

**KINGSBOROUGH COMMUNITY COLLEGE**  
**of The City University of New York**

Philosophy 78: Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism, and Taoism: Philosophy in Asian Traditions  
Professor Barnhart

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Office Hours:

Texts:

Patrick Olivelle, translator. *Upanisads*. Oxford University Press, 1996.

John J. Holder, editor and translator. *Early Buddhist Discourses*. Hackett Publishing Company, 2006.

Edward Slingerland, translator. *Confucius, Analects: With Selections from Traditional Commentaries*. Hackett Publishing Co., 2003.

Stephen Addiss and Stanley Lombardo, translators. *Tao Te Ching,, Lao Tzu*. Hackett Publishing Company, 1993.

Hermann Hesse, *Siddhartha*, Translated by Hilda Rosner. Mass Market Paperback.

This course surveys the development of philosophical thought in the great Asian religious traditions. Special emphasis is placed on the major philosophical debates between and within these divergent traditions. Though we will be concerned with what sorts of religious beliefs typify each tradition, our primary focus will be on the ways in which these beliefs are interpreted, justified, and defended against their rivals. Students should expect to come away with both an appreciation of the intellectual riches of Asia and a basic introduction to the enduring philosophical questions with which mankind perennially wrestles.

Learning Goals

The purpose of any philosophy course is to encourage students to think and to sharpen their ability to do so. Philosophical analysis is critical and conceptual. It focuses not only on what someone thinks but most importantly on the reasons that support those views. In terms of CUNY Pathways requirements, this course falls under "World Cultures and Global Issues." We will be examining the philosophical content of the major traditions of south and east Asia.

Students should be able to:

- Construct critical arguments, provide evidence, and examine underlying premises
- Gather and analyze information from multiple scholarly sources
- Show understanding of philosophical issues and arguments as they arise in an Asian context
- Analyze and discuss the intersection of religious belief and philosophical analysis in Asian societies and cultures
- Write clearly and critically

Requirements

There will be two short papers (3-4 pages and 5-6 pages), an initial and a final examination. Topics for essays will be provided well in advance. In addition, since this is a philosophy course, class attendance and participation in discussion is also emphasized. Grades are determined on the basis of three weighted factors: performance on the two written essays, the two examinations, and participation in class discussion.

Essays focus on a number of topics and issues. For example, what is the concept of self

expressed in the Katha Upanisad's injunction to "Know the self as a rider in a chariot, and the body, as simply the chariot"? Or, How do Confucians justify the claim that we must discriminate and follow the way? Why would Daoists disagree? Students are expected to give reasons based on textual analysis to support their answers.

### Schedule of Topics and Assignments

**Week 1:** Introduction; Themes in Asian Traditions; India and the Vedic Tradition. Purchase books, read Introduction in Olivelle, *Upanisads*, xxiii-lvi. Start *Siddhartha*.

**Week 2:** The early Upanishads, What is *Brahman*? What is *Atman*? Read Chap. 4, *Bṛhadaranyaka Upanisad*, 52-72 in Olivelle. **ESSAY I TOPICS on 3/12**

**Week 3:** *Atman=Brahman*? Read in Olivelle, *Chandogya Upanisad*, chap.s 6&7, 148-166.

**Week 4:** *Katha Upanisad*, 230-247. **ESSAY I DUE, March 26**

**Week 5:** Buddhism, introduction to major themes, Read Introduction and Chap.s 1, 3, and 4 in *Buddhist Discourses* by Holder.

**Week 6:** Buddhist Challenges, internal and external, Read Holder, Chap.s 2, 6-11, and 13.

**Week 7:** Hinduism/Buddhism in perspective. Discussion of *Siddhartha*. **REVIEW; EXAMINATION I**

**Week 8:** Core Confucian teachings. Slingerland, *Confucius*, Introduction, xiii-xxv, Books 1-7 of the *Analects*, 1-77. Last day for W (5/8)

**Week 9:** Confucian conduct and good government. Read Slingerland, Books 9-10, 12-14 of the *Analects*; 86-110, 125-173.

**Week 10:** The Taoist challenge. Read *Tao Te Ching* 1-37

**Week 11:** The Taoist challenge. Read *Tao Te Ching* 38-81. Taoism vs. Confucianism **ESSAY II TOPICS on 5/14**

**Week 12:** REVIEW. Final Reflections: What are the themes within Asian Philosophy?  
**ESSAY II DUE**  
**FINAL EXAMINATION**