



Course Syllabus: **Asian Philosophy & Religion**  
College of Humanities and Social Sciences  
PHIL-2213/4213  
Fall 2022

**Contact Information**

**Instructor:** Dr. Tyler M. Williams  
**Office:** 236 Bea Wood Hall  
**Office hours:** MWF 12:00-1:00, T 2:00-3:30, R 2:00-2:30  
**Office phone:** (940) 397-4125  
**E-mail:** [tyler.williams@msutexas.edu](mailto:tyler.williams@msutexas.edu)

**Instructor Response Policy**

Emails sent during the week will receive a reply within 24 hours. Response time over the weekends and holidays will likely take longer. If you have not received a reply to an email within 48 hours, please feel free to send a follow up. Before sending an email regarding a question about our course, check to see if this syllabus answers your question. All emails should observe basic email etiquette: a greeting at the beginning, a statement of the purpose of your email, a tone of cordiality, and a signature at the end.

**Textbook & Instructional Materials**

Three books are required for this course. They are available at the campus store. All other course texts will be available to download from D2L as a PDF.

- *Bhagavad Gita*, trans. Gavin Flood and Charles Martin. W.W. Norton, 2015.
- *Tao Te Ching*, trans. Stephen Mitchell. Harper Perennial, 2006.
- Confucius, *The Analects*, trans. Annping Chin. Penguin, 2014

**Course Catalogue Description**

A historical and theoretical survey of Asian philosophy and religion, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism.

**Course Objectives/Learning Outcomes/Course Competencies**

This course provides a historical and theoretical introduction to Eastern philosophy and religion. Topics to be discussed will include, but are not limited to, historical origins and development; conceptions of divinity and the sacred; metaphysics, cosmology, and epistemology; sacred texts and religious rituals; theories of human nature and the self; and ethical principles.

The main objectives of the course are as follows:

1. To help students learn and understand the basic issues of eastern philosophy and religion from both a historical and theoretical perspective.
2. To help students gain familiarity with various pivotal thinkers, theories, and texts in Eastern philosophy and religion.
3. To help students develop their skills in interpreting and critically analyzing texts.
4. To help students develop their skills in identifying and evaluating arguments as well as in formulating arguments of their own.
5. To help students improve their ability to read and write clearly and critically. To help students appreciate the relevance of philosophical discourse in public and private life and to gain a greater understanding of their personal philosophical commitments.

6. To inculcate students with a love of wisdom and a desire to live a philosophical life.

## Student Handbook

Refer to: Student Handbook-2021-22

### Academic Misconduct Policy & Procedures

Students are expected to uphold the standards of “Academic Integrity” set forth by the MSU Student Honor Creed. The instructor will notify the appropriate authority of any infringement of academic honesty.

“Cheating” includes the unauthorized use of certain information, materials, or devices in exams, papers, or assignments. Additionally, grading will abide by the University’s plagiarism policy. “Plagiarism” includes but is not limited to using the published or unpublished works of another person without recognition, either by paraphrase or direct quotation. The use of materials generated by agencies engaged in “selling” term papers is also plagiarism. A student who makes use of plagiarized material, or anyone that profits from (or abets) cheating, will be DISMISSED from the course. Cases will also be referred to the Dean of Students for possible dismissal from the university.

Academic Dishonesty: Cheating, collusion, and plagiarism (the act of using source material of other persons, either published or unpublished, without following the accepted techniques of crediting, or the submission for credit of work not the individual’s to whom credit is given). Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the Office of Student Conduct:

Office of Student Conduct

### Grading

Table 1: Final grades for PHIL-2213 will be determined according to the following distribution:

Assignments	Weight
Engagement	30%
Protocol 1	15%
Protocol 2	15%
Essay (revisable)	40%

Table 2: Final grades for PHIL-4213 will be determined according to the following distribution:

Assignments	Weight
Engagement	30%
Protocol 1	10%
Protocol 2	10%
Essay	20%
Final project	30 %

Table 3: Grades will be administered on an A-F scale according to the following percentages:

