The Three Teachings in Medieval China

EALL 700 / RLST 594

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Course Description:

This course explores intersections between the so-called "Three Teachings"—Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism—in medieval China, focusing on the seventh through the ninth century. These religious and intellectual traditions were deeply intertwined throughout this period, and scholars aiming to understand its religious, intellectual, and literary history need to be able to read broadly across their boundaries in a way that few studies to date have done. The central claim of the course is that intellectuals, religious figures, and literati in medieval China tended to be considerably more aware of and engaged with contemporary developments across these "Three Teachings" than are contemporary scholars who study their works, and that contemporary scholarship would benefit considerably from a better understanding of the broad intellectual developments of the medieval period.

Because relatively little work has been done that considers these "Three Teachings" together, and because nothing close to a sufficient general history of the intellectual and religious developments of the medieval period exists in any language, the readings of this course represent less a well-curated narrative than an introductory exploration of a wide range of materials that speak to a set of core questions. These questions include: How did medieval intellectuals think about the relationships between intellectual and religious traditions? Did they draw stark distinctions between traditions, and if so, to what degree do their distinctions map onto contemporary ideas of Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism? How did developments within a given intellectual tradition affect others? To what degree did clergy or intellectuals in one tradition expect to be speaking to clergy or intellectuals in another, either in the attempt to persuade them or in hopes of refuting their claims? What kinds of agreements were there between traditions, and what sorts of disagreements? How did debates in these fields influence other areas of intellectual activity, such as literature?

Because of the exploratory nature of the course, the syllabus of readings given below is also somewhat flexible. We will evaluate student interest and aptitude as we go, so if there are other texts (or genres) you would like to read, or texts you would like to spend more time reading, let us know.

Prerequisites:

All primary readings are in classical/literary Chinese; most have never been translated into any other language. For this reason, the prerequisite is at least one year of classical/literary Chinese, or the equivalent. Though primarily a graduate course, the class is open, with permission from the instructors, to undergraduates with sufficient language skills.

Readings:

Please read the assigned texts carefully before each class, either fully translating them into English or at least making comprehensive notes so that you are prepared to translate them in seminar. Much of our class time will be devoted to working our way through crucial and problematic passages in the assigned text, so please make sure that you are ready to translate when it is your turn.

Grading:

Weekly preparation: 50%

Term paper, due at 5pm on December 19th: 50%

Your term paper should be a research paper of 18-25 pages in length, and should draw on primary sources in Chinese and relevant secondary scholarship. Your paper should engage with at least one of the texts that we read in the seminar. A one-page summary of your proposed paper/topic and preliminary bibliography of primary and secondary sources must be submitted before Thanksgiving break.

Syllabus of Readings:

Tuesday, September 3: Course Introduction

Sight reading of selections from the *Zhenyan yaojue* 真言要決/訣, a preaching text preserved fragmentarily in Japan and at Dunhuang, as S.2695, P.2044, and P.4970. The text is of uncertain date, but we know it existed no later than the 740s, its freewheeling citation of the classics of all Three Teachings has led at least one scholars to argue that it dates from the early 700s. We will be sight-reading the text on the first day, largely as an introductory example of an aggressive use, in a more or less Buddhist framework, of the Chinese Classics as proof texts.

Tuesday, September 11: Buddhist Apologetics of the Earlier Period

The *Mouzi lihuo lun* 牟子理惑論, the "Treatise on the Rectification of Error by Master Mou," is one of the most famous early pieces of pro-Buddhist apologia. Its preface claims that the text was written by "Master Mou," described as a Chinese gentleman living in what is now Vietnam during the late 2nd century. Its true dating has long been a topic of debate among scholars, with proposals ranging from it being an early third-century text, to a mid-fifth-century one (that it is nowhere cited or mentioned in sources prior to the mid-fifth century is certainly suspicious). It is preserved in the Liang-era *Hongming ji* 弘明集. For our purposes the text is significant as one of the most famous early attempts to explain, over the objections of a hostile interlocutor, why Buddhism is compatible with, or perhaps even superior to, both the teachings of Laozi on the one hand and those of the "Confucian" classics on the other.

