

Introduction to Philosophy
PHIL 1030
Middle Tennessee State University
Spring, 2012

Section 18: TR 4:20-5:45 Peck Hall 211
Section 19: TR 6:00-7:25 Andrew Todd Hall 212
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“We thought that we had the answers. It was the questions we had wrong.”
U2, 11 O’Clock Tick Tock

“The standard is the standard.” Mike Tomlin

Introduction

The most important skill you can take away from an introductory course in philosophy is the ability to read, with understanding, philosophical texts, and this course is designed to help you acquire that ability. From at least the time of Socrates, philosophy in the West has been understood through a model of dialogue: we learn to think about deep and foundational problems by posing questions of others and interrogating their answers. In this spirit, this course will be centered around dialogue: through active reading and text analysis, you will interrogate authors living and dead, and through writing and conversation (and with the help of your instructor) you will help your peers to understand the books and articles that you read and the ideas they contain.

In the process, you will be introduced to some of the major subfields of philosophy and texts from different periods in its history. Should you choose to take more courses in the discipline, this will provide you with some background to help you select courses that may be of interest to you, or helpful in your future life or career plans. However, it would be impossible to introduce you comprehensively to all the subfields or all the historical periods, and no attempt will be made to do so.

Material Covered

This course is designed to introduce you to representative readings from different periods in the history of philosophy, to both European and Asian traditions, and to different subfields of philosophy. Most readings have been chosen so that they will talk to each other, not in a systematic fashion, but rather in pairwise fashion, so for example Descartes and Zhuangzi begin with similar intuitions, but pursue them in very different ways, whereas Peerenboom and Bell take different approaches to the same trends in contemporary neo-Confucianism.

At the end of this syllabus you will find a daily list of assignments, followed by a curriculum map that illustrates graphically how the various assignments are related. The curriculum map indicates connections between readings in three ways. Readings that are intended to talk to each other are grouped together in boxes when they belong to the same period and tradition. Single arrows show connections between individual readings, and double arrows show connections between groups of readings. The curriculum map also indicates roughly the subfields of philosophy to which each reading belongs.

Our Approach to the Study of Philosophy

Since this is an introductory course in philosophy, the course is designed to help you answer the question “what is philosophy?” The texts you read will be diverse, to indicate some of the range of what constitutes philosophy, but at the same time in your written work I’ll be encouraging you to practice one particular style of philosophy writing, because otherwise it would be too hard to evaluate your performance.

This course is built around comparison: ancient to modern to contemporary, Western to Chinese, and one philosopher to another. Several readings focuses specifically on the problem of how to engage in comparison. All of this is designed to illustrate the idea that there is not just one way to do philosophy; nevertheless, we do need to set some ground rules to establish what will constitute good methods for the study of philosophy.

In this course, we will assume that the development of arguments and clarity of expression are an essential feature of philosophy. Some of the texts you read will appear more narrative (Zhuangzi) or gnomic (Kongzi) than argumentative, but this shouldn’t worry us because the fact that different philosophers pursue different strategies doesn’t imply that we can imitate any of them indiscriminately. Our focus on argumentation and clarity is consistent with the dominant trend in contemporary Anglo-American philosophy, illustrated in different ways by the readings from Thomson, Gracyk, and Sainsbury.

How to Benefit from the Course

The best way for you to learn how to read philosophy is for you to read philosophy – with appropriate support. The best way for you to learn how to think about philosophy is to write about it and talk about it. For this course to work, then, you need to keep up with assignments. If enough students fall behind in their reading, I can always lecture at you: that is, explain to you the philosophical issues we need to address. But that’s not the best way to learn what you need to excel in this course. You need to engage with the material on your own in order to success at the exams that constitute the bulk of your grade.

Required Texts, with MSRPs

You should buy the following books for this course.

- Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Donald Cress, ed., Hackett, 1993. \$ 6.95
- Plato, *The Trial and Death of Socrates*, Grube, Trans, Cooper, ed., Hackett, 2001. \$ 5.50
- bulkpack: this is a collection of readings available from the MTSU bookstore. \$ 46.25

In addition, you can access two of the readings (Thomson and Murphy/Weber) directly through MTSU's library website.

