

## Teaching statement

Monica Ding

I have two primary aims in my teaching of philosophy: (1) to improve my students' competence in philosophical thinking and to help them to apply such competence in real-life cases; and (2) to encourage students to explore the construction of philosophical paradigms in different cultures and to reflect on how these paradigms might be challenged.

As a researcher working on fake news and misinformation, I see philosophy learning as a way to equip students with the tools and skills to maintain a rational and critical mind. First, my teaching emphasizes the tools of philosophical reasoning. I add a five-to-ten-minute session in each class explaining philosophical tools used in the recommended readings, such as 'validity and soundness of argument', 'begging the question', and 'hinge proposition'. My emphasis enhances their awareness of using these tools in their own writing. Students' final papers showed significant improvement in logical coherence. Second, I encourage students to apply philosophical theories and tools to real-life situations by using recent social news as examples in the classes. When teaching Kantian ethics, for example, I use an example of a local interview of a police officer accused of abuse of power who insists on justifying his behaviour in terms of his own moral principle. Using this real-life example not only helps students to understand how moral rules might motivate actions, but also ease their frustrations with social injustice by helping them analyse it with philosophical theories.

As a teacher and researcher of Chinese philosophy and comparative philosophy, I emphasize how different philosophical paradigms might shed light on each other. When teaching Chinese philosophy courses, I prefer precise language and analytical approach to reconstruct and explain the paradigm of Chinese philosophy, which differs from the traditional way of employing obscure language to guide students in feeling and experiencing the classical teachings. When comparing the philosophical traditions of the East and West, I encourage my students not only to observe their surface similarities and differences but also to delve into the origins of these differences. For instance, when teaching epistemology in Chinese tradition, I explain to students that, whereas the primary aim of cognitive activity in the Western tradition is to reach the truth, in the Chinese tradition, it is to perform the *dào*. Both knowing and action are considered competence in performing the *dào*. It explains why a Cartesian scepticism is absent in classical Chinese philosophy. Illusions are considered a failure of the competence in knowing that can be avoided simply by improvement of competence. In upper-level classes, I would further compare the Chinese approach with virtue epistemology. This comparison helps students see the differences between philosophical paradigms and their potential interactions. In courses on mind, epistemology, and ethics, I also add one or two lectures on Chinese philosophy to give students a chance to explore how concepts are constructed in different philosophical paradigms.

I consider respect for diversity as making students proud of their unique backgrounds by teaching them how to utilize their language and culture in philosophical learning. For instance, in a class on epistemology, I invite students to share how the words 'know' and 'tell' are used in their mother language and how linguistic evidence suggests the factivity of knowledge and assertion. Their interests in their mother language was stimulated. Several students even started an after-class study group to share philosophical terms and issues in their mother language. Diversity is enhanced through their communications.

In conclusion, my teaching provides students with thinking tools and an open and confident mindset that will benefit them in their learning and life after they leave my classroom.

### **Teaching competence**

1. Courses I can teach:

- Philosophy of Language (from introductory level to upper level)
- Epistemology (from introductory level to upper level)
- Philosophy of Cognitive Science (from introductory level to upper level)
- Philosophy of the Mind (from introductory level to upper level)
  
- Ethics (introductory level)
- Metaphysics (introductory level)
  
- Introduction to Classical Chinese Philosophy (introductory level)
- History of Chinese philosophy (introductory level)
- Language, Mind, and Knowledge in Classical Chinese Philosophy (upper level)
- Classical Chinese Ethics (upper level)
- Philosophy of Arts in Classical Chinese philosophy (upper level)
- Traditional Chinese Political Theory

2. Potential Courses I can teach after preparation:

- Critical Thinking
- Formal Logics
- Ancient Greek philosophy

## Samples of Syllabi

### Epistemology (Upper level)

#### Course Description

The course covers the very recent topics in epistemology. We will start with two standard accounts of justification according to which a belief is justified if it is based on good evidence or a reliable process. It leads to a series of questions: When we have formed our belief based on some evidence or reliable process, how much confident are we? Can we guarantee that we are not manipulated by misinformation? With these accounts of justification in mind, we will turn to the nature and value of knowledge: is knowledge more valuable than justified true belief? If we cannot fully explain the nature of knowledge in terms of justified true belief, what other approaches might we have? What kind of knowledge do we have, and do we have epistemic states go beyond knowledge?

#### Learning Objectives and Outcomes

After completing this course, students should be able to:

- have an in-depth grasp of recent topics in contemporary epistemology,
- critically evaluate different accounts of rational belief, knowledge, understanding and wisdom

#### Course Outline

##### Part One: Can we have rational belief?

##### Week 1 Internalism and Evidentialism

Recommended reading:

Cohen, 1984, "Justification and Truth"

Feldman and Conee, 1985, "Evidentialism"

Optional reading:

Goldman, 1979, "What Is Justified Belief?"

Dutant, 2015, *The Legend of the Justified True Belief Analysis*

##### Week 2 Belief and Degrees of Belief

Recommended reading:

Foley, 2009, *Belief, Degrees of Belief, and the Lockean Thesis*

Optional reading:

Leitgeb, 2020, "The Stability of Belief: How Rational Belief Coheres with Probability"

##### Week 3 Misinformation as a threat to rational belief

Recommended reading:

Harris, to be published, Chapter 1, *Misinformation, Content Moderation, and Epistemology*.

Optional reading

Musi & Reed, 2022, *From fallacies to semifake news: Improving the identification of misinformation triggers across digital media*.

##### Part two: What is knowledge?

##### Week 4 Knowledge VS Justified True belief

Recommended reading:

Pritchard, 2009, "The Value of Knowledge"

Optional reading:

Kvanvig, 2003, Chapter 1, *The Value of Knowledge and the Pursuit of Understanding*.

### **Week 5 Knowledge-first**

Recommended reading:

Williamson, T. 2014. "Knowledge First."

Optional reading:

Fricker, 2009, "Is Knowing a State of Mind? The Case Against"

### **Week 6 Virtue epistemology I**

Recommended reading:

Sosa, 2017, Chapter 1, Judgment and Agency

Optional reading:

Greco, 2009, "Knowledge and Success From Ability"

Lackey, 2007, "Why we don't deserve credit for everything we know"

### **Week 7 Virtue epistemology II**

Recommended reading:

Zagzebski, 2012, Virtues of the Mind, Selections from Chapter 3.

Optional reading:

Zagzebski, 2012, Virtues of the Mind, Selections from Chapter 1

## **Part three Different kinds of Knowledge**

### **Week 8 Testimonial knowledge**

Recommended reading:

Greco, 2020, selections of chapter two, *The Transmission of Knowledge*

Optional reading:

Goldberg, 2005, "Testimonial Knowledge through Unsafe Testimony"

### **Week 9 Perceptual knowledge**

Recommended reading:

Siegel and Silins, 2014, "The Epistemology of Perception"

Optional Reading:

McDowell, 1995, Knowledge and the Internal

### **Week 10 Memory**

Recommended reading:

Malcolm. 1963. "Three forms of memory" Knowledge and Certainty

Optional reading:

Moon, 2012. "Remembering entails knowing"

## **Part four: Beyond knowledge**

### **Week 11 Understanding**

Recommended reading:

Grimm 2006, "Is understanding a species of knowledge"

Optional Reading:

Hills, 2015, "Understanding why"

### **Week 12 Wisdom**

Recommended reading:

Whitcomb, 2010, "Wisdom," in *Routledge Companion to Epistemology*

Optional reading:

Nozick, R., 1989, “What is Wisdom and Why Do Philosophers Love it So?”

### **Assessment**

Seminar attendance and participation (10%), Three short reflections on each section (under 500 words, 20%), Mid-term paper (2000 words, 30%) Final paper (2500 words, 40%).

## **Language, Mind, and Knowledge in Classical Chinese Philosophy (Upper level)**

### **Course Description**

Though often neglected in contemporary literature, theories of language, mind, and knowledge play a fundamental role in classical Chinese philosophy. This course helps students understand the distinctive philosophy paradigms constructed in the above topics in Classical Chinese tradition. The basic unit of language is names; the basic object of epistemic activity is kinds. The basic cognitive competence drawing distinctions between kinds and recognizing an object as its kind. Knowledge is taken as a kind of epistemic success achieved by such competence. This course will lead the students step by step to grasp the classic Chinese approach, encouraging them to critically engage with classical texts and to appreciate how it might cast light on contemporary philosophical inquiries.

### **Learning Objectives and Outcomes**

After completing this course, students should be able to:

- have a general understanding of the classical Chinese approach to language, mind, and knowledge.
- be able to compare classical Chinese approaches with the major contemporary approach.

