

## Introduction to Taoist Philosophy

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**Start date** 18 August 2019                      **End date** 19 August 2019

**Venue** Madingley Hall  
Madingley  
Cambridge

**Tutor** Dr James Giles                      **Course code** 1819NTX008

**Director of Academic Centres** Sarah Ormrod

**For further information on this course, please contact** Head of Academic Centre Administration, Zara Kuckelhaus  
[zara.kuckelhaus@ice.cam.ac.uk](mailto:zara.kuckelhaus@ice.cam.ac.uk) or 01223 746204

**To book** See: [www.ice.cam.ac.uk](http://www.ice.cam.ac.uk) or telephone 01223 746262

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### Tutor biography

James Giles teaches in the Residential Programme and has taught in the International Summer Programmes at ICE. He is also external associate professor of psychology at Roskilde University, Denmark. He studied at the University of British Columbia and the University of Edinburgh. In addition to teaching at universities in the UK and Denmark, he has also taught at universities in Canada, Hawaii, Guam, and Australia. James has a strong interdisciplinary background and has taught in philosophy, psychology, communication studies, social anthropology, and in East-Asian Studies. He is author of *The Way of Awareness in Taoist Philosophy* (forthcoming), *Sexual Essays: Gender, Desire, and Nakedness*, *Sexual Attraction: The Psychology of Allure*, *The Nature of Sexual Desire*, *No Self to be Found: The Search for Personal Identity*, and *A Study in Phenomenalism*. He is also editor of *Kierkegaard and Japanese Thought*, *Kierkegaard and Freedom*, and *French Existentialism: Consciousness, Ethics, and Relations with Others*.

The overarching purpose of James' work is to create a philosophical psychology that explains the core features of the human condition. The unifying theme in his work is the fundamental role that human awareness, in its diverse modes, plays in that condition.

James teaches through a combination of lectures and class discussion. His courses are frequently historically based, but always with the primary focus of having students arrive at a philosophical understanding of the subject. For more information, please visit [www.james-giles.com](http://www.james-giles.com)

## Course programme

### Sunday

Please plan to arrive between 10:00 and 12:00. You can meet other course members in the bar. Tea and coffee making facilities are available in the study bedrooms.

13:00	Lunch
14:30 – 16:00	Session 1 – The character of ancient Chinese philosophy
16:00	Tea
16:30 – 18:00	Session 2 – The Tao of Lao Tzu
18:30	Dinner
20:00 – 21:30	Session 3 – Yang Chu’s natural leanings without hindrance

### Monday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	Session 4 – Lieh Tzu: Like a dead leaf blown away
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	Session 5 – Chuang Tzu and the freedom of non-activity
12:45	Lunch
14:00 – 15:30	Session 6 – Neo-Taoism, dark learning, and light conversation

## Course syllabus

### Aims:

1. to give students an appreciation of the basic principles of Taoist philosophy.
2. to give students an understanding of the historical development of Taoist philosophy and its relation to Chinese philosophy.
3. to stimulate students interest to read further in the philosophy of Taoism.
4. to help students develop their own philosophical perspective on the various philosophical issues with which philosophical Taoism deals.

### Content:

Taoism is an ancient Chinese school of thought that involves a complex blend of religious and philosophical elements. However, at the heart of the early Taoist writings lay a philosophical view of the nature of human existence and the human being's relation to the world. In this introductory course we will examine the ideas of central figures and schools in Taoist thought.

Starting with the character and development of Chinese philosophy, we will then turn to Lao Tzu's *Tao Te Ching* and its principles of the Way, returning to the source, an non-action. Several passages, we will see, point to the Way as being a primordial level of awareness. From here we will examine Yang Chu's existential hedonism and his emphasis on the value of personal satisfaction over social concerns. In the work of Lieh Tzu, Lao Tzu's concepts become expressed in terms of natural simplicity, scepticism, and fate. For Lieh Tzu, acting in terms of natural simplicity is the way to achieve integrity and liberty. We then come to Chuang Tzu and his enlightening stories and parables. Central to Chuang Tzu's philosophy is his notion of non-activity-naturalness or freedom in spontaneous action. The course will end with an examination of the ways in which Taoism influenced the later philosophies of Neo-Taoism and Zen Buddhism.