Grading

The following types of assignment will contribute to your final grade for the course in the proportions indicated:

Attendance	5%
Quizzes	10%
Homework	10%
Midterm #1	15%
Midterm #2	30%
Final Exam	30%

Individual questions on exams and quizzes will be assigned lower-cases letter grades, except in rare cases where quizzes will need to be graded on a point scheme and then converted to letter grades. These lower-case grades will then be converted to numerical values so that composite grades can be calculated, and in the end these will be converted back to a single letter grade for the course. The advantage to this system is that it provides you with immediate and clear feedback regarding the quality of your performance: if you get a b+ on a particular essay question, that tells you that on that question you were doing B+ level work, so if all your work was at that level, you could expect to receive a B+ for the course.

Since MTSU does not allow for pluses or minuses to modify A and F grades, and because I only see reason to make fine distinctions in performance at the upper end of the grade distribution, only six grades will be assigned to individual questions: a, b+, b-, c, d, and f. Final grades for the course may be A, B+, B, B-, C, D, or F. General standards for the allocation of these grades are indicated below. First, I reproduce MTSU's standards for letter grades, according to the Academic Regulations (in italics), and then I provide the more specific standards that I will apply in grading particular questions.

A – work of distinctly superior quality and quantity accompanied by unusual evidence of achievement

a:

- work is exceptionally clear (given that this is an introductory course);
- and question is treated completely;
- individual claims may be wrong, but only if correct answers are also given to all elements of the question posed

B – work of good quality and quantity accompanied by evidence of achievement beyond the essentials of the course

b+:

- work is basically clear, though select phrasings may be a little confused
- and any misunderstandings are minor and peripheral;
- there may be small gaps in an answer, but all important parts of a question are treated adequately

b-:

- work shows signs of real understanding on select points, but may contain serious misunderstandings at the periphery of the question;
- or material portions of a question are simply ignored, or treated summarily

C – work demonstrating fulfillment of the essentials of a course

c:

- work shows signs of real understanding on select points, but also contains serious and substantial misunderstandings or gaps;
- or writing is unclear in significant ways, though someone who understands the course materials and knows what has been covered in the course can recognize that a serious attempt is being made to wrestle with course content

D – passing work, but below the standards of graduation quality

d:

- work shows some understanding of course readings, but is seriously incomplete or confused;
- or writing is seriously ambiguous or incoherent

F – failure, necessitating repetition of the course to obtain credit

f:

- assigned to assignments not completed;
- or work shows little or no understanding of course readings

In order to calculate grades, the following conversion scheme will be used to translate between grades in letter and numerical form:

a	100	A	$95 < x \leq 100$
b+	95	B+	$92 < x \leq 95$
		B	$88 < x \leq 92$
b-	85	B-	$80 < x \leq 88$
c	70	C	$40 < x \leq 80$
d	40	D	$20 < x \leq 40$
f	0	F	$0 \leq x \leq 20$

Lower-case letter grades (first column) will initially be translated into numerical values as given in the second column; to determine final course grades, grades will be calculated for quizzes, homework, and exams, and these will be weighted as described above. The ranges in the fourth column will be used to translate these calculated, numerical values back into upper-case letter grades (third column).

For the sake of comparison, I reproduce here the grading standards used in English 1010 and 1020:

The grade of C means that the essay is fairly well organized and manages to convey its purpose to the reader. It lacks serious errors in the use of English, but it lacks the vigor of expression and thought that would entitle it to an above-average grade.

The grade of B means that the essay is logically and adequately developed. Its ideas are developed clearly because it exhibits the positive qualities of good writing listed above. The B essay usually lacks the originality of thought and style that characterizes the A composition.

The grade of A means that the essay shows originality of statement and observation. Its ideas are clear, logical, and even thought-provoking, and it contains all the positive qualities of good writing that are listed above.

Attendance

I will take attendance every day. I won't call out everyone's name; rather, I'll just have a class list at the front of the room, and everyone is expected to sign in when they enter. This will constitute only a small portion of your grade, just enough to incentivize you to make sure you sign in. There are other reasons for attending class: to take quizzes, for example, which count more than mere attendance, and because students who don't attend class regularly don't practice the skills they need to do well in the class.

I plan to issue an Academic Alert for students who miss 2-3 weeks of class; this isn't a promise, but that's my plan. If I do this, your advisor will get an email and probably give you grief.

