

CONFUCIANISM AND CHINESE TRADITION

RELIGION 4402 / 6402
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA
SPRING 2008



PROFESSOR RUSSELL KIRKLAND



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PEABODY HALL 221



BY APPOINTMENT

"Were one asked to characterize the life of religion in the broadest and most general terms possible, one might say that it consists of the belief that there is an unseen order, and that our supreme good lies in harmoniously adjusting ourselves thereto."

— WILLIAM JAMES (1842-1910), *THE VARIETIES OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE* (1902)



THE PURPOSE OF THE COURSE

The academic study of religion is a systematic exploration of the visions, values, and activities by which individuals and societies of past and present have understood and shaped their life-experiences. The goal of such courses is to promote a mature sensitivity to religious traditions, personalities, issues, and institutions, within their proper historical contexts. Such courses are not intended to persuade students either toward or away from any specific tradition, nor are they intended to serve as an element of any personal spiritual search in which students might already be engaged. Rather, the goal of such courses is for students to achieve an accurate understanding of certain cultures' religions on those cultures' own terms, and to evaluate those religions in a manner that is both properly critical and properly sympathetic. Should you want an experience that is "spiritually fulfilling" to you personally, please go to a religious center of your choice and practice there. You are in this course to study religion: if you wish to practice religion, or to learn how to do so, you are in the wrong place.

Confucianism is a humanistic—and, some would say—religious value-system, which is based on the teachings of "Confucius" (Kongzi: 551- 479 BCE). It stresses the moral responsibilities of the individual as a member of society, and Chinese society has been deeply ingrained with Confucian values for many centuries. This course will explore Confucianism as it evolved through Chinese history. (It will not explore Confucian traditions of other lands, such as Korea or Japan.) Following tradition, our starting place will be Confucius himself. We will examine his teachings, and the teachings of his followers in later generations — particularly Mencius (Mengzi) and Hsün-tzu (Xunzi) — as they refined Confucianism in response to the challenges of rival schools, such as Mohism, Taoism, and Legalism. We will also explore the cosmic dimensions of early Confucianism by examining the classical text known as the *Chung-yung* (*Zhongyong*) and the thought of the Han dynasty thinker Tung Chung-shu (Dong Zhongshu). We will then turn to the Buddhist-influenced metaphysical theories and meditative practices of the "Neo-Confucians" of the 10th-16th centuries, then to selected Confucian thinkers of the 19th and 20th centuries. Finally, we will consider the enduring but oft-ignored Chinese tradition of reverence of Confucius as a divine being. The ultimate goal of the course will be to assess the religious dimensions of Confucianism, and to determine the sense(s) in which it might be appropriate to call the Confucian tradition "a religion."

This syllabus is simply a general plan for the course. Changes and variations, as announced to the class by the instructor, may be necessary at times. All academic work must meet the standards contained in the document titled *A Culture of Honesty*. All students are responsible for informing themselves about those standards before performing any academic work. You are also expected to take thorough notes in class. Whenever you miss class, it is your responsibility to check with classmates about what you missed—not to expect the instructor to give you a personal review or to excuse you for not having paid attention to important announcements. The midpoint withdrawal deadline is Tuesday 4 March. A student who submits assigned work before that date, then later withdraws from the course, will receive a W or WF based on that work. A student who withdraws before submitting assigned work will receive a grade of W.

You are welcome to chat with the instructor **after** class, during **office hours**, or at other **arranged times**. The time **before** class, however, is **NOT** a good time for any discussion.

The classroom is **not a lunchroom**: please show respect for others by doing your snacking and enjoyment of beverages before you come to class or after you leave. It is also not a phonebooth, so please make sure that any **phones** that you bring into the building are **turned off**. In sum, it is your responsibility to show respect for others by refraining from activity that might distract others or interfere with the learning process. Failure to do so will affect your course grade.

Course Objectives:

1. To illumine the hermeneutic issues involved in understanding religion across cultures. Prof. Mark MacWilliams of St. Lawrence University calls this process “gaining cross-cultural religious literacy.”
2. To introduce the Confucian traditions of China, in relation to other Chinese traditions.
3. To illustrate that religious traditions evolve, and that such evolution can be understood by reference to historical, intellectual, cultural and existential phenomena.
4. To sample the cultural riches of Confucianism by reading important selections from Confucian texts.
5. To stimulate meaningful comparison, and contrast, of Confucian traditions with those more familiar to students from their own cultural heritage. As Prof. Mark MacWilliams says, this means: “*To learn more about religion and about one’s self. Max Müller, a famous historian of religions, once said, “One who knows one religion knows none.” The same can be said about human life. One who knows only one culture or one way of living knows none. To know ourselves--who we are, who we could be--means we must know others. And to know others means we must study that which informs and guides their sense of self, society, and world. To study what people believe is ultimately real, good, beautiful, true, and the way they put this into practice is to study religion.*”



TEXTS

1. **Course Reader** (Available at Bel-Jean's Printers, Downtown)
2. **Required Textbooks** (Available at local bookstores)

Yao Xinzong, *An Introduction to Confucianism*

H. G. Creel, *Chinese Thought from Confucius to Mao Tse-tung*

Raymond Dawson, trans., *Confucius: The Analects*

D. C. Lau, trans., *Mencius*

Rodney Taylor, *The Religious Dimensions of Confucianism*

P. J. Ivanhoe and Bryan Van Norden, *Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy*

Wing-tsit Chan, trans., *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*

Most of the required readings will be found in the **READER** and in the required textbooks. In addition, other assigned readings will be made available (1) on reserve, in hard-copy or as “e-texts” (accessible from any computer); (2) on the instructor's webpage; and/or (3) as handouts.



REQUIREMENTS



Regular attendance. Frequent absences will lower your grade.



Timely completion of **all** required readings.



Two in-class objective tests [each 30% of course grade]



Take-home Final essay exam [40% of course grade]

Graduate students will write a research paper on an approved topic, in lieu of the final exam.

At the end of the course, borderline grades are usually rounded up. But if a student's written work seems to indicate that he/she failed to do the assigned readings, or if her/his attendance is irregular, such facts will seriously affect her/his grade on specific assignments, and in the course overall. Class attendance will be recorded, and will be a primary factor in determining the disposition of borderline grades at the end of the course. **NOTE** the "Criteria for Evaluation of Papers," in your course **READER**. The **READER** also includes:

- ✍ Kirkland, "THE WRITING PROCESS AS PARTNERSHIP"
- ✍ Kirkland, "A GUIDE TO WRITING ACADEMIC PAPERS."

Following the advice provided there will help you write good final exam essays, and good papers, in this and other courses. See also "Writing Resources" at the **UGA Writing Center** (<http://www.english.uga.edu/writingcenter/writing/index.html>) and "Writing the Religion Paper," at <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~writing/materials/student/humanities/religion.shtml>.



THE ACADEMIC VALUE OF THE INTERNET

Your instructor's **Webpage** ([HTTP://KIRKLAND.MYWEB.UGA.EDU](http://KIRKLAND.MYWEB.UGA.EDU)) includes many pertinent



STUDY GUIDES



FULL-TEXT **PUBLICATIONS**



LINKS TO OTHER **GOOD SITES** ON ASIAN AND NATIVE AMERICAN RELIGIONS.

However, like many other good sites, this one has its limitations. First, it is now quite outdated (updates are in the works). Secondly, it has never provided all the material that even your instructor would like it to provide. And thirdly, it was not constructed, in the first instance, to serve as a pedagogical tool. Even such a website tries to fulfill different functions for different people: some are intended as professional connections for other scholars, others are designed to appeal to the general public. The latter may be more colorful or amusing, but are not necessarily more reliable or more informative. Remember to *think critically about what you are seeing*: many sites have an unexpressed agenda, just like movies and TV shows, and some may be well-intentioned but insubstantial and/or unsound. **So beware attempting to use the internet as an educational tool — particularly** in regard to non-Western religions — **without expert guidance**. Remember that all a person has to do to create, for example, a website on Confucianism is to set up the website: he or she does not really have to *know* much, or anything, about Confucianism! And for psychological and/or economic reasons, some people construct such sites just to get attention, or to get a reputation that they have not bothered to earn through hard work or proven expertise. Newcomers can easily mistake such a site for a reliable resource. See the instructive guide to "Evaluating Websites" from a committee of the American Library Association at <http://www2.kenyon.edu/Depts/Religion/Fac/Adler/EvaluatingWebsites1.htm>.

With a very few exceptions, responsible scholars do not put their actual research on the web. Few professors' webpages, for instance, even provide full bibliographic data telling you what they have published. And only a handful post unpublished research findings, or provide full-text reprints of any of their publications, the way that your instructor and a few others do on their own webpages. So despite the immense amount of *stuff* that you can find on the internet, it is unreliable as an educational resource.

Solid and reliable studies of Confucianism, and other non-Western traditions, generally appear **only** in your university **LIBRARY**, within the pages of **scholarly books and journals**. Such publications—**unlike internet websites**—undergo a careful **peer-review process**, by which today's knowledgeable authorities confirm the substance and value of good scholarship and screen out shoddy material. So **DO NOT** attempt to "do research" on the web! Your instructor will recommend particular websites that are useful and dependable. But unless instructed otherwise, you should plan to do **all** of your research in your university **library**, informed by your instructor and guided by trained reference librarians.

COURSE OUTLINE AND READINGS

READINGS LISTED IN SQUARE BRACKETS ARE **RECOMMENDED**

READINGS MARKED ☞ WILL BE FOUND AT [HTTP://KIRKLAND.MYWEB.UJA.EDU](http://kirkland.myweb.uja.edu) OR AT SPECIFIED SITE



INTRODUCTION

READER: "On the Academic Study of Religion in American Colleges and Universities"

☞ "Why Study Religion?" <http://www.studyreligion.org/why/index.html>

☞ / **READER:** Kirkland, "A Definition of Religion" [For a fuller discussion, see ☞ Kirkland, "Defining Religion"]



CHINA AND ITS RELIGIONS

☞ / **READER:** "ELEMENTS OF CHINESE RELIGION"

[Teiser, "The Spirits of Chinese Religion":

<http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/core9/phalsall/texts/lopez.html>]

On the divergent systems of romanization of Chinese, see **Dawson**, *Confucius*, xxviii-xxxii.

"A Visual Sourcebook of Chinese Civilization" by the fine historian Patricia Buckley Ebrey is found at

☞ <http://depts.washington.edu/chinaciv>.

A resource for dealing with the confusions caused by the two conflicting systems for romanizing Chinese words

is ☞ <http://www.edepot.com/taoroman.html>. See also:

Major Periods in Chinese History: ☞ <http://www2.kenyon.edu/Depts/Religion/Fac/Adler/ReIn270/History.htm>

"Traditional / Mythic Periods": ☞ <http://www2.kenyon.edu/Depts/Religion/Fac/Adler/ReIn270/MythHist.htm>

Other Useful Links Appear at ☞ <http://www.asianstudiesarena.com/asianstudiesarena/links.html>



THE RELEVANCE OF CONFUCIANISM

VISIT: ☞ <http://www.hamilton.edu/academics/Asian/TempleCulture.html>;

☞ <http://www2.kenyon.edu/Depts/Religion/Fac/Adler/ReIn471/links471.htm>

READER: Csikszentmihalyi, "Confucius": 233-36

Yao, *Introduction to Confucianism*: 1-4, 10-12, 273-79

Creel, *Chinese Thought*: 4-9, 258-62

READER: Kirkland, "BOOKNOTES ON CONFUCIANISM"

Yao, *Introduction to Confucianism*: 245-47, 261-63, 273-80, 284-86



"THE MIDDLE KINGDOMS"

Creel, *Chinese Thought*: 10-24

Yao, *Introduction to Confucianism*: 49-52

"Important Periods, Important Texts, Important Terms," in **Ivanhoe** and **Van Norden**,
Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy: 353-362



**THE LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF “CONFUCIUS”:
“Master Kong” as presented in “*The Analects*”**

📖 / **READER:** Kirkland, “THE FOUNDERS OF CLASSICAL CONFUCIANISM”
[Jeffrey Riegel, “Confucius”: 📖 <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/confucius>]

Yao, *Introduction to Confucianism*: 16, 21-26

Dawson, *Confucius: The Analects*

vii-xiv: Introduction [xvi-xxvii: “Note on the Translation of Key Terms”]

1-73: *The Analects*, Books 1-17 [see “Explanatory Notes,” 83-103, as needed]

[cf. also these partial translations:

1. Slingerland in **Ivanhoe** and **Van Norden**, *Readings*: 3-50;
2. **Chan**, *Source Book*: 14-48; for a useful topical index to his partial translation, see **Chan**, *Source Book*: 18;
3. Charles Muller: 📖 <http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/contao/analects.htm>]