### **Course Outline**

#### **Part One: Language**

##### **Week 1 Names in Ruism and Mohism I – Correcting Names**

Primary reading: Selections from *Xúnzǐ* and *Mòzǐ*

Secondary reading: Chris Fraser, 2021, “Representation in Early Chinese Philosophy of Language”

Optional

##### **Week 2 Names in Ruism and Mohism II -- Mohist Dialectics**

Primary reading: Selections from *Mohist Dialectics*

Secondary reading: Dan Robins. 2012, “Names, Cranes, and the Later Moists”

##### **Week 3 Dàodéjīng and Skepticism About Language**

Primary reading: Selections from *Dàodéjīng*

Secondary reading: Chad Hansen, 1992, Selection from Chapter 6 “Laozi: Language and Society”, *A Daoist Theory of Chinese Thought*

##### **Week 4 Zhuangzi’s ineffability: Skill stories**

Primary reading: Selections from *Zhuāngzǐ*

Secondary reading:

Lai, K. L., 2006, "Philosophy and Philosophical Reasoning in the Zhuangzi: Dealing with Plurality."

Optional reading:

Franklin Perkins, 2019, "Skill and Nourishing Life."

## **Part two: Mind**

### **Week 5 Mind to the world VS Mind to the *Dao*, A compassion between the East and the West**

Primary reading: Selections from the *Analects*, *Guānzǐ*, *Mòzǐ*, *Mèngzǐ*, *Xúnzǐ*, and *Zhuāngzǐ*

### **Week 6 Heart as affective and cognitive organ**

Primary reading: Selections from *Xúnzǐ*

Secondary reading:

Goldin, Paul R., "Xunzi", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy

Chris Fraser, 2011, *Knowledge and Error in Early Chinese Thought*

### **Week 7 Perception and Illusion in the *Xúnzǐ* and Mohism**

Primary reading: Selections from *Xúnzǐ*

Secondary reading: Jane Geaney, 2002, Chapter 2, "Hearing and Seeing", *On the Epistemology of the Senses in Early Chinese Thought*

## **Part Three: Knowledge and Understanding**

### **Week 8 Truth in the *Xúnzǐ* and Mohism**

Primary reading: Selections from *Xúnzǐ* and *Mòzǐ*

Secondary reading: Chad Hansen, 1985, Chinese Language, Chinese Philosophy, and "Truth"

### **Week 9 Intellectual Virtue in the *Xúnzǐ* and *Mèngzǐ***

Primary reading: Selections from *Xúnzǐ* and *Mèngzǐ*

Secondary reading:

Waldemar Brys, 2023, Epistemology in the Mencius

Chris Fraser, 2022, "Epistemic Competence and Agency in Sosa and Xunzi"

### **Week 10 Understanding and Wisdom in the *Xúnzǐ***

Primary reading: Selections from *Xúnzǐ*

Secondary reading: Monica Ding, "*Ming* and *Tong* in the *Xúnzǐ*: Understanding the Unified System of Names"

### **Week 11 Argumentation or logic? the Mohist Dialectics**

Primary reading: Selections from *Xúnzǐ* and *Mòzǐ*

Secondary reading: Chang, Chih-wei, 1998, "The Road Not Taken: The Convergence/Divergence of Logic and Rhetoric in the Mohist 'Xiaoqu'."

### **Week 12 Zhuāngzǐ's Emptying Heart as a way of knowing**

Primary reading: Selections from *Zhuāngzǐ*

Secondary reading: Chiu Wai Wai, 2021, "Zhuangzi's evaluation of *qing* and its relationship to knowledge"

## **Assessment**

Seminar attendance and participation (10%), Three short reflections on each section (under 500 words, 20%), Mid-term paper (2000 words, 30%) Final paper (2500 words, 40%).

May 2023

Dear Monica,

**Graduate Teaching Assistant Award 2022-23 – HONOURABLE MENTION**

We have solicited nominations for the Graduate Teaching Assistant Award from the undergraduate students. These responses included a nomination of you as an excellent teaching tutor.

This is an example of the comments we received from your students:

*“Monica asked very thought-provoking questions and really ensured that our understanding of the content was firm. She provided great advice on essay writing as well and also very useful feedback for my work.”*

Our undergraduate degrees could not function without the dedication and commitment of tutors like you, and we are very grateful indeed. The award brings with it a small monetary prize, but the main advantage is that you can proudly list it as an achievement on your CV, and of course you should take a moment to bask in the satisfaction of a job well done.

Congratulations!

With best wishes,



Prof Maria Alvarez  
Head of Department



Dr Adrian Alsmith  
Deputy Department Education Lead

## TEACHING OBSERVATION

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**GTA:**

**Monica Ding**

**Reviewer:**

**Matt Soteriou**

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**Term: 2**

**Module:**

**4AANA103 Introduction to Philosophy II**

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**Year: 2023**

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### **Structure, planning and organisation:**

The seminar was well planned and organised. It was clear what issues and questions you had identified for discussion beforehand, and they were all useful prompts for discussion and good ways to test comprehension.

You asked some nicely focused questions. It may be good to start with some simpler questions, just to make sure some of the cohort aren't being left behind.

It may also be useful to ask what they read / whether they did. Also any questions about the lecture.

### **Learning outcomes:**

It was clear from the questions you asked what issues you wanted to cover and help them understand; and the learning outcomes you'd chosen were entirely appropriate.

### **Methods and approach:**

Your questions helped guide the discussion and you did a good job of explaining key points when that was required. When students asked you questions you invited other students to answer, and that was great.

Sometimes the student's comment or answer didn't directly engage with what you were focused on. But even in such cases, try to make the most of what they say, rather than ignoring it.

### **Content:**

Excellent on content. Pitched at the right level. Really helped students' understanding.



**Delivery, pace, tone and timing:**

Good pace – you're not rushing through issues (just as it should be, I think). The tone was great. Not intimidating. Allowing students the space to think and talk, and allowed the discussion to develop.

**Participation/interaction:**

On the whole, good participation and interaction among students. There were some good discussions. You were patient in your responses, so no one felt they shouldn't have asked the question they were asking.

**Learning resources:****Overall style and ambience**

Excellent on both.

# DR DANIEL ELBRO

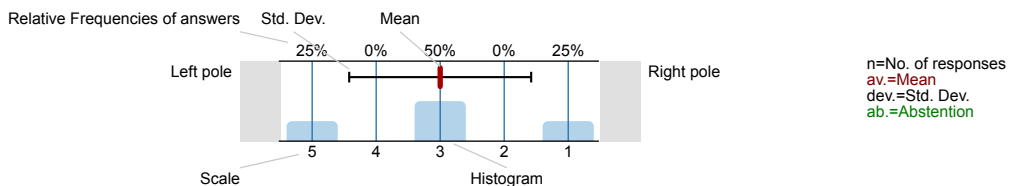
Monica Ding (4AANA002-2022/3-SEM1-000001 MD)  
No. of responses = 16



## Survey Results

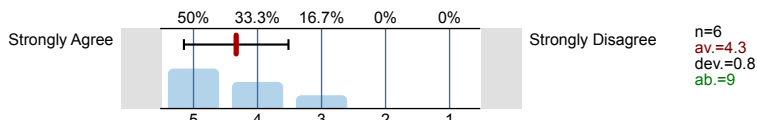
### Legend

Question text

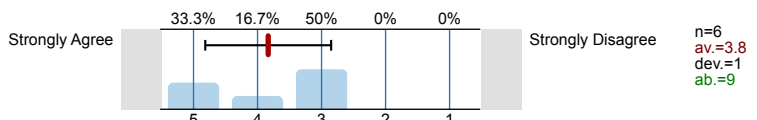


### 1. Lecturer Questions

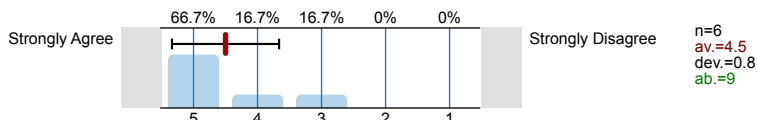
1.1) The lecturer has been good at explaining the subject



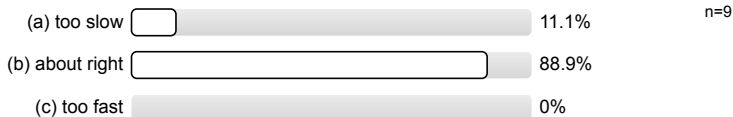
1.2) The lecturer has made the subject interesting



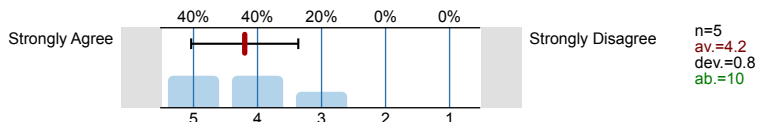
1.3) The lecturer has been well prepared for their classes



