

Lesson Plan: An introduction to Chinese Philosophy

Rationale for study: Admittedly, most of my students do not know much about Chinese philosophy and so I have created the following lesson in an effort to introduce them to the major philosophical traditions that blossomed during the late Zhou dynasty in China. The following lesson assumes that students have studied China's warring period and have some understanding of the social and economic conditions that allowed the major distinct schools of philosophy to blossom. It is my objective that students will acquire an understanding of the major tenets of each of the four major philosophical traditions and understand their historical and cultural significance within China's historical context. This lesson is designed for World History class for 9th graders.

Learning Objectives:

- Students will understand China's major philosophical traditions and understand their historical and cultural significance within China's history.
- Students will read and analyze primary and secondary texts and identify the principal tenets of four of China's philosophical traditions: Confucianism, Mohism, Daoism and Legalism
- Students will be able to identify the principal beliefs of each philosophical tradition and present clear and focused summaries of one school's ideas and principles
- Students will exercise critical reading skills and effective communication skills in presentation and groups
- Students will form clear arguments and statements in support of their school of thought and evaluate its appropriateness as it answers the question of what constitutes an ideal state/government
- Students will be able to express sophisticated and complex ideas clearly, persuasively and creatively

Materials:

World History: Modern Times (world History text)

Early Chinese History by Professor Dube: Documents A, B, C, D

Teacher made handouts

Dube-Chinese-thought-2015.pdf power point presentation

Web resources: <https://guides.library.duke.edu/k-12resourcesonEA>,

<https://www.ancient.eu>, www.philosophybasics.com, <http://afe.easia.columbia.edu>

Day 1: An Introduction to Chinese Philosophy

Focus question: What are the main ideas of each of the major philosophical traditions/schools? What did each school of thought think about what constitutes the ideal citizen, government and society?

- Teacher briefly reviews the Warring period in China and the social and economic conditions that allowed the major school of thoughts which comprise the body of Chinese philosophy to blossom in the "Hundred Schools" era and that will students will be conducting an independent study in the four most influential of these schools: Confucianism, Mohism, Daoism and Legalism.
- Teacher briefly reviews historical context: maps to show geography of China along with divided states and a brief introduction to the philosophers and philosophy of each of the major philosophical traditions that developed in China at this time. Teacher briefly introduces the four main schools of thought: Confucianism, Mohism, Daoism and Legalism: power point presentation.
- Teacher introduces the concept of philosophy, its purpose and usefulness as it grapples with larger questions of human nature, government and society. Teacher informs students that they will be learning about the major philosophical traditions of this time and that they will become an expert on one philosophical school of their choosing.
- Students will select one school of thought to focus on and will conduct independent research by reading both primary and secondary texts and internet resources. Students will gather relevant sources and read, analyze, synthesize and summarize main points of their chosen philosophical school. Teacher passes Documents A, B, C, D to corresponding students. Students use documents, internet resources and other texts to conduct their research.
- Students will then choose a medium of their choice to present findings to other students in a small group. They can either create a power point presentation with both visuals and text summarizing findings or poster board to synthesize philosophies main tenets around our focus question. In addition to this, student will each be required to create a graphic narrative or fable that encapsulates the main beliefs of philosophical tradition and will present this in their final presentation in a group.
- Students will then be placed in small discovery groups of four in which each student from each school is represented and will each present their findings/expertise of

their research to the group. As each student presents, other students in group will be asked to take notes in teacher made handout and ask questions of each other.

Assessment: Students will be assessed according to their written work and presentation with rubric grading thoughtfulness, accuracy, precision and originality of presentation and graphic narrative or fable

Day 2 and Day 3: Making the case: Creating an Ideal State

Focus question: How does each philosophy address the issue of ideal government? What solutions/ideas does each represent to create an ideal government and an ideal relationship to its citizens? What according to each philosophical tradition should the role of the citizen and government be?

Lesson:

- Teacher begins this session by congratulating students on their expertise of one and general knowledge of China's four most influential philosophical traditions. Teacher informs students that today they will exhibit their understanding of the philosophies by making a case for their particular philosophy and why it is the best for addressing the question of how to create an ideal government.
- Teacher presents scenario: The emperor of China wants to create the ideal society and government and calls on all four philosophers from each school of thought to come and present their ideas before him. He is open and eager to hear what you have to say as one of the leading philosophers of the time and this is your chance to persuade him to adopt your ideas and implement them.
- Students will spend class time preparing for this meeting: they will form arguments, research and imagine the most appropriate way to present their arguments. Students are encouraged to promote their philosophy as the best and most appropriate for the cause.
- To aid students in their efforts, teacher writes focus questions on the board to help student focus their arguments. Students are encouraged to be creative in their arguments. They can create a skit, a song or a fable that addresses their main points. Students will choose the medium in which they will present. Their presentation should be accurate, persuasive and creative!

- Students spend this session working on their arguments and presentations. Teacher conferences with each student to make sure she/he is making adequate progress in work.
- Before this session ends, students will submit a written draft of main arguments to be presented. They will later revisit this draft to produce final essay on the question: **What constitutes an ideal state and how does their particular philosophical tradition address a solution to this question.**

Assessment: Teacher informally assesses first draft of arguments

Day 3: Day with the Emperor

- Teacher begins this session by telling students that they are now going to meet with the Emperor to discuss their proposals with him. Teacher uses props to create the scene.
- Since the group of students I am choosing for this lesson is small, students will present in a small group. Each philosophy will be represented in the group and students can take turns being emperor. All members of the group are encouraged to present counter arguments and ask challenging questions of each other. The point is to have a lively discussion about the issue: how to create an ideal society

Assessment: Students will be assessed by the correctness, persuasiveness and creativity of their arguments in both essay and presentation