Homework

You will write a lot in this course. In class you will have three “high-stakes” assignments, AKA exams, and the bulk of your grade will be based on these. You will also write at home and in class, in assignments known in education-speak as “low-stakes.” These will serve as practice for exam writing, and will be “formative,” that is, these regular assignments will help you develop the skills needed to perform well on the exams. Homework writing will be graded based on completion: if you turn in an paper on time, and it is a viable attempt to meet the requirements of the assignment, you will receive full credit for the assignment. Thus, every student should be able to receive full credit for the homework writing portion of the final grade; but to get full credit, you need to do all the work and do it on time. You can miss **two homework assignments** and still receive full credit for this portion of your grade.

Homework assignments will be due on most **Mondays at 5:00 pm**; exact dates are listed below on the schedule. This should allow me time to look over your homework in advance of class. Homework assignments will be posted on D2L before the previous Thursday’s class starts.

Please note that “turning in a paper” has two components: all homework writing (or “papers”) must be **turned in online** through D2L before our assigned class meeting, even for classes that you may miss. Network outages or problems with D2L will not count as viable excuses, so you are advised not to wait until the last minute to turn in your homework. In addition, if you have not been excused from the class session ahead of time, you will be expected to bring copies of the paper to class with you (unless otherwise stated in the assignment, you should bring two hard copies with you). I will not accept paper or emailed copies of homework towards the eight required: to receive credit, you must submit a digital copy through D2L by the deadline.

Quizzes

Quizzes will be frequent, may be either announced or unannounced, and will often be held at the beginning of class. These serve as a proxy for **attendance**, and also encourage you to do your homework carefully. Some may be open book and/or open notes, others not. When held at the beginning of class, these serve to review homework assignments or our previous day’s discussion. When held during or at the end of class, they will test your ability to apply skills that we have practiced during the class period. The best way to maximize your quiz grade is to attend class regularly and for the whole period, and to do homework intentionally: take notes while reading and glance at them before class begins.

Exams

The bulk of your grade will come from performance on exams, which will be short answer or essay format. Exams will be closed-book and closed-notes, but you will have the questions ahead of time. You are strongly advised to write answers to exam questions ahead of time, when you can refer to notes, and reread your answers as your final preparation.

How I Comment on Written Work

Let me just briefly explain how I comment on written work. On graded work (quizzes and exams) I don't write detailed comments. The comments I do make fall into two categories: some are "readerly," that is, they help me read your work, so they're really more for me than for you; think of them as being like footprints, in that people rarely leave footprints for other people, but they leave them nevertheless. The other type are "adventitious": when you say something that I feel I can usefully comment on, I do.

What my comments are generally NOT is strategic and comprehensive: I don't aim to give you detailed feedback on your performance relative to my grading standards. Sometimes I'll write a summative comment, but when I do it's adventitious (it's easy to write, so I do). If you'd like to get a comprehensive view of how I've read your work, I'd rather talk it through with you in person, because then I can better respond to your concerns.

If I'm doing to write systematic comments, I'd rather do it on "formative" work, that is, assignments you write in order to learn how to perform specific skills, because that's more useful: formative assignments, after all, prepare you for graded work.

Course Website

This course uses MTSU's Desire to Learn (D2L) course management system, which can be accessed most easily at <https://elearn.mtsu.edu/>, or from the university's homepage. Additional readings will be posted there, as will updates to the syllabus or general announcements, and you can also submit homework assignments through the site.

Making Up of Work

Quizzes cannot be made up if missed. If students can anticipate not being able to sit for exams for sufficient reason, reasonable attempts will be made to provide makeup exams. Onerous standards will be placed on students who miss exams without advance consultation with the instructor and wish to make them up anyway. Elective extra credit is not possible in this course.

Athletic and Religious Obligations

If you will miss classes or will have trouble meeting assignment deadlines because of religious or athletic commitments, please inform the instructor in the first two weeks of the semester.

Laptops

If it's convenient, you are encouraged to bring a laptop to class every day. In-class writing will often be submitted online, and having a laptop allows you to both produce and turn in the final

version of drafts during the class; otherwise you will have to remember to retype and submit in-class writing when you get home. In addition, laptops are useful for taking notes and accessing the course website. If you can afford one, a netbook will serve your purposes and be easy to carry around and protect from accidental damage.

