An American Philosopher Looks at Chinese Philosophy

Eric Sotnak
Monday, October 8, 2012
3:20 – 4:10pm SU room 335

It seems self-evident that the only things that exist are things that exist. Anyone who rejected such a thesis would initially seem to be crazy. Yet there have been instances in philosophical history that can be interpreted as affirming the existence of non-existence – or as it is more commonly called, “nonbeing.”

It seems to me that there is a defense of the legitimacy and reality of non-being to be found in Daoism. I propose to examine some Daoist texts in search of such a defense. It may or not be that a strong defense of non-being can be extracted.

A fruitful starting point, however, may not be classical Daoism, but a metaphysical discussion from the late philosopher, David Lewis.

Some questions
1. Why might someone want to defend the view that only concrete material objects exist?
2. What is the problem that consideration of holes generates?
3. What bearing might the Daoist worldview have on the problem of holes?
Keynote Speaker: Xinhua Wan

Tuesday, October 9, 2012
7:45 – 9:00 am
Goodyear Polymer Center Auditorium room 229

Director of Department of Polymer Science & Engineering
College of Chemistry & Molecular Engineering
Peking University
Beijing, China

Professor Wan is an expert in polymer chemistry and polymer physics worldwide. His research area covers not only synthesis of polymer, which is polymer chemistry, but also the performance of the polymers in certain application. In particular, his research group focuses on controlled free radical polymerization, liquid crystalline polymer, self-assemble structure and other optical, electrochemical, and electrooptical properties of advanced functional materials.

Sample assignment: Dr. Wan’s talk will be about “The Development of Polymer Science and Technology in China”. Since China is on a rapid growth in scientific researches in a variety of areas, like polymer science, aerospace engineer and biomaterials, a lot of efforts are put in these areas. In addition, Chinese government provides more and more financial support on fundamental scientific research. A lot of scientific papers were published every year on high impact factor journals by research organizations and laboratories in China. Even though the US is still leading in scientific research in the world, fewer students in the US are willing to choose their majors and careers in science and engineering now.

Based on Dr. Wan’s talk, China is growing rapidly in scientific research area, how does America hold their leading position in polymer science and engineering in the future? Why are American students not choosing the scientific area as their majors and career?
Title: Traditional Chinese Health Beliefs and Practices

Dr. Sheau-Huey Chiu
Tuesday, October 9, 2012
12:15 – 1:30pm SU Ballroom C

Individual's health beliefs and practices impact how they interact with their environment (including their healthcare providers). Traditional Chinese health beliefs consider the body as a whole and seek to restore a balance between Yin and Yang. Harmony means health and good fortune, while disharmony leads to disease and bad luck. Understanding Chinese health beliefs and practices is a first step toward providing culturally appropriate care.

Possible assignments:

1. Ask students to search for examples of traditional Chinese health beliefs and practices using various research databases.
2. Ask students to explore their own health beliefs and practices and to compare/contrast these beliefs and practices with traditional Chinese health beliefs and practices.
3. Ask students to identify the use of traditional Chinese health beliefs and practices in various situations.
Rethinking Confucianism and Feminism

Abstract: This interactive session will invite students to undertake a critical examination of the relationships between Confucianism and feminism. First, students will review feminist critiques of Confucian values that sustain the hierarchical sex/gender role system in the “Confucian” area of East Asia. Second, students will explore the common ground between Confucian ethics and feminist care ethics. Finally, students will participate in an open forum to embark upon an exploration of gender egalitarianism in the global society.

Sample Assignment:

1. What are the cultural beliefs and socio-economic factors that have contributed to the construction and maintenance of “patriarchy” in varied societies?
2. What are the cultural beliefs and socio-economic factors supporting the advocacy of gender egalitarianism in the increasingly globalized society?
3. What are your personal thoughts on the conceptual connections between Confucian ethics and feminist care ethics?
Family Poverty in the US and China

Presented by Dr. Timothy McCarragher and Dr. Baomei Zhao
School of Social Work
11:00 – 11:50 am, Wednesday, October 10, 2012
Student Union Ballroom B

Poverty exists in any society. The presentation will cover family poverty in the U.S. and China with statistic information and cases, the presentation will introduce the concept of “Working poor” population, which is a special group that strives for survival. The presentation will also show how social workers in both countries strive to help.

Url for more information about topic or speaker or event:
http://www.census.gov/
http://chinadataonline.org/
http://www.uakron.edu/socialwork/

The presentation can be used in social sciences classes, the class assignments can be as follows:

1. Use something you learned from the presentation to explain family poverty in the U.S. and China.
2. “Working poor” population exists in both countries, what kind of policy guidance should be used to eliminate “working poor families”?
3. What kind of policies are needed to help the populations in poverty?
Chinese Poetry Slam

Kang Li
Wednesday, October 10
5:10 – 6:25pm SU Ballroom C

The event is called a Chinese Poetry Slam. This means you will be able to hear our students perform Chinese poems and their performances will be accompanied by paintings, calligraphy, and traditional Chinese music.