Tuesday, September 18: An Early Attempt at Synthesis

Selections from the *Bianzonglun* 辩宗論 of the Southern Dynasties aristocrat Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (385–433). Xie was raised in a community of Celestial-Masters Daoists, served as an official under both the Eastern Jin and Liu-Song, and late in his life participated in the retranslation of the *Nirvana sutra*; he thus circulated in communities professing each of the Three Teachings. The *Bianzonglun* was written while Xie was living in exile in Yongjia around 420, and debates novel ideas about "sudden enlightenment" recently introduced by Zhu Daosheng 竺道生 (ca. 360–434), claiming that Daosheng has in fact discovered a teaching that goes beyond the limitations of either Buddhism or Confucianism. The text is preserved in the *Guang Hongming ji* 廣弘明集. We will also read two very famous poems by Xie Lingyun written around the same time, "Climbing Yongjia's Luzhang Mountain" 登永嘉綠嶂山詩 and "Climbing the Tower by the Pool" 登池上樓詩, each of which can be seen as enacting ideas of "sudden enlightenment" discussed in the *Bianzonglun*.

Tuesday, September 25: "Confucianism" in the Southern Dynasties

Selections from the *Lunyu jijie yishu* 論語集解義疏 by Huang Kan 皇侃 (488–545). Based upon the collected Han-dynasty commentaries of the *Lunyu jijie* 論語集解 of He Yan 何晏 (d. 249), the *Lunyu yishu* preserves both Huang Kan's own subcommentary as well as numerous fragments of now-lost *Lunyu* commentaries by such medieval intellectual luminaries as Wang Bi 王弼 (226–249) and Sun Chuo 孫綽 (320-377). The subcommentary is markedly influenced by *Xuanxue* 玄學, and will provide us a point of entry for discussing that tradition. It was lost in China after the Southern Song, but preserved in various manuscripts in monasteries in Japan. After being discovered and edited by Sonshi Nemoto 根本遜志 in the middle of the eighteenth century, the text was reintroduced into China around 1770; questions of the authenticity of various portions linger on. This is the only surviving commentary on the *Lunyu* from the middle of the third century to the beginning of the ninth.

Tuesday, October 2: Buddho-Daoist Scripture in the Sui

Selections from the *Taixnan Zhenyi Benji miaojing* 太玄真一本際妙經 (or simply, *Benji jing*). Buddhists complained for centuries that many "Daoist" scriptures seemed to plagiarize Buddhist texts; this scripture offers compelling evidence for their complaint. The text does not survive entire; fragments were rediscovered at Dunhuang and recompiled by Wu Chi-yu in the middle of the twentieth century. The first five *juan* of the text were purportedly written by the Sui-dynasty Daoist Liu Jinxi 劉進喜; the second five have, with equal uncertainty, been attributed to Li Zhongqing 李仲卿. Few historical records survive concerning either author, but the two seem to have been active between 560 and 640, and the text apparently saw wide circulation in the seventh and eighth centuries.

Tuesday, October 9: "Confucianism" and Wen 文 at the Beginning of the Tang

This week we will read selections from the *Wujing zhengyi* 五經正義. Based upon the Classicist scholarship of the Six Dynasties period and building upon exegeses largely written in the Sui dynasty,

this massive series of subcommentaries to the *Zhouyi* 周易, the *Maoshi* 毛詩, the *Shangshu* 尚書, the *Liji* 禮記, and the *Chunqiu* 春秋 was formally commissioned by Tang Emperor Taizong 唐太宗 in 638 and completed, after three rounds of revision by different committees, in 653. The series was at that point promulgated by the government and formally instituted as the official commentary on the Five Classics for use in the imperial academies and on the civil-service examination, a position it retained throughout the Tang, the Five Dynasties, and most of the Song, until it was replaced by Neo-Confucian commentaries in the Yuan-dynasty examinations begun in 1315. Over the six centuries wherein it was officially backed by, published by, and used by the state, the commentaries contained in the *Wujing zhengyi* were probably among the most widely read of all Classicist works, and their centrality seems to have facilitated the loss of most other Classicist scholarship from the late Six Dynasties, Sui, and Tang.

Alongside short selections from the *Wujing zhengyi*, we will also read selections from the "Jingji zhi" 經籍志 of the *Suishu* 隋書, compiled around the same period, and Gao Jian's 高儉 (575–647) introduction to the thousand-*juan* compilation of past literature and government documents, the *Wensi boyao* 文思博要. These texts discuss the importance of the concept of *wen* 文 in the ideology of the Zhen'guan 貞觀 era.

Tuesday, October 16: A Chongxuan Zhuangzi

Selections from the Nanhua zhenjing zhushu 南華真經注疏, i.e., the Zhuangzi 莊子, with annotations by Guo Xiang 郭象 (d. 312) and a subcommentary by Cheng Xuanying 成玄英 (ca. 600–690). In this week's reading, we will primarily be interested in understanding the thought of Cheng Xuanying, a Daoist priest active in capital circles in the mid-seventh century. He is retrospectively grouped with a set of other seventh-century Daoists under the heading of *Chongxuanxue* 重玄學, a "school" of early-Tang Daoist thought whose central defining characteristic seems to be the adoption of the Madhyamaka tetrilemma as a formal means of working out the relationship between the traditional *xuanxue* concepts of "being" 有 and "nonbeing" 無. We will also consider *Chongxuan* commentaries the following week, in the hopes of investigating to what degree they are homogeneous in their approach to the Daoist classics. As you read this week, try to pay attention to differences between the thought of Guo Xiang and that of Cheng Xuanying (as well as, of course, the differences between these thinkers and modern interpretations of the *Zhuangzi*).

Tuesday, October 23: Medieval Commentaries on the Daodejing

Selections from several commentaries on the *Daodejing* 道德經 of *Laoxi* 老子. We will primarily be interested in the so-called *Heshanggong* 河上公 commentary, of uncertain date (supposedly Han, but more likely written in the fourth or fifth century); the Li Rong 李榮 (*fl.* mid seventh c.) commentary; and the commentary and subcommentary written by Emperor Tang Xuanzong 玄宗 (r. 713–756). Since the Tang ruling house claimed descent from Laozi, the *Daodejing* was afforded a special place among the Classics throughout the dynasty, and scholarship of the text was one path into government service. This week, we will consider a small subset of the surviving medieval commentaries on the text to get a sense of the debates about its meaning that were current in the seventh and eighth centuries.

Tuesday, October 30: Imperial Buddhism

In addition to his commentaries on the *Daodejing* (see above), Emperor Tang Xuanzong also composed commentaries to the *Xiaojing* 孝經 and the *Diamond Sutra* 金剛經 (御注金剛般若波羅 蜜經), thus making him the author of 3 commentaries associated with a central scripture of each of the Three Teachings. Xuanzong's commentary on the *Diamond Sutra*, which we will read this week, is one of only a handful of imperially authored Buddhist commentaries. Based on its preface, it was composed in 735, and was quickly promulgated throughout the empire. The later Chinese Buddhist tradition, however, largely ignored it. It was not included in any of the official Chinese Buddhist canons, and survives to us only in fragmentary form, through a few Dunhuang manuscripts and a version that was included among the Buddhist texts carved on stone and interred at Fangshan 房山. Scholars have used these versions to reconstruct most, but not all, of the text and its preface. The emphasis by Xuanzong on the Diamond Sutra is especially interesting to consider given the ideological importance that this text assumed with the early Chan School, which rose to prominence during Xuanzong's reign.

Tuesday, November 6:

The *Dunwu zhenzong yaojue* 頓悟真宗要決 (Essential Formulas of the True Lineage of Sudden Awakening). This text, which survives to us only within the Dunhuang manuscripts, is one of the many later-lost documents associated with "Early Chan" that modern scholars have looked to for an understanding of the origins and early development of this school of Chinese Buddhism, which later came to dominate Chinese Buddhism in the Song and even beyond, and which is sometimes considered to be the form/style of Chinese Buddhism that was most deeply "influenced" by both Confucianism and Daoism. A preface to the text dates it to 712, the very beginning of Xuanzong's reign, and era that (despite the later stories that ground its history in much earlier times) is now know to be the time when Chan really began in earnest. Like many "Early Chan" documents, the *Dunwu zhenzong yaojue* expresses ideas often seem rather different than what would later become a more "orthodox" Chan understanding. We will be interested in this particular text firstly because of its focus on the *Diamond Sutra* (see the previous week), and secondly, because it presents a quite unusual understanding of Buddhist meditation and cultivation that seems to bring it rather close to what we might more typically think of as a "Daoist" approach.

Tuesday, November 13: Daoist Meditation Practices (the Zuowang lun 坐忘論 and others)

The primary text we will read this week is the Zuowang lun 坐忘論, a treatise on "sitting in oblivion" (a term originating in the Zhuangzi) attributed to Sima Chengzhen 司馬承楨 (647-735), a prominent Daoist master in the early 8th century who was patronized by Emperor Xuanzong. It is transmitted to us in an independent version in the Daoist Canon (道藏), and slightly different version within the Song-dynasty Daoist encyclopedia the Yun ji qi qian 雲笈七籤. The Zuowang lun is notable as a Daoist "meditation" text that eschews the alchemical register of much Daoist cultivation literature and borrows heavily from Buddhist vocabulary and understanding about the nature of meditation and its fruits. To this extent, it is very similar to the "Twofold Mystery" current

of Tang Daoism that we have already seen examples of. Along with the Zuowang lun we may also read portions of several other Daoist scriptures, seemingly written around this same time, that address similar topics using a very similar register of language.