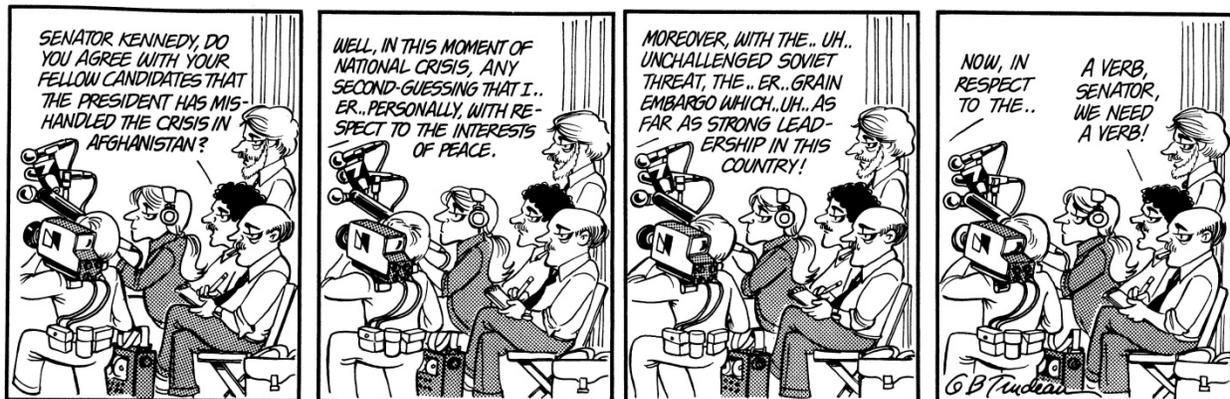
Carl's Rule

Carl's Rule applies to all assignments (including quizzes and exams) for this class. Carl's Rule states: *if Carl can't read it, it's wrong.*

SWE and the Evaluation of Writing

The main learning goal of this course is that you learn how to read a range of philosophical texts with understanding; it is based on the assumption that writing and speaking about such texts not only serves to assess your reading ability, but also builds your reading skills. By putting the ideas of others into your own words, you help yourself to understand (develop your own relation to) these ideas. Your writing will be assessed (graded) based on your ability to describe the structure of arguments and clearly express philosophical concepts and arguments.

While the medium of instruction in this course is English, you will not be assessed on your facility with the dialect known as Standard Written English (SWE). However, you will only get credit for complete sentences, because sentence fragments do not express propositions ("complete ideas," as you may have been taught in school); and words expressed in abbreviated form (such as text-message spelling) will be ignored. In order to get credit for an assignment, **your ideas need to be clearly expressed.**



SWE provides a common and recognizable way for speakers of different dialects of English to communicate, and it is adapted for the expression of complex ideas, so everything being equal you should try to follow its rules; but violation of rules of SWE will not in itself cause you to lose credit on an assignment.

In terms of the skills you have (or will) learned in English 1010, the writing in this class counts as “expository writing.” You will mostly be asked to **summarize** arguments or **describe** their structure, and **paraphrase** or **explain** ideas and arguments. To a limited extent you will also be asked to **assess** arguments, but you will not be asked to develop your own philosophical arguments. I should add here that these are not the low-level skills that they may appear to be: in order to produce a summary of a text, for example, it is necessary to not only understand a text and be able to paraphrase key ideas, but it is also necessary to form **judgments** about the relative importance of different ideas and draw **inferences** not clearly stated in a text. Thus the ability to summarize is a complex and not at all mechanical or formulaic.

The only graded writing required in this class will be performed in class (on exams and quizzes), unlike the core English classes that require the revision of papers, but you will practice revision of your compositions in class in preparation for the high stakes writing required on the exams, and you are encouraged to draft and revise answers to essay questions while studying for exams.

Important Deadlines

January 18 is deadline for students to add a class online.
January 25 is deadline to drop a course without a grade.
March 23 is deadline to drop a course with a grade of "W".

Email

Please note that as per university policy, I am only allowed to email students through their official MTSU address. So if you typically use Gmail, Yahoo, Hotmail, Hushmail, etc., then you should at a minimum set your MTSU email to forward to that account. Better yet, check your MTSU email regularly anyway, and set your cell phone to receive it as well.