Grade	Value
A	100-90
B	89-80
C	79-70
D	69-60
F	59-0

## Essays

Two essay deadlines are listed on the Course Schedule. Every student will pick one essay to write and submit by the appropriate deadline. Specific descriptions of topics per paper will be posted to D2L two weeks prior to each due date. Students are also welcomed to suggest their own essay ideas, which are subject to instructor approval *at least* a week in advance. Students registered for PHIL-2123 have the option to revise their paper once after it is graded. However, revisions to the essay must include (a) substantial revision that demonstrates serious consideration of feedback provided on the first draft and (b) a new second half of the essay, effectively doubling the length of the first draft, that extends the topic to include new material covered in the course since the first draft was submitted. The purpose of this revision policy is to demonstrate, first, the consistency and coherence across various ideas in our course and, second, the practical importance of thinking and writing about one idea from various perspectives over a period of time. A specific assignment handout outlining essay requirements in more detail will be provided during the first week.

## Protocols

Nearly every Monday, class will start with a protocol presentation. Protocols will be no more than two pages long (single-spaced) and will provide a detailed, analytic summary of the course progress from the previous week. By the end of the semester, the collected protocols will give a full account of our entire course. The purpose of these protocols is twofold: (1) For the protocol writers, it is a writing assignment that tests student's ability to present concise yet detailed exegesis of course material beyond text summarization, and (2) for the rest of the class, it draws daily engagement away from a fixation on note taking and refocuses on discussion, creativity, and thinking. By the end of the semester, every student will have written two protocols. Typically, protocols will be written in pairs (i.e., in collaboration with another student in the course). A specific assignment handout outlining protocol requirements in more detail will be provided during the first week.

## Engagement Reports

Students will submit two self-assessment "engagement reports" throughout the semester. These reports are not individually graded; they are taken as a "completion" grade. Failure to write a report will reduce the overall engagement grade by a full letter grade. Given the self-reflective nature of our course material and the very strong emphasis our course places on engagement, these reports provide students the opportunity (a) to pause and reflect thoughtfully and creatively on their own accountability with the course objectives, (b) to provide "real time" feedback about the course, and (c) receive "real time" feedback from the instructor.

By the deadlines provided on the Course Schedule, students will submit to the appropriate D2L dropbox a 1-page, single-spaced reflection on the following prompt:

*Each philosophical tradition studied this semester recognizes that the small, mundane aspects of our lives—like going to class—contain grand, cosmic opportunities for reflection. In what ways has your participation in this course fostered a collaborative relation to the course material and contributed to the open, discussion-oriented nature of our classroom environment? What aspects of your engagement do you plan to retain, and what aspects will you improve (or, for the second Engagement Report, have since improved)? Lastly, are there ways that the course itself helps foster your engagement, or are there changes that can be made to the course to help you engage better?*

## Final Projects (PHIL-4213 only)

Students registered for this course at the upper level are required to submit a final project. Development of the final project works in stages. Students will initially consult with the instructor to brainstorm ideas. Then, the student present to the instructor an abstract/proposal for the project they want to write, including the topic, thesis, and overall approach. After feedback on the proposal, the student will write and submit the final project. At the end of the semester, students will deliver brief presentations to the class about their project. Part of this assignment includes using these various stages as opportunities for revision, recognizing research and writing as a dynamic process. Students are welcome to pursue "multi-modal" projects, provided that any project that is not primarily a thesis-driven research paper includes a written, thesis-driven explanatory essay in accompaniment of the project.

### **Extra Credit**

No extra credit will be accepted in this course. Students are therefore encouraged to keep pace with the syllabus from the start of the semester to avoid a situation in which extra credit would be desired.

### **Late Work**

Assignments submitted late will accrue a late penalty of one-third of a letter grade per day late. Extensions on essays will be granted only in consultation with the instructor in advance and in rare circumstances.

### **Make Up Work/Tests**

Assignments more than a week late cannot be submitted and/or made up. Protocols can only be submitted on the day due and cannot be made up retroactively.