Although Taoism is an ancient system of thought, it is hope that students can take something away from this course that they can apply in their daily lives.

### Presentation of the course:

The course will involve lectures, discussions, and some group work. All philosophy is dialogue and student participation will be an important aspect of this course.

### As a result of the course, within the constraints of the time available, students should be able to:

1. understand the nature of the Taoist philosophy;
2. understand the relation of Taoist thought to philosophical thought generally;
4. philosophically evaluate Taoist ideas;
5. see a relation between the philosophy of Taoism and their own philosophical concerns.

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## Reading and resources list

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Listed below are texts that might be of interest should you wish to supplement your learning on the course. Any essential reading is marked with an asterisk \*

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Author	Title	Publisher and date
*James Legge (Translator),	<i>The Texts of Taoism</i> ,	volume 1, New York: Dover, 1962.
James Legge (Translator),	<i>The Texts of Taoism</i> ,	volume 2, New York: Dover, 1962.
*Wong, Eva (Translator),	<i>Lieh-tzu: A Taoist Guide to Practical Living</i> ,	Boston: Shambahala, 2001.
Paul J. Lin,	<i>A Translation of Lao-Tzu's Tao Te Ching and Wang Pi's Commentary</i> ,	Ann Arbor MI: University of Michigan, 1977.
Lui Yi-Ching, commentary by Liu Hsun,	<i>Shih-shou Hsin-yu: A New Account of Tales of the World</i> ,	translated by Richard B. Mather, Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, '02.
Wing-tsit Chan (Translator and compiler),	<i>A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy</i> ,	Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973.
Wong, Eva,	<i>Taoism: An Essential Guide</i> ,	Boston: Shambahala, 2011.
Stephen Coutinho,	<i>An Introduction to Daoist Philosophies</i> ,	New York: Columbia University Press, 2013.
Moeller, Hans-Georg,	<i>The Philosophy of the Daodejing</i> ,	New York: Columbia University Press, '06.
Holmes H. Welch,	<i>Taoism: The Parting of the Way</i> ,	revised edition, New York: Beacon Press, 1971.

Volume 1 of James Legges' Texts of Taoism contains the *Tao Te Ching* and the first half of the writings of Chuang Tzu (Kwang dze, as he refers to him). Wong's *Lieh-tzu* contains the work of Lieh Tzu and Yang Chu (a chapter called 'Yang Chu'). Chan's *Source Book* contains excerpts from the writings of many Chinese philosophers, and the rest of the books contain discussions of Taoism.

## Website addresses

James Legge's translation of the *Tao Te Ching* is available online at:

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/tao/taote.htm>

His translation of both the *Tao Te Ching* and *The Writings of Chuang Tzu* are available at:

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/tao/sbe39/index.htm>

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## Additional information

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### Venue

Details of how to find Madingley Hall can be found on our website:

<http://www.ice.cam.ac.uk/who-we-are/how-to-find-the-institute>

### Refreshments

Tea and coffee and lunch will be provided. If you have any specific dietary requirements or allergies and have not already advised us, please inform our Admissions Team on [ce.admissions@ice.cam.ac.uk](mailto:ce.admissions@ice.cam.ac.uk) or +44 (0)1223 746262.

**Note** Students of the Institute of Continuing Education are entitled to 20% discount on books published by Cambridge University Press (CUP) which are purchased at the Press bookshop, 1 Trinity Street, Cambridge (Mon-Sat 9am – 5:30pm, Sun 11am – 5pm). A letter or email confirming acceptance on to a current Institute course should be taken as evidence of enrolment.

Information correct as of: 24 April 2019