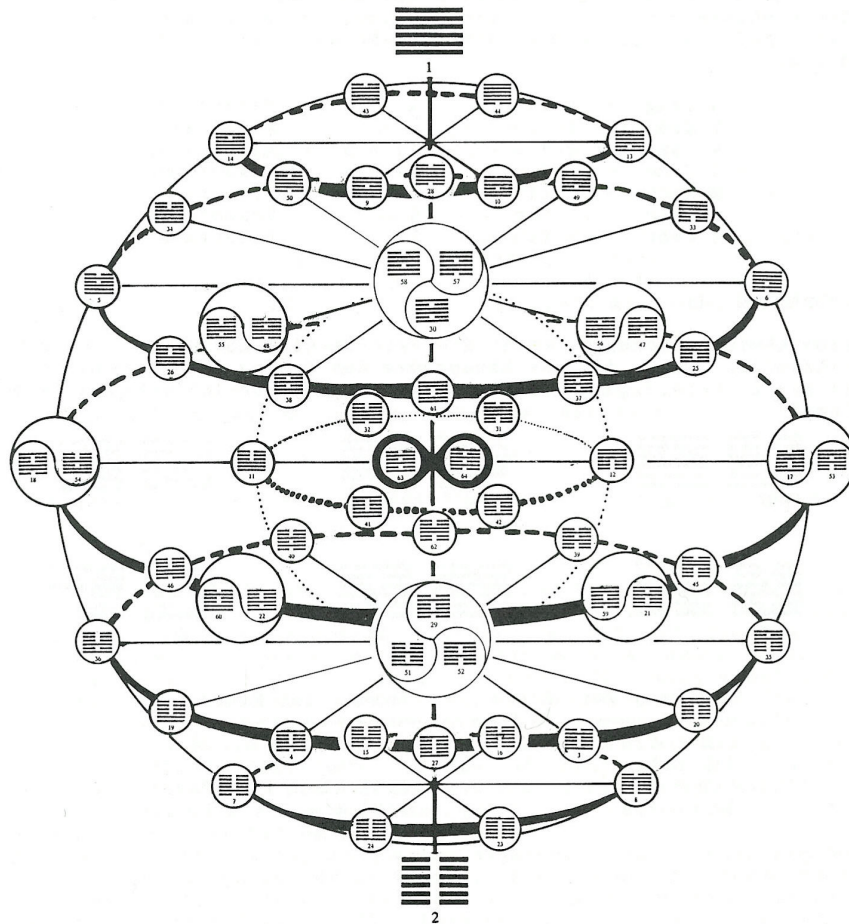


Philosophical Daoism



Instructor: Dr. Chris Goto-Jones (he/him) (chrisgotojones@uvic.ca)

Office Hours: Mondays 11:30-12:20 and Thursdays 11:30-12:20 (booking link is on Brightspace)

Teaching Assistant: Kaitlyn Berry (she/her) (kaitlynjberry@uvic.ca)

Class Information: Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday 13:30-14:20 (on Zoom)

Course Website: Through Brightspace. <http://bright.uvic.ca>

Readings available through the course website – all available electronically when on campus network.

Links to academic support and other services available through course site.

If you notice any accessibility issues with respect to this class, please let me know. If they are within my power, I will do my best to solve them. In general, though, I would also encourage any students who might benefit from their services to register with the Centre for Accessible Learning (www.uvic.ca/services/cal/), where accommodations and other support can be sought.

Course Description

Professional philosophy in the modern university has become almost completely dominated by dead, white, European men. So, it has become easy to forget that something like philosophy (oh my goodness, *what is philosophy?!*) has been practised all over the world for at least as long (if not longer) than it has in Europe. What are the reasons that these traditions have become excluded from the conventional history of philosophy and are those reasons sustainable today?

In this class, we'll consider just one of the many traditional schools of philosophy that developed in China and East Asia, Daoism. The focus will be on the emergence of Daoism as a philosophy, partly in response to the other major schools of Chinese philosophy, Confucianism and Mohism, probably in the 6th century BCE. Hence, seeking to see through the confusions of Orientalism and religious mysticism that arose around these traditions in later centuries and millennia (and which dominate the representation of Daoism in contemporary North America), we will go back to a close reading of important primary texts (in translation), including classics such as the *Dao De Jing* and the *Zhuangzi*. How should we read and engage with these astonishing texts, which have been two of the most influential (and most translated) books in human history.

The course will place philosophical Daoism into its intellectual context (exploring its relationship to other major schools of thought in China, especially Confucianism, and also its synergies with earlier classics, especially the Yi-Jing/I-Ching). However, we will also investigate the characteristics of Daoism's contributions to perennial philosophical questions about the nature of human existence, the meaning of the good life, and the composition of reality. Daoism will not only be read as an ancient Chinese tradition but also as a modern, transnational tradition. Particular emphasis will be placed on questions of ethics and cultivation, as well the relationship between humans and nature.

Alongside conventional lectures and classes, this course will also introduce students to a more traditionally 'Daoist' format for learning and teaching, focussing on creating commentaries on short passages from the classic texts.

Course Objectives

The course aims to give students an understanding of the central questions, concepts and arguments in the philosophy of Daoism, focussed on the period of 'philosophical Daoism' that centres around the *Dao De Jing* and *Zhuangzi* in particular.

Students who successfully complete the course will have a good understanding of:

- characteristic Daoist positions on the nature of human existence, including the mind-body problem;
- characteