

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY OF CHINESE PHILOSOPHY

As indicated by its name, the department concentrates on the study of the history of Chinese philosophy, but the word “philosophy” is defined in a very broad sense. How have Chinese people understood the universe and nature, or the relations between people and society? How have they acted on the basis of those understandings? Our discipline traces Chinese people’s thought and practice in historical perspective.

People may associate the term “Chinese philosophy,” above all, with Confucian thought, typically that of Confucius and Mencius, or Taoism.

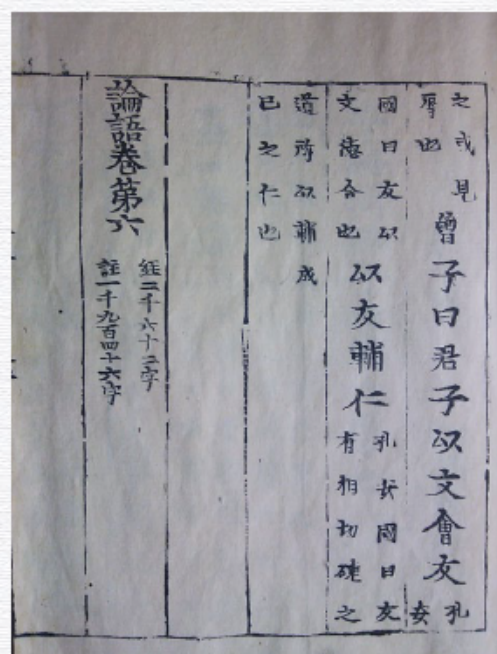
In truth, Confucianism and Taoism constitute the most important themes for students of Chinese philosophy, and are indeed pivotal parts of the department’s research and education activities. However, Chinese philosophy covers a much broader spectrum; it can encompass all philosophical endeavors undertaken in China’s history, or we may even venture to say, all spheres of Chinese culture. Thus, aside from courses in Confucianism and Taoism, students are offered classes on religion,

art and science in China.

There are a few things that should be noted by prospective students.

First, since the department has traditionally focused on pre-modern China (from the Spring and Autumn period to the early 20th century), our programs may not meet the needs of those students who are interested solely in modern China. Furthermore, China as the object of study here mainly refers to regions and peoples using Chinese characters and the Chinese language. Hence, an essential part of students’ daily work consists of reading classical texts written in Classical Chinese and Chinese characters. Indeed, our curriculum places the greatest emphasis on developing students’ skills in reading Classical Chinese.

Finally, we might add that being a “booklover” is one of the minimum qualifications for students of the history of Chinese philosophy even though becoming one requires no special talent.



L: Classroom Photo

R: Lunyu