

Chinese Classical Aesthetic Ideal

Department: Fudan International Summer Session 2025

Course Code	PHIL110045. 01						
Course Title	Chinese Classical Aesthetic Ideal						
Credit	2	Experiment (including Computer) Credit		Practice Credit		Aesthetic Education Credit	
Credit Hours Per Week	2	Education on The Hard-Working Spirit Credit Hours		Language of Instruction	Engli sh	Honors Course	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Course Objectives	As a Core General Ed course, the course aims to promote a broader and deeper understanding of the spirit and aesthetic values of Chinese culture from a philosophical perspective. It expects to cultivate TWO abilities: firstly, to develop the ability of philosophical textual interpretation in order to understand the ideas and arguments in ancient canons. Secondly, to develop students' ability to “read” specific artworks, perceiving and understanding art in a larger cultural, political, and intellectual context.						
Course Description	This course provides a detailed, vivid introduction to the origin and distinctive artistic features of Chinese traditional culture, namely, the culture of RITES and MUSIC. Arranged in fifteen lectures, the course will first trace the culture foundation imbedded in archeological artifacts (bronzeware, musical instruments, etc.) as well as in Confucian canons. The course will then dive into three perfections of traditional Chinese arts (calligraphy, painting, and poetry) to analyze those “suggestive but not articulate” features in specific artworks. It will also explain the philosophical ideas, aesthetic interests and humanistic values of Chinese culture.						
Course Requirements: The class requires student presentations, individual/group presentations, and a final paper due. In addition, emphasis is placed on class participation, with discussions organized within the classroom.							
Teaching Methods: (1) Lecture-based, (2) Theory/artistic practice combination: Museum/Art Gallery trip (optional)							
Course Director's Academic Background: CHEN Jia is associate professor teaching at the Department of Aesthetics and Philosophy of Art, School of Philosophy, Fudan University. She received her PhD from University of Illinois at							

Urbana-Champaign (USA). Her research interests include comparative philosophy of art and aesthetic education, modern western aesthetics (esp. John Dewey pragmatism aesthetics, aesthetics of symbolism). Dr. Chen has published one English monograph in the field of aesthetics and philosophy of art, co-authored four edited books and translations, and published bilingually articles in a number of leading domestic and international journals including *Academic Monthly*, *International Aesthetics*, *Fudan Journal*, *Art Magazine*, *Educational Theory (English)*. Her most recent English publication is “Harmony in the Arts: The Sense of Communication in Confucian and Deweyan Aesthetics” collected in *Confucianism and Deweyan Pragmatism: Resources for a New Geopolitics of Interdependence* (University of Hawaii Press, 2021).

Instructor's Academic Background:

See above

Members of Teaching Team

Name	Gender	Professional Title	Department	Responsibility

Course Schedule (Please supply the details about each lesson/unit, including reading materials with page numbers listed, reflection questions/questions for further consideration, etc):

Class 1 Introduction

1. The Axial Age
2. Pre-Qin Timeline

Questions:

- 1) What’s the overall relationship between Chinese aesthetics and “the art of living”?
- 2) What’s the meaning of “the Axial Age” proposed by Karl Jaspers?

Part I. Cultural Foundation of Chinese Art

Class 2 The Origin and Features of Chinese Civilization

1. Geographic and Economic Conditions
2. The Cultural Pattern of Ancient China

[Readings]: Fung, Chapter 1 & 2

Questions:

- 1) What does it mean to say that ancient Chinese civilization is independent and precocious?
- 2) What were the reasons for the “priority of agriculture” in ancient China?

Class 3 Painted Pottery and Bronzeware: Images and Designs

1. Painted Pottery
2. Bronzeware

[Readings]: (1) Ye, Chap. 13;
(2) Li, Chap. 1, pp. 1-11

Questions:

- 1) According to LI Zehou, what's the germination of Chinese aesthetic consciousness?
- 2) What's the earliest artwork in your own culture? Any archeological, historical evidence?

Class 4 Music and the Rites: Harmony without Sameness

1. The Origin of Music
2. The System of Rites and Music

[Readings]: (1) Ye, Chap. 12;
(2) Li, Chap. 1, pp.11-29

Questions:

- 1) How does the concept of Music in Pre-Qin China differ from its modern meaning?
- 2) Were rites and music independent from each other? Why?

Class 5 Confucian Heritage: *Yue Jiao*

1. The Culture of Rites and Music: Confucius' Contribution
2. Harmony—Rational Principles in a Balanced Musical Emotion
3. Music and A Whole Person Education

[Readings]: (1) Lau *
(2) Zong, Chap.14, pp.152-167

Questions:

- 1) Please share your understanding of the passage 2.4 in *the Analects*.
- 2) What did Music Education consist of then?

Class 6 Group Discussion (Topic TBD) or Museum Trip

1. Musical Notes and Instruments
2. Goodness and Beauty
3. Holistic Education

Part II. Three Perfections of Chinese Art

Class 7 & 8 Calligraphy: Rhythmic Force-Form

1. From Chinese Characters to Calligraphy
2. The Beauty of Chinese Calligraphy—Flying Strokes
3. Cross-cultural dialogue on the notion of “line”

[Readings]: (1) Shi, Xiongbo

(2) Fry, Roger

(3) Zong, Baihua: Chap.13, pp. 135-151

Questions:

- 1) What's the relationship between pragmatic features of calligraphy and its aesthetic features?
- 2) What were the main features of two kinds of lines according to Roger Fry?
- 3) How did Zong Baihua analyze the correlation between the structure of calligraphy and the notion of void? Could you give an example?