Reasonable Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

ADA accommodation requests (temporary or permanent) are determined only by Disabled Students Services. Students are responsible for contacting the Disabled Students Services Office at 615-898-2783 to obtain ADA accommodations and for providing the instructor with the accommodation letter from Disabled Student Services.

Statement on Guests in the Classroom

During exams, only enrolled students and others approved in advance by the instructor may attend this class. Otherwise, anyone is welcome as long as the maximum occupancy of the room is not exceeded; though if lots of visitors want to sit in, they must yield spaces to students who are actually enrolled. Anyone who is not enrolled in the class, or MTSU students who are seeking to add the course in the early weeks of the term, is asked to introduce themselves to the instructor.

In particular, prospective students and their parents, parents of enrolled students, well-behaved children of enrolled students, and MTSU faculty and administrators are welcome to visit the class and do not need to seek permission from the instructor before arriving.

This said, the instructor reserves the right to ask anyone to leave the class due to conduct that interferes with the educational mission of the class, or for other reasons he deems appropriate.

Animals in the Classroom

Only service animals (dogs and miniature horses) are allowed on campus. Students must register with Disabled Student Services before a service animal is allowed as an accommodation. Faculty and staff must request service animals as an accommodation through Human Resources. See Policy No. I:01:13. The instructor welcomes house-bred cats, but apparently the university doesn't allow these, and unfortunately the university policy trumps the instructor's.

Administrivia and Legalese

Faculty and students who do not follow University policies and instructions during emergencies and emergency drills are individually liable.

A list of safest places for each building during a tornado is at:
http://www.mtsu.edu/alert4u/tornado_shelter.shtml. University instructions during emergencies are sent via email, phone calls, and text messages. University websites will also be updated with the latest information. You are encouraged to plan ahead for emergencies.

Anyone wishing to tape (audio and/or video) this class must receive advance permission from the instructor.

Do you have a lottery scholarship? To retain Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship eligibility, you must earn a cumulative TELS GPA of 2.75 after 24 and 48 attempted hours and a cumulative TELS GPA of 3.0 thereafter. You may qualify with a 2.75 cumulative GPA after 72 attempted hours (and subsequent semesters), if you are enrolled full-time and maintain a semester GPA of at least 3.0. A grade of C, D, F, or I in this class may negatively impact TELS eligibility. Dropping a class after 14 days may also impact eligibility; if you withdraw from this class and it results in an enrollment status of less than full time, you may lose eligibility for your lottery scholarship. Lottery recipients are eligible to receive the scholarship for a maximum of five years from the date of initial enrollment, or until a bachelor degree is earned; students who first received the lottery scholarship in Fall 2009 or later will additionally be limited to 120 TELS attempted hours. For additional Lottery rules, please refer to your Lottery Statement of Understanding form via RaiderNet, review lottery requirements on the web at www.mtsu.edu/scholarships/telsconteligibility_scholarships.shtml, or contact the Financial Aid Office at 898-2830.

The instructor reserves the right to make changes to this syllabus as necessary. Should this happen, I will give you as much notice as possible. It is worth saying that I don't intend to make any significant changes, at most tweaking the dates of reading assignments; but sometimes necessity imposes its will, and sometimes students ask for changes, which it's nice to be able to make if it's in your best interests. Any changes will be announced in class and posted on the course website.

Class Schedule

When a reading is indicated, this schedule indicates date by which the assigned reading is to be completed. It is important for you to know when readings must be completed because once you're responsible for having read an assignment, you can be quizzed on it.

In some cases, discussion of a reading may extend beyond a single day. In such cases, I might direct you to do part of the reading for one day, and more on another day. But if that's not a convenient way of scheduling things, I'll ask you to do the reading up front, on one or more days, and then I've got days in the schedule labeled "Class:". That indicates that we'll continue discussing a text that you're supposed to have already finished reading on a previous day.

You can get the papers by Thomson and Murphy/Weber directly from the MTSU library's website. Readings that are in the bulkpack are indicated below by "bp" along with page references in the bulkpack (handwritten, circled numbers).

Jan 12 (R) First Day of Classes

Jan 16 (M) homework #1 due
NB: Homework assignments will be posted on D2L before the previous Thursday's class starts.