Tuesday, November 27: Yuanren lun 原人論

The "Inquiry into the Origins of Humanity" (*Yuanren lun*), written by the Buddhist monk Guifeng Zongmi 圭峰宗密 (780-841). Zongmi is remembered as a "patriarch" of both the Chan but also Huayan 華嚴 traditions, and his voluminous writings are among our more important surviving sources for early 9th-century Buddhist intellectual history. The *Yuanren lun* is something like a Buddhist primer, probably intended for a non-monastic audience. (Its title may well have been intended as a response to Hanyu's famous *yuan* essays, one of which we will read next week.) To this extent, it serves as a useful introduction to this day to Chinese Buddhism for non-specialists. However it does also draw on the long Chinese Buddhist tradition of what was called *panjiao* 判教 or "classification of teachings" in which Chinese Buddhist scholiasts attempted to arrange, in various ways, the diverse assemblage of Buddhist philosophical systems to which they were heir into a coherent yet also strictly hierarchical system. What makes the *Yuanren lun* interesting given our concerns in this class that Zongmi explicitly incorporates the non-Buddhist teachings of Daoism and Confucianism into his *panjiao*, and thus offers a novel vision of the relationship between the three.

Tuesday, December 4: The End of the Middle Ages

This week, we will be reading two texts that have often been understood as paving the way to Songdynasty Neoconfucianism. The first, and probably the earlier text is Han Yu's 韓愈 (768–824) "Yuan dao" 原道, a polemical text that announced a radical break with certain signal medieval assumptions. The second, longer text, is Li Ao's 李翱 (772–841) *Fuxing shu* 復性書, which uses what seem markedly Buddhist concepts to interpret classical "Confucian" doctrines. In this respect, Li Ao is a precursor for the various Song-dynasty Neoconfucians who simultaneously absorbed Buddhist ideas while rejecting Buddhism itself as dangerous and foreign.

Essential Reference Texts:

If you are not already, you should make an effort to become familiar with all of the below listed reference works over the course of this semester and use them regularly as you read the assigned texts.

General Dictionaries

- Luo Zhufeng 羅竹風, ed. Hanyu da cidian 漢語大詞典. Shanghai: Hanyu da cidian chubanshe, 2001. (One of many printings and editions. This is *the* dictionary to use for most nonspecialist vocabularies.)
- Kroll, Paul. A Student's Dictionary of Classical and Medieval Chinese. Leiden: Brill, 2017. (Useful for translation, but contains very few binomes, so not close to sufficient for reading.)

• An online version of this dictionary is available through a Yale proxy: <u>http://chinesereferenceshelf.brillonline.com/chinese-english/</u>

Dictionaries of Chinese Buddhist Terminology

The Digital Dictionary of Buddhism (DDB)

- <u>http://www.buddhism-dict.net/ddb/</u> (available using a Yale proxy)
- Compiled on the basis of all of the major modern dictionaries of Chinese Buddhist terms.
- Use with care; sometimes includes very specialized terms that may have the relevant meaning only in the specific source cited.

Foguang da cidian 佛光大辭典. Foguang Chubanshe 佛光出版社, 1989

- <u>https://www.fgs.org.tw/fgs_book/fgs_drser.aspx</u>
- This is the most comprehensive Chinese-Chinese dictionary of Buddhist terminology.
- It was largely compiled based on the two Japanese dictionaries below.

Nakamura Hajime 中村元. 2001. Kösetsu Bukkyögo daijiten 広說佛教語大辞典. Tokyo: Tokyo shoseki.

Mochizuki Shinkō 望月信亨, ed. 1958-1963. Bukkyō daijiten 佛教大辭典. 10 vols. Tokyo: Sekai seiten kanko kyokai.

- These two together are the "gold standard" of modern dictionaries of Chinese Buddhist terminology.
- The first is a dictionary; the second, more like an encyclopedia.
- Even if you don't use these frequently, it is worth going to the East Asian reference room and becoming familiar with them.

Dictionaries of Daoism

- Hu Fushen 胡孚琛, ed. Zhonghua Daojiao da cidian 中华道教大辞典. Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1995.
- Li Shuhuan 李叔還, ed. Daojiao da cidian 道教大辭典. Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 1987. (Also reproduced by other presses several times.)

Allusion Dictionaries

- Lu Zunwu 陆尊梧 and Li Zhijiang 李志江, eds. Lidai diangu cidian 历代典故辞典. Beijing: Zuojia chubanshe, 1990.
- Yang Renzhi 楊任之, ed.. Zhongguo diangu cidian 中國典故辭典. Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1993.
- Shandong daxue guji zhengli yanjiusuo 山东大学古籍整理研究所, ed. Wenxue diangu cidian 文学典故词典. Jinan: Qi-Lu shushe, 1987.