THE MOHIST CHALLENGE

Creel, *Chinese Thought*: 46-67

📖 / **READER:** Kirkland, “Book of Mozi (Mo-tzu)”
[partial translation by Ivanhoe in **Ivanhoe** and **Van Norden**, *Readings*: 55-107]
[Chris Fraser, “Mohism”: 📖 <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/mohism>]



**CLASSICAL DEFENDERS OF CONFUCIAN VALUES:
MENCIUS (“Mengzi”)**

Yao, *Introduction to Confucianism*: 71-76

Creel, *Chinese Thought*: 68-93

📖 / **READER:** Kirkland, “MENCIUS’ EXPLANATION OF THE VIRTUES”

Lau, trans., *Mencius*: 1A: 1-2, 7

2A: 2-3, 6-7, 9; 2B: 4

3A: 3 (p. 97 only), 4 (p. 100-1, 104), 5; 3B: 6

4A: 10-12, 17, 24; 4B: 6-8, 14, 19, 26, 28, 32

6A: 1-11, 15, 18; 6B: 1

7A: 1-4, 15-16, 27, 37, 41; 7B: 3, 10, 21, 31, 37

[“Comments and Corrections to D. C. Lau’s *Mencius*”: 📖 <http://faculty.vassar.edu/~brvannor/lau.html>]

[Cf. also these partial translations:

1. Van Norden in **Ivanhoe** and **Van Norden**, *Readings*: 111-153
2. Charles Muller: 📖 <http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/contao/mencius.htm>]

Taylor, *The Religious Dimensions of Confucianism*: 23-28



THE LEGALIST CHALLENGE

📖 / **READER:** Kirkland, “Legalism”

Creel, *Chinese Thought*: 135-44



CLASSICAL DEFENDERS OF CONFUCIAN VALUES: HSÜN-TZU (“Xunzi”)

Yao, *Introduction to Confucianism*: 76-80

Creel, *Chinese Thought*: 115-34


Chan, *Source Book*: 116-24, 128-35


[Cf. also these partial translations:

1. “A Discussion of Heaven”; “A Discussion of Ritual”; and “Human Nature Is Bad”
(From Patricia Ebrey, *Chinese Civilization : A Sourcebook*, 2d ed., 1993):
<http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/core9/phalsall/texts/hsun-tse.html>
2. Extracts on Other Topics
(From John Knoblock, *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works*, 1988):
<http://www.humanistictexts.org/xunzi.htm>
3. Selections translation by Hutton in **Ivanhoe** and **Van Norden**, *Readings*: 247-291]




THE “TAOIST” (“Daoist”) CHALLENGE, I


 Kirkland, “The Taoism of the Western Imagination and the Taoism of China: De-Colonializing the Exotic Teachings of the East”

 / **READER**: Kirkland, “Taoism and Early Chinese Thought”

 / **READER**: Kirkland, “Taoism and Confucianism (through the Han Dynasty)”

 / **READER**: Kirkland, “The *I Ching*, *Yin* and *Yang*, and the ‘Five Forces’”:

 / **READER**: Kirkland, “The *Neiye*”

 / **READER**: Kirkland, “Daode jing”

[**Chan**, *Source Book*: 138-76: *The Tao te ching*]

READER: Kirkland, “The Useless Words of Chuang Chou”

[partial translation of *Chuang-tzu* by Kjellberg in **Ivanhoe** and **Van Norden**, *Readings*: 203-243]



RELIGIOUS DIMENSIONS OF EARLY CONFUCIANISM, I: HEAVEN AND HUMANITY IN *THE CHUNG-YUNG* (*Zhongyong*)

Charles Muller, translator: <http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/contao/docofmean.htm>


[**Chan**, *Source Book*: 98-113: *The Chung-yung* (ignore all of “Chu Hsi's remarks”)]



RELIGIOUS DIMENSIONS OF EARLY CONFUCIANISM, II: HEAVEN AND HUMANITY IN THE TEACHINGS OF TUNG CHUNG-SHU (Dong Zhongshu)

Yao, *Introduction to Confucianism*: 83-86

[**Creel**, *Chinese Thought*: 159-85]

 Kirkland, “Dong Zhongshu (Tung Chung-shu)”