### **Desire-to-Learn (D2L)**

Extensive use of the MSU D2L program is a part of this course. Each student is expected to be familiar with this program as it provides a primary source of communication regarding assignments, examination materials, and general course information. You can log into [D2L](#) through the MSU Homepage. If you experience difficulties, please contact the technicians listed for the program or contact your instructor.

### **Attendance**

Students are expected to attend all meetings of the classes in which they are enrolled. Although in general students are graded on intellectual effort and performance rather than attendance, absences may lower the student's grade where class attendance and class participation are deemed essential by the faculty member. In those classes where attendance is considered as part of the grade, the instructor should so inform students of the specifics in writing at the beginning of the semester in a syllabus or separate attendance policy statement (see next two paragraphs below). An instructor who has an attendance policy must keep records on a daily basis. The instructor must give the student a verbal or written warning prior to being dropped from the class. Instructor's records will stand as evidence of absences. A student with excessive absences may be dropped from a course by the instructor. Any individual faculty member or college has the authority to establish an attendance policy, providing the policy is in accordance with the General University Policies.

Students in this course are graded on "Engagement," which includes but is not limited to attendance. You have to be in attendance to be engaged, but attendance alone does not qualify as engagement. "Engagement" includes attendance, participation in discussion and other course activities, active listening, evidence of preparedness, and the avoidance of distracting/distracted behavior.

There is no distinction in this course between "excused" and "unexcused" absences (with the exception of absences for official university business, like, but not limited to, athletics). Students can miss class for any reason without penalty to their grade, but any student whose cumulative absences amount to three weeks of missed class will be dropped from the course. A student who misses class on the day of his or her protocol presentation (without prior arrangement with the professor) will receive a zero on the protocol and their overall Engagement grade will be reduced by a full letter grade.

### **Online Computer Requirements**

Portions of this course make use of online materials. It is your responsibility to have (or have access to) a working computer in this class. ***\*Assignments and tests are due by the due date, and personal computer technical difficulties will not be considered reason for the instructor to allow students extra time to submit assignments, tests, or discussion postings.*** Computers are available on campus in various areas of the buildings as well as the Academic Success Center. ***\*Your computer being down is not an excuse for missing a deadline!!*** If you have any computer problems, a student helpdesk available to you. The college cannot work directly on student computers due to both liability and resource limitations however they are able to help you get connected to our online services. For help, log into [D2L](#).

## **Instructor Class Policies**

Help — Students should discuss any concerns with the instructor as soon as possible. Many of the readings will be difficult, so *please* ask questions in class for clarification. Office hours are available throughout the week. An appointment is not required for office hours consultation, since they're "drop-in" hours. Appointments can also be made on a case-by-case basis.

Recordings — Lectures, lecture notes, assignments, etc. remain the intellectual property of the instructor. Students are not permitted to disseminate the content of our online class outside D2L.

Conduct — Actions that diminish the quality of other students' learning will not be tolerated. Insults, slurs, or attacks of any kind will be grounds for permanent removal from the course. Every student is expected to engage with the course material in a responsible and respectful manner. This course will include open discussion of a diverse array of religious and philosophical worldviews. Disagreement is normal in classes of this nature; disagreement is conducive to positive learning outcomes, regardless of whether this disagreement pertains between texts themselves, between texts and readers, or between students. Disagreement or debate that turns negative, derogatory, hostile, or otherwise demeaning *in any way* will not be tolerated in class.

Email — Check emails regularly, since that will be the only method by which students are informed about class cancellations or any changes to the course. Your instructor will email you via D2L. Therefore, either make sure you check your D2L email regularly, or change the settings of your D2L inbox to reroute your D2L emails to a preferred email address. When emailing your professors, please ensure that proper etiquette and professionalism is being observed. Always check the syllabus and the course schedule first to ensure that any questions are not already answered there. Your instructor will not respond at length to emails about writing assignments after the assignment has been posted. Please allow 24 hours for an email reply.

## **Change of Schedule**

A student dropping a course (but not withdrawing from the University) within the first 12 class days of a regular semester or the first four class days of a summer semester is eligible for a 100% refund of applicable tuition and fees. Dates are published in the [Schedule of Classes](#) each semester.