• There are a great number of allusion dictionaries, and it is a good thing too: none of them is particularly comprehensive. You may have to consult several before you find your reference; and after that, you'll need to look up the original text, as many merely paraphrase. Sou-yun.com has a useful quicksearch, but it is far from complete.

Dictionaries of Chinese Philosophy

- Fang Keli 方克立. Zhongguo zhexue da cidian 中国哲学大辞典. Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1994.
- Wei Zhengtong 韋政通, ed. Zhongguo zhexue cidian daquan 中國哲學辭典大全. Beijing: Shijie tushu chuban gongsi, 1989.
 - Use these with extreme caution. They are useful for finding the general source and reference of philosophical terminology, but the definitions are often untrustworthy.

General Reference Guides:

Endymion Wilkinson. *Chinese History: A New Manual, Fifth Edition.* Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2017.

• If you don't own this book, you should; it is shockingly affordable to buy.

Digital Text Repositories

The huge number of digital texts now available is both a boon and burden; a boon because one can easily find what used to require days of research or vast erudition; a burden because i) there is no longer any excuse *not* to find all textual references, allusions, etc., and ii) because the sheer volume of material is sometimes hard to navigate. We will not spend a great deal of time chasing this kind of information, but a basic knowledge of how to navigate these kinds of resources is necessary for all serious work in this field. Two collections which may prove useful for our work in this class are:

- 1. The 漢典電子文獻資料庫, of Academia Sinica: <u>http://hanchi.ihp.sinica.edu.tw/ihp/hanji.htm</u>
 - With a Yale proxy you will have access to the superior version (click on the 授權 button)
 - This repository includes most of the key pieces of traditional Chinese literature that you ever might need search through when working on the Tang or earlier periods (and much more besides).
 - It also includes the Daoist Canon (道藏)
 - Some Buddhist material is here, but better to use #2 below
- 2. The SAT Database (http://21dzk.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/SAT/index_en.html)

- Here you will find an easy to use digital edition of the 大正新編大藏經, the most useful modern collection of "canonical" Chinese Buddhist literature.
- It includes scanned copies of the original books as well.
- Learning your way around this collection takes time. Vols. 1-55 and 85 are Chinese Buddhist literature, the rest is from Japan.
- Vols. 1-32 are the Chinese Buddhist sutras and other scriptures translated from Indian sources.

Preliminary Course Bibliography:

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- Robert Ashmore. "Word and Gesture: On Xuan-School Hermeneutics of the Analects." Philosophy East and West 54.1 (2004): 458–488.
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- T. H. Barrett. Li Ao: Buddhist, Taoist, or Neo-Confucian? Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.
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- Alan K. L. Chan. Two Visions of the Way: A Study of the Wang Pi and the Ho-shang Kung Commentaries on the Lao-Tzu. Albany: SUNY Press, 1991.
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- Patricia B. Ebrey and Peter N. Gregory, eds. *Religion and Society in T'ang and Sung China*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993.
- Bernhard Fuehrer, "Exegetical Strategies and Commentarial Features of Huang Kan's Lunyu [jijie] yishu." In Huang, Chun-chieh, ed., Dongya Lunyuxue: Zhongguo pian 東亞論語學: 中國篇. Taipei: National Taiwan University Press, 2009: pp. 274–296.
- Bokenkamp, Stephen R. 1983. "Sources of the Ling-pao Scriptures." In *Tantric and Taoist Studies in Honor of R.A. Stein*, edited by Michel Strickmann, 434-486. Bruxelles: Institut Belge des Hatues Etudes Chinois.
- Bokenkamp, Stephen R. 2007. *Ancestors and anxiety : Daoism and the birth of rebirth in China*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
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- Andrew Seth Meyer. "The *Correct Meaning of the Five Classics* and the Intellectual Foundations of the Tang." PhD Thesis: Harvard University, 1999.
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- Mugitani Kunio 麦谷邦夫, ed. 2005. Sankyo kosho ronso 三教交涉論叢. Kyoto: Kyoto Daigaku Jinbun Kagaku Kenkyujo.
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- Mugitani Kunio 麦谷邦夫. 2007. To Genso Kongo hara mitsukyo chu sakuin 唐玄宗金剛般若波羅蜜經注索引. Kyoto: Kyoto Daigaku Jinbun Kabaku Kenkyu o Fuzoku Kanji Joho Kenkyu Senta.
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- Robert Sharf, *Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism: A Reading of the* Treasure Store Treatise (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005).
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