Chan, *Source Book*: 284-87 (Tung Chung-shu); 289-91 (Yang Hsiung); 305-8 (*The Huai-nan-tzu*)



THE BUDDHIST CHALLENGE

- 📖 / READER: Kirkland, "THE ORIGINS OF BUDDHISM"
 Kirkland, "BUDDHISM IN CHINA: THE EARLY CENTURIES"
 Kirkland, "NEW TRADITIONS IN EAST ASIAN BUDDHISM: CH'AN BUDDHISM ('ZEN')"
 READER: Kirkland, "ZEN'S DEBT TO CONFUCIANISM"
 Creel, *Chinese Thought*: 186-202



"NEO-CONFUCIANISM" TRADITION, PHILOSOPHY, AND IDEOLOGY

AN OVERVIEW OF "NEO-CONFUCIANISM"

- READER: Csikszentmihalyi, "Confucius": 281-85
 READER: Kirkland, "THE PRINCIPAL FIGURES OF NEO-CONFUCIANISM"
 📖 Adler, "[Neo-Confucian Terms](http://www2.kenyon.edu/Depts/Religion/Fac/Adler/Reln270/NeoC.htm)":
<http://www2.kenyon.edu/Depts/Religion/Fac/Adler/Reln270/NeoC.htm>
 [Berling, *The Syncretic Religion of Lin Chao-en*: 28-38]
 Creel, *Chinese Thought*: 202-6

CONFUCIAN THINKERS OF THE EARLY SUNG DYNASTY

Chou Tun-i (Zhou Dunyi)

- [📖 Adler, "Zhou Dunyi: The Metaphysics and Practice of Sagehood":
<http://www2.kenyon.edu/Depts/Religion/Fac/Adler/Reln471/CHOU.htm>
 Chan, *Source Book*: 460-67, and readings #20, 29-30, 38-39

Chang Tsai (Zhang Zai)

- Chan, *Source Book*: 495-500 [500-507] 507-14

The Ch'eng Brothers, Ch'eng Hao and Ch'eng I (Cheng Hao and Cheng Yi)

- Chan, *Source Book*: 518-26, and "selected sayings" #3-7;
 Chan, *Source Book*: 544-46, and "selected sayings" #3-22, 33-34, 57-60, 72-78

CONFUCIAN THINKERS OF THE LATER SUNG DYNASTY

Lu Hsiang-shan (Lu Xiangshan)

- Creel, *Chinese Thought*: 210 (bottom) - 213 (middle)
 Chan, *Source Book*: 572-73; readings #1-3, 8-11, 24, 27, 37

Chu Hsi (Zhu Xi)

- Creel, *Chinese Thought*: 206-10
 [Joseph Adler, "[Chu Hsi's Appropriation of Chou Tun-i](http://www2.kenyon.edu/Depts/Religion/Fac/Adler/Reln471/ChouChu2.htm)":
<http://www2.kenyon.edu/Depts/Religion/Fac/Adler/Reln471/ChouChu2.htm>
 Chan, *Source Book*: 588-592; readings # A2, 4; B8-11, 13, 15, 17, 25, 30-32, 47, 61,
 65-67, 73, 82, 90, 95, 116-17, 120, 122, 125, 136, 140, 147 (end of p. 653)



THE "TAOIST" ("Daoist") CHALLENGE, II

- 📖 Miller, "Daoism: A Short Introduction": <http://www.oneworld-publications.com/samples/daoism.htm>
 [Sivin, "On the Word 'Taoism' as a Source of Perplexity":
 📖 <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/~nsivin/perp.html>]
 📖 Kirkland, "Transcendence & Immortality"
 📖 / READER: Kirkland, "TAOISM"
 📖 Kirkland, "TAO"



CONFUCIAN DIVERSITY IN LATE IMPERIAL CHINA: MEDITATION, SOCIAL ACTION, AND “THE THREE TEACHINGS”

“**Quiet-Sitting**”: **The Meditational Practices of Confucians Who Deny That They Meditate**
Taylor, *Religious Dimensions of Confucianism*: 77-81, 85-86, 109-14; 60-64

“**Confucianism in Action**”: **Wang Yang-ming**
Creel, *Chinese Thought*: 213-16
Taylor, *Religious Dimensions of Confucianism*: 81-83
[Ivanhoe, *Ethics in the Confucian Tradition*: 15-27, 37-47, 61-72, 80-90, 102-14]

