systematic thinking from Asian philosophical sources that challenges the student's belief. This class will enable the student not only to be able to rehearse the basic tenets of Buddhism and how Buddhist views shaped and changed over time, and discuss the ethical views of Buddhist philosophy and draw implications from those ethics regarding how they apply to today's issues.

### Jones' Statement on Syllabus Reading:

- Thank you for making it this far! If you are reading this, send me the following message over email: “*Tell yer folks I says hi*” The first five people to do so will receive an extra two points on their final grade.

### Academic Misconduct

- The Ohio State Code of Student Conduct is available at <http://oaa.osu.edu/coam.html>
- I am obliged to report any suspected violations of The Ohio State Code of Student Conduct (including plagiarism, use of ChatGPT, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty) to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. All decisions about academic sanctions, when appropriate, are made by COAM (and not by me).
- Unless otherwise stated (e.g. group work on research projects), all assignments are to be completed individually. I will be using the Carmen-standard Turnitin.com plagiarism checker for written work.

### Disability Services

- The Office of Student Life Disability Services (<https://slds.osu.edu/>) can be contacted either by phone (614-292-3307) or by email ([slds@osu.edu](mailto:slds@osu.edu)). Currently, and until further notice, all appointments and services will be conducted remotely.
- I will make every effort to appropriately accommodate any students whose disabilities have been certified by the Office of Student Life Disability Services. Students are strongly encouraged to inform me *in advance* (rather than retroactively) of any necessary accommodations.

### Sexual Misconduct

- Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories (e.g., race).
- If you or someone you know has been sexually harassed or assaulted, you may find the appropriate resources at <http://titleix.osu.edu> or by contacting the Ohio State Title IX Coordinator, Kellie Brennan, at [titleix@osu.edu](mailto:titleix@osu.edu)

### Mental Health

- As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems,

feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities. The Ohio State University offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing.

- If you or someone you know are suffering from any of the aforementioned conditions, you can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Office of Student Life's Counseling and Consultation Service (CCS) by visiting [ccs.osu.edu](https://ccs.osu.edu) or calling 614-292-5766. You can reach an on call counselor when CCS is closed at 614-292-5766 and 24 hour emergency help is also available through the 24/7 National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1-800-273-TALK or at [www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](https://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

## Diversity and Inclusion

- Decades of research have shown that diversity, nurtured in a welcoming and respectful environment, encourages critical thinking, reduces harmful stereotypes, and strengthens the ability to communicate, work and play across lines of identity and difference. These are essential skills for participants in a globally-connected world, and Ohio State is committed to providing the richly diverse learning environment that all Ohio State students need to grow into the able leaders and productive citizens that our nation and world demand. Diversity enhances the learning experience by exposing and challenging us to consider, weigh and value the thoughts, experiences, and practices of others different from ourselves.
- The above statement is from the OSU Office of Diversity and Inclusion. For more information, please visit <https://odi.osu.edu/about-office-diversity-and-inclusion>

## Statement on Religion

- Ohio State has had a longstanding practice of making reasonable academic accommodations for students' religious beliefs and practices in accordance with applicable law. In 2023, Ohio State updated its practice to align with new state legislation. Under this new provision, students must be in early communication with their instructors regarding any known accommodation requests for religious beliefs and practices, providing notice of specific dates for which they request alternative accommodations within 14 days after the first instructional day of the course. Instructors in turn shall not question the sincerity of a student's religious or spiritual belief system in reviewing such requests and shall keep requests for accommodations confidential.

- With sufficient notice, instructors will provide students with reasonable alternative accommodations with regard to examinations and other academic requirements with respect to students' sincerely held religious beliefs and practices by allowing up to three absences each semester for the student to attend or participate in religious activities. Examples of religious accommodations can include, but are not limited to, rescheduling an exam, altering the time of a student's presentation, allowing make-up assignments to substitute for missed class work, or flexibility in due dates or research responsibilities. If concerns arise about a requested accommodation, instructors are to consult their tenure initiating unit head for assistance.
- A student's request for time off shall be provided if the student's sincerely held religious belief or practice severely affects the student's ability to take an exam or meet an academic requirement and the student has notified their instructor, in writing during the first 14 days after the course begins, of the date of each absence. Although students are required to provide notice within the first 14 days after a course begins, instructors are strongly encouraged to work with the student to provide a reasonable accommodation if a request is made outside the notice period. A student may not be penalized for an absence approved under this policy.
- If students have questions or disputes related to academic accommodations, they should contact their course instructor, and then their department or college office. For questions or to report discrimination or harassment based on religion, individuals should contact the **Office of Institutional Equity**. (Policy: **Religious Holidays, Holy Days and Observances**)