Class 9 &10 Ink-wash Painting: Far-reaching Tranquility

1. Natural Depiction
2. Shaping beyond Likeness
3. Aesthetics of Space Consciousness

[Readings]: (1) Zong, Baihua: Chap.8 & 9

(2) Bush, Chap.1, pp.18-42

Questions:

- 1)What're the philosophical reasons underlying the popularity of ink-wash painting started since Tang Dynasty?
- 2) What were the main ideas of human/nature relationship expressed in ink-wash painting?
- 3) What does Zong Baihua mean by “space consciousness”?

Class 11 &12 Tang Poetry: Meaning Beyond Words

1. Splendid Peak of Artistic Development

2. Main Genres, Themes, Schools

3. Poetry into Painting

[Readings]: (1) Liu, part I: 3, pp.20-38;

(2) Xu, Yuanchong: Introduction, pp. 28-38

(3) Zong, Baihua: Chap. 20 & 22

Questions:

1) What are the main artistic formal features of New Genre Poetry?

2) How would you comment on the aesthetic images embodied in Li Bai's poems?

3) What are the roles of musical elements in poetry?

***: see attached "reading assignments" for details**

Reading Assignments for Confucius' *Analects*

in Lau, D.C. trans. *The Analects: sayings of Confucius*, 1992.

I. Confucius on Music

Passages: 1.12
2.4
3.1, 3.20, 3.23, 3.25
6.20
7.6, 7.14, 7.32
8.8, 8.15
9.15
13.23
15.11
17.20

II. Confucius on Poetry

Passages: 2.2
12.1
16.13
17.9

III. Confucius on Aesthetic Ideal

Passages: 6.18, 6.29, 6.23

11.26

The design of class discussion or exercise, practice, experience and so on:

See Class 6 Group Discussion (topic TBD)

1. Musical Notes and Instruments
2. Goodness and Beauty
3. Holistic Education

If you need a TA, please indicate the assignment of assistant:

TA is expected to assist the instructor with organizing discussions, arranging presentations and grading non-regular homework.

Grading & Evaluation (Provide a final grade that reflects the formative evaluation process):
 Class Participation (20%) + Presentation (30 %) + Final Paper (50%)

Usage of Textbook: Yes (complete textbook information form below) No

Textbook Information (No more than two textbooks) :

Title	Author	ISBN	Publishing Time	Publisher	Type I	Type II
					<input type="checkbox"/> Self-compiled Textbook (Published) <input type="checkbox"/> Non-mainland Textbook <input type="checkbox"/> Other Textbook (Published)	<input type="checkbox"/> National Planning Textbook <input type="checkbox"/> Provincial and Ministerial Planning Textbook <input type="checkbox"/> School Level Planning Textbook <input type="checkbox"/> Others
					<input type="checkbox"/> Self-compiled Textbook (Published) <input type="checkbox"/> Non-mainland Textbook <input type="checkbox"/> Other Textbook (Published)	<input type="checkbox"/> National Planning Textbook <input type="checkbox"/> Provincial and Ministerial Planning Textbook <input type="checkbox"/> School Level Planning Textbook <input type="checkbox"/> Others

Teaching References (Including author, title, publisher, publishing time,ISBN):

1. Ye, Lang and Zhu, Liangzhi: *Insights into Chinese Culture*. Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, Beijing, 2008. [pdf]
2. Fung, Yu-lan. *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*. Free Press, 1948. [pdf]
3. Lau, D.C. trans. *The Analects: sayings of Confucius*, 1992. [pdf]
4. Li, Zehou. *The Chinese Aesthetic Tradition*. Trans. Maija Bell Samei. University of Hawai'i Press,2010. [pdf]
5. Zong, Baihua, *An Aesthetics Anthology*. Trans. ZHANG Wei, Routledge, 2023. [pdf]
6. Liu, James. *The Art of Chinese Poetry*. The University of Chicago Press, 1962. [pdf]
7. Owen, Stephen. *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought*, Harvard University Press, 1992. [pdf]
8. Xu, Yuanchong trans. *Selected Poems of Li Bai*, Hunan People's Publishing House, 2007. [pdf]
9. Bush, Susan and Shih, Hsio-yen, *Early Chinese Texts on Painting*, Hong Kong University Press, 2012. [pdf]
10. Ames, Roger, eds., *Xu Bing and contemporary Chinese art: cultural and philosophical reflections*, State University of New York Press, 2011. [pdf]
11. Fry, Roger, "Line as a Means of Expression in Modern Art Author", in *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, Dec., 1918, Vol. 33, No. 189, pp. 201-203; 205-208. [pdf]
12. Shi, Xiongbo, "Chinese Calligraphy as 'Force-Form'", in *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, Volume 53, Number 3, Fall 2019, pp. 54-70. [pdf]

Table column size can be adjusted according to the content.