The teachers at the CI and our students who are studying Chinese will participate in the event.

Since a poetry slam is more a performance than simply reading a poem out loud, that is the most appropriate way to describe what we call Lang Song in Chinese, which means to perform, chant or sing a Chinese poem.

There is a long tradition of this type of performance of poems in China, because the language and theatrical work assists listeners in their efforts to understand the profound meanings in each poem.

This activity will not only may improve students ability to speak Chinese, it will also deepen their understanding of ancient Chinese culture.

We will focus on the poetry from the Tang Dynasty (AD618-907) and the Song Dynasty (AD 960-1279). Song Ci is particularly important to me, because that the capital of the Song Dynasty was in the city we now call Kaifeng, my hometown.

Both Tang Shi & Song Ci represent the best in Chinese ancient literature and hold a much respected position in Chinese culture. Many famous verses are the sources for Chinese proverbs or idioms which are often quoted and recited by Chinese people today.

An old Chinese saying said “poetry is a speaking picture, painting a silent poetry.”

Poetry and painting are different forms of expression. However, they share some common characteristics, which make it possible for poets and painters to learn from each other and to exchange experiences.

In the poetry of Tang and Song Dynasties we can see that “there is a painting in poetry just as poetry in painting.” Traditional Chinese painting is an art form combining poetry, calligraphy, painting and seal carving.

Song Ci is also known as musical poetry because it can be sung to the music. Even today, a great number of renowned Ci poems have been set to new tunes for singing in popular music.

Finally, calligraphy is a comprehensive art that links painting with poetry and mood. Thus there is an aesthetic relationship among poetry, calligraphy, painting and music that we will help our students discover and perform for you at the Chinese Poetry Slam.

We hope you will join us and some suggested assignments are attached.
Possible Assignments:
1. Students will notice the difference between Tang Poetry, Song Ci, and American poetry.
2. Students will explore the meaning of "there is a painting in poetry just as a poetry in painting"
3. Students will learn the relationship among Chinese ancient poetry, music, traditional Chinese painting and calligraphy. How do you think the relationship of American poetry and other arts are similar or different from the Chinese arts?
Illustrative Assignments for Jon Huntsman’s China Week Keynote

Send your students to hear Governor Jon Huntsman... our most recent Ambassador to China and a 2012 Republican candidate for president, who will speak on “Reflections on Sino-US Relations in a Presidential Election Year” at EJ Thomas on Monday October 15 at 7:30pm.

In this youtube clip you can hear Ambassador Huntsman speaking Chinese and discussing China as our "most important relationship in the 21st century." http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPb-5A7zKXo

And here is an ABC News story, during the campaign, that provides some basic biographical information about Jon Huntsman. http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/voice-vote-meet-jon-huntsman/story?id=14563408

Sample Assignment #1: Use the analytical framework provided by Jon Huntsman in his lecture to analyze the current state of US power and position in the global political-economy, with particular attention to how an emerging China creates both challenges and opportunities.

Sample Assignment #2: As you listen to Ambassador Huntsman reflect on Sino-US relations during a presidential election, compare his comments to the response we recently observed to President Obama’s unexpectedly public conversations with the Russian President. What does the Ambassador teach us about the relationship between delicate international negotiations and the bright lights of national elections?

Here is the youtube video of President Obama: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gfUmquTtFfE

Sample Assignment #3: In the ABC News biography provided above, the journalist notes the following: "On paper, Jon Huntsman’s credentials are exactly what one would expect from a presidential candidate: a successful career in state politics, decades of public service and a background in the private sector. But for the former Utah governor, the journey to the 2012 campaign trail was anything but typical." Based on what you heard in Ambassador Huntsman’s presentation at EJ, provide your most thoughtful explanation for the mismatch between a candidate with ‘exactly the credentials we would expect’ for success and his 2012 electoral failure.

Sample Assignment #4: As you listen to Ambassador Huntsman, create three lists of ideas and perspectives on world politics, presidential politics, Sino-US relations that you (1) have not heard before, that (2) you find surprising (or confusing), or that (3) you consider particularly insightful. Try to get the exact quote for each, if possible. Then consider these jolting ideas as a whole and use these to challenge or reinforce conventional wisdom, media portrayals, candidate positions, and scholarly analysis about the relationship between one of the following pairs:

- US and China
- Foreign policy and Domestic elections
- Law and Democracy