Jan 17 (T) Thomson, "The Trolley Problem," sections 1-4
The Yale Law Journal, Vol. 94, No. 6 (May, 1985), pp. 1395-1415

Jan 19 (R) Thomson, "The Trolley Problem," sections 5-10

Jan 23 (M) homework #2 due

Jan 24 (T) Descartes, *Meditations* 1

Jan 26 (R) Descartes, *Meditations* 2

Jan 30 (M) homework #3 due

Jan 31 (T) Descartes, *Meditations* 3

- Feb 2 (R) Descartes, *Meditations* 4
- Feb 6 (M) homework #4 due*
- Feb 7 (T) Class: discuss Descartes
- Feb 9 (R) Class: Midterm Review
- Feb 14 (T) **MIDTERM #1**
- Feb 16 (R) Plato, "Euthyphro"
- Feb 20 (M) homework #5 due*
- Feb 21 (T) Plato, "Euthyphro"
- Feb 23 (R) Class: discuss Plato
- Feb 27 (M) homework #6 due*
- Feb 28 (T) Murphy and Weber, "Confucianizing Socrates and Socratizing Confucius"
Philosophy East & West 60/2 (2010) 187-206
- March 1 (R) Zhuangzi (Chuang Tzu) 1-2 (bp 32-43)
- March 6 (T) NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK
- March 8 (R) NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK
- March 12 (M) homework #7 due*
- March 13 (T) Mengzi 6A1-6A6, Xunzi 23 (bp 44-48, 93-99)
[note that bulkpack also contains an editorial introduction to Xunzi; this is not
required reading]
- March 15 (R) Class: discuss Zhuangzi, Mengzi, and Xunzi
- March 19 (M) homework #8 due*
- March 20 (T) Seneca, *On the Shortness of Life* (bp 75-86)
- March 22 (R) Class: discuss Seneca

March 27 (T) Class: Midterm Review

March 29 (R) **MIDTERM #2**

April 3 (T) Gracyk, *Rhythm and Noise*, Chapter 1 (bp 13-31)

April 5 (R) Sainsbury, *Fiction and Fictionalism*, Chapter 2 (bp 63-74)

April 9 (M) homework #9 due

April 10 (T) Class: discuss Gracyk and Sainsbury

April 12 (R) Peerenboom, "Confucian Harmony and Freedom of Thought" (bp 49-62)

April 16 (M) homework #10 due

April 17 (T) Bell, "Confucian Constraints on Property Rights" (bp 1-9)

April 19 (R) Kongzi (Confucius) 2.1-2.3, 15.5, 17.2-17.3 (bp 10-12)
also, Class: Discuss Peerenboom and Bell

April 24 (T) Class: Final Review

FINAL EXAM, Section 18: Thursday, May 3, 3:30-5:30
Section 19: Tuesday, May 1, 6:00-8:00

Sources of Readings in Bulkpak (complete bibliographic references)

- (1) Daniel Bell, "Confucian Constraints on Property Rights," Chapter 9 in *Confucianism for the Modern World*, ed. by Daniel Bell and Hahm Chaibong, Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 218-235.
- (2) Confucius, *Analects, with a Selection from Traditional Commentaries*, Edward Slingerland, ed., Hackett 2003, pp. 8, 175-176, 200.
- (3) Theodore Gracyk, *Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock*, Duke University Press 1996, Chapter 1, pp. 1-36.
- (4) Victor Mair, *Wandering on the Way: Early Taoist Tales and Parables of Chuang Tzu*, University of Hawaii Press 1994, pp. 3-24.
- (5) *Mengzi: With Selections from Traditional Commentaries*, trans. by Bryan van Norden, Hackett 2008, pp. 143-150.
- (6) Randall Peerenboom, "Confucian Harmony and Freedom of Thought: The Right to Think Versus Right Thinking," Chapter 13 in *Confucianism and Human Rights*, ed. by Theodore de Bary and Tu Weiming, Columbia University Press, 1998, pp. 234-260.
- (7) R. M. Sainsbury, *Fiction and Fictionalism*, Routledge 2010, Chapter 2, pp. 22-43, 218-219.
- (8) Seneca, "On the Shortness of Life," in *Dialogues and Essays*, trans. by John Davie, Oxford University Press 2007, pp. 140-162.
- (9) *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works*, trans. by John Knoblock, Stanford University Press 1988, pp. 139-162, 280, 345-348.

Syllabus version: 1-9-12

Curriculum Map