## **Refund and Repayment Policy**

A student who withdraws or is administratively withdrawn from Midwestern State University (MSU) may be eligible to receive a refund for all or a portion of the tuition, fees and room/board charges that were paid to MSU for the semester. HOWEVER, if the student received financial aid (federal/state/institutional grants, loans and/or scholarships), all or a portion of the refund may be returned to the financial aid programs. As described below, two formulas (federal and state) exist in determining the amount of the refund. (Examples of each refund calculation will be made available upon request).

## **Services for Students with Disabilities**

In accordance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Midwestern State University endeavors to make reasonable accommodations to ensure equal opportunity for qualified persons with disabilities to participate in all educational, social, and recreational programs and activities. After notification of acceptance, students requiring accommodations should make application for such assistance through Disability Support Services, located in the Clark Student Center, Room 168, (940) 397-4140. Current documentation of a disability will be required in order to provide appropriate services, and each request will be individually reviewed. For more details, please go to [Disability Support Services](#).

## **College Policies**

Campus Carry Rules/Policies

Refer to: [Campus Carry Rules and Policies](#)

Smoking/Tobacco Policy

College policy strictly prohibits the use of tobacco products in any building owned or operated by MSU TEXAS. Adult students may smoke only in the outside designated-smoking areas at each location.

## Alcohol and Drug Policy

To comply with the Drug Free Schools and Communities Act of 1989 and subsequent amendments, students and employees of Midwestern State are informed that strictly enforced policies are in place which prohibits the unlawful possession, use or distribution of any illicit drugs, including alcohol, on university property or as part of any university-sponsored activity. Students and employees are also subject to all applicable legal sanctions under local, state and federal law for any offenses involving illicit drugs on University property or at University-sponsored activities.

## Campus Carry

Effective August 1, 2016, the Campus Carry law (Senate Bill 11) allows those licensed individuals to carry a concealed handgun in buildings on public university campuses, except in locations the University establishes has prohibited. The new Constitutional Carry law does not change this process. Concealed carry still requires a License to Carry permit, and openly carrying handguns is not allowed on college campuses. For more information, visit [Campus Carry](#).

## Active Shooter

The safety and security of our campus is the responsibility of everyone in our community. Each of us has an obligation to be prepared to appropriately respond to threats to our campus, such as an active aggressor. Please review the information provided by MSU Police Department regarding the options and strategies we can all use to stay safe during difficult situations. For more information, visit [MSUReady – Active Shooter](#). Students are encouraged to watch the video entitled “*Run. Hide. Fight.*” which may be electronically accessed via the University police department’s webpage: [“Run. Hide. Fight.”](#)

## Grade Appeal Process

Students who wish to appeal a grade should consult the Midwestern State University [MSU Catalog](#)

## Changes to Syllabus

Changes in the course syllabus, procedure, assignments, and schedule may be made at the discretion of the instructor. All details of any changes made to the course will be made available to students via email.

## Mandatory Reporting

Under Title IX, all MSU faculty are “mandatory reporters” of any disclosure from a student of sexual assault, abuse, harassment, dating violence, stalking, or other forms of sexual misconduct. It is the legal responsibility of a “mandatory reporter” to notify the Title IX coordinator if a student reports being the victim of any of the aforementioned abuses. For more information, please visit the [Sexual Misconduct Resource](#).

## Course Schedule

### Week 1

Monday, 8/22: Course introductions  
Wednesday, 8/24: Kena and Katha *Upanishads* (PDF)  
Friday, August 26: Isā, Prasna, and Mandukya *Upanishads* (PDF)

### Week 2

Monday, 8/29: *Bhagavad Gita* book 1  
Wednesday, 8/31: *Bhagavad Gita* books 2-3  
Friday, 9/1: *Bhagavad Gita* books 2-3 continued

### Week 3

Monday, 9/5: Labor Day holiday. No class session  
Wednesday, 9/7: *Bhagavad Gita* books 4-6  
Friday, 9/9: *Bhagavad Gita* books 4-6 continued