1.5) The pace of the lectures/seminars was



1.4) The lecturer cares about my learning experience

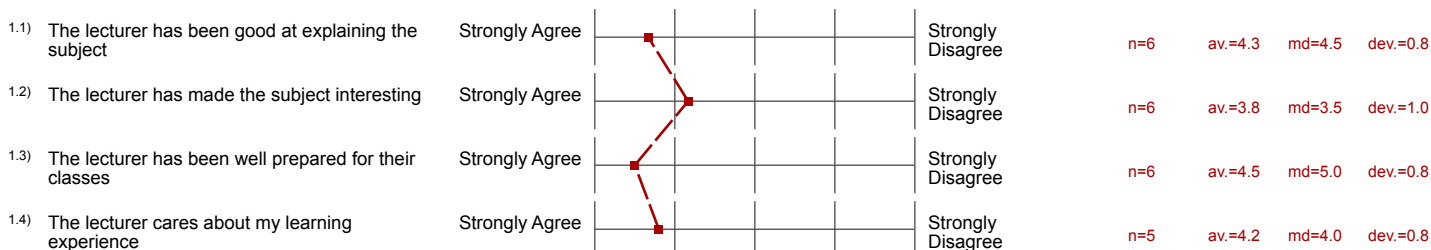


# Profile

■ Subunit: ■ Philosophy  
■ Responsible for modules: ■ DR DANIEL ELBRO  
■ Name of the course: ■ Monica Ding  
■ (Name of the survey)

Values used in the profile line: Mean

## 1. Lecturer Questions



# PROFESSOR MATTHEW SOTERIOU

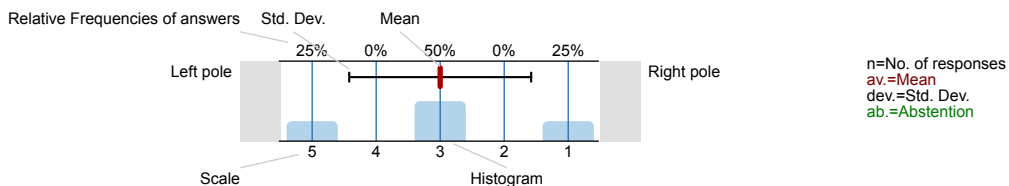
Monica Ding (4AANA103-2022/3-SEM2-000001 MD)  
No. of responses = 11



## Survey Results

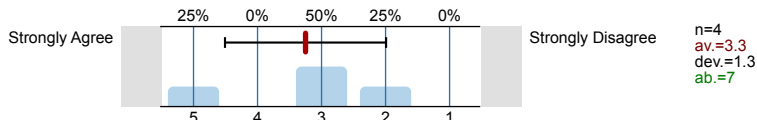
### Legend

Question text

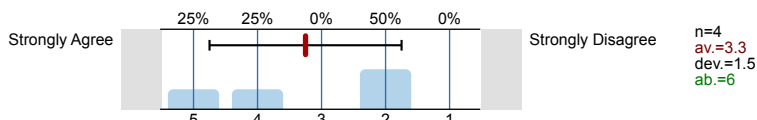


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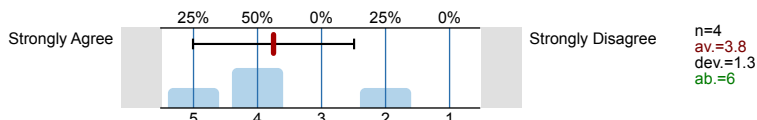
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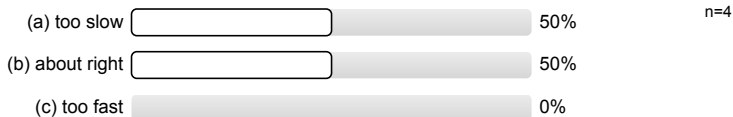
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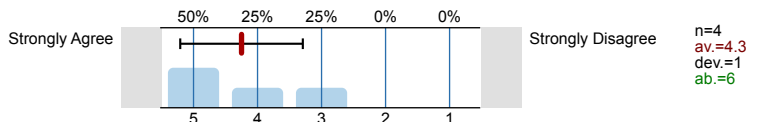
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# Profile

Subunit: **Philosophy**  
 Responsible for modules: **PROFESSOR MATTHEW SOTERIOU**  
 Name of the course: **Monica Ding**  
 (Name of the survey)

Values used in the profile line: Mean

## 1. Lecturer Questions