“**Confucianism in Action**”: **Lin Chao-en**
READER: Kirkland, “LIN ZHAOEN (LIN CHAO-EN)”
[Berling, *The Syncretic Religion of Lin Chao-en*: 235-238]

The Enlightenment Experience as a Basis for Reforming the Imperial State: K’ang Yu-wei
READER: Csikszentmihalyi, “Confucius”: 285-91
Chan, *Source Book*: 723-25 [725-34] 734-36



CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES ON CONFUCIANISM

READER: Csikszentmihalyi, “Confucius”: 291-308
[Yao, *Introduction to Confucianism*: 245-273, 279-86]
[Taylor, *The Religious Dimensions of Confucianism*: 137-47]

🎥 **Video**: *A World of Ideas: Bill Moyers with Tu Wei-ming*



IS CONFUCIANISM “RELIGION”??

Yao, *Introduction to Confucianism*: 38-47, 190-96 [196-204] 204-209 bot.

Taylor, *The Religious Dimensions of Confucianism*: 31-32

[Adler, “Varieties of Spiritual Experience: **Shen** in Neo-Confucian Discourse”:

🌐 <http://www2.kenyon.edu/Depts/Religion/Fac/Adler/Reln471/Spirit.htm>]

Why This Course Has No Material By or About “Women Confucians”

"Kaibara Ekken (1630-1714), like many other Confucian scholars, insisted that 'women are by nature weak, irresolute, lacking intelligence, and mostly wicked; they cannot follow the right way.'"

— H. Byron Earhart, *Religion in the Japanese Experience*, 3rd edition (1997), 33-34

Actually, not all Confucians so insisted. Confucius himself said nothing on the subject. Mencius' teachings assume that women have exactly the same “good” tendencies as men do, while Hsün-tzu's assume that women have exactly the same nasty tendencies as men do. Before their exposure to modern Western ideas, most Chinese Confucians said little that pertained specifically to gender.

That having been said, one can reasonably state that in general, Confucians seldom really expected any woman to participate in the Confucian life on the same terms as a man was expected to do—i.e., cultivating his higher qualities to become a *chün-tzu* ("gentleman") or a “sage,” so as to help lead human society on the correct course. From Han times on, Confucians did acknowledge certain specific “female virtues,” but they were fairly distinct from the virtues that men were urged to cultivate. In imperial China, women could, axiomatically, never lead society, or even serve as a government official at any level. And no real-life woman was ever acknowledged by Confucians of any period as a *chün-tzu*, a sage, or anything other than an exemplar of “women's virtues.”

Hence, while there were indeed “Confucian women” over the centuries, there was never, at any time in history, even one single “woman Confucian”—in the sense of someone acknowledged by male Confucians as fulfilling *their* ideals, or even as contributing to their *discourse*. That “a woman's place is in the home” was accepted by *all* Confucians up to the late nineteenth-century, when Western ideals of gender equality began to influence some male intellectuals. And while an increasing percentage of girls from well-to-do families, from Sung times onward, were educated as boys were, and some exceptional women even became noted writers, they were never welcomed into Confucian activities alongside men.

Beware, therefore, modern presentations—some from otherwise trustworthy scholars, including Tu Wei-ming—that mistranslate the term *chün-tzu* as “superior person,” “profound person,” “exemplary person,” etc. Such presentations *falsify* traditional Confucian teachings to suit modern sensibilities. It may be that *we* would have wished Confucius, and all premodern Confucians, to have presented their ideals and values on terms that provided at least some opportunity—however unequal—for women as well as men to fulfill such ideals. But the fact is that they simply did not. The fact that *we* do *not like* such realities does not entitle us to write or speak as though they are not *true*.

Beware, also, the common falsehood that China was a uniform “Confucian society” prior to “modern times”: both Confucians, and those who despise it, still often refuse to acknowledge that premodern China featured lots of social change from era to era, and lots of cultural diversity within each era. In imperial China, women who wanted to participate in religious activities alongside men did always have certain options—including leadership roles—within some traditions of Taoism and Buddhism. Such seems to have been particularly true prior to Ming times. And even today in China, there are women Buddhists and women Taoists who take part in the same activities as male participants, and some even play leadership roles. Yet, within Confucianism, full participation for women simply never existed, either in theory or in practice.