### Week 4

Monday, 9/12: *Bhagavad Gita* books 9, 11-13, 18  
Wednesday, 9/14: Integrated flex-day for catch up  
Friday, 9/16: “The Life Story of Shakyamuni Buddha” (PDF)

**Week 5**

- Monday, 9/19: *What the Buddha Taught* ch. 1  
 Wednesday, 9/21: “The Approach to Knowledge and Truth in the Theravāda Record of the Discourses of the Buddha” (PDF)  
 Friday, 9/23: *What the Buddha Taught* pp. 92-94 and ch. 2  
**Engagement Report 1 due in D2L dropbox no later than 11:59 p.m. on 9/25**

**Week 6**

- Monday, 9/26: Nāgārjuna’s *Fundamental Verses of the Middle Way* (PDF)  
 Wednesday, 9/28: *What the Buddha Taught* chs. 3-4 and pp. 95-97  
 Friday, 9/30: *What the Buddha Taught* chs. 5-6

**Week 7**

- Monday, 10/3: “Theravāda Philosophy of Mind and the Person” (PDF)  
 Wednesday, 10/5: Vasubandhu’s *Abhidharmakośa* ch. 9 (PDF)  
 Friday, 10/7: *What the Buddha Taught* pp. 125-136 (*Dhammapada* selections)  
**Essay option #1 due in D2L dropbox no later than 11:59 p.m. on 10/9**

**Week 8**

- Monday, 10/10: Confucius *Analects* books 1-3  
 Wednesday, 10/12: *Analects* book 4  
 Friday, 10/14: Guest lecture by Dr. Kirsten Lodge on Confucian poetry

**Week 9**

- Monday, 10/17: *Analects* books 7-8, 10  
 Wednesday, 10/19: *Analects* books 13-14  
 Friday, 10/21: *Tao Te Ching*, verses 1-13

**Week 10**

- Monday, 10/24: *Tao Te Ching*, verses 14-54  
 \*\*Last day to drop for a “W.” Drops after this date will receive “F”  
 Wednesday, 10/26: *Tao Te Ching* verses 55-67  
 \*\*Consider attending at 4:00 p.m. today the Red River Reading Series, which will include readings of haiku poetry. Event location is TBD, but it will be on campus.  
 Friday, 10/28: *Tao Te Ching* verses 68-81 & Taoist poetry

**Week 11**

- Monday, 10/31: *What the Buddha Taught* ch. 7, & Davis *Zen Pathways* ch. 10-11 (PDF)  
**Essay option #2 due in D2L dropbox no later than 11:59 p.m. on 11/1**  
 Wednesday, 11/2: Bodhidharma *Two Paths* (PDF), & Dōgen “Rules for Zazen” (PDF)  
 Friday, 11/4: Dōgen “Mountains and Waters Sūtra” (PDF)

**Week 12**

- Monday, 11/7: Dōgen “Time-Being” (PDF)  
 Wednesday, 11/9: Dōgen “Time-Being” continued  
 Friday, 11/11: In-class workshop with Dr. John Schulze on haiku poetry

**Week 13**

- Monday, 11/14: Nishitani “The Standpoint of Zen” (PDF)  
 Wednesday, 11/16: “Nishida’s Conception of Person” (PDF)  
 Friday, 11/18: Kyoto School wrap-up (Nishitani & Nishida continued)  
**Engagement Report 2 due in D2L dropbox no later than 11:59 p.m. on 11/20**

**Week 14**

- Monday, 11/21: Lecture on Zen ideas in the Western avant-garde (no reading due)  
 Wednesday, 11/23: Thanksgiving holiday. No class session  
 Friday, 11/25: Thanksgiving holiday. No class session

**Week 15**

Monday, 11/28:

*What the Buddha Taught* ch. 8, & Thich Nhat Hanh *Interbeing* (PDF)

Wednesday, 11/30:

Integrated flex-day for catch up

Friday, 12/2:

Course conclusions, evaluations, and final discussion

Optional essay revisions due in D2L dropbox no later than 11:59 p.m. on 12/4

PHIL-4213 Final Projects due in D2L dropbox no later than 11:59 p.m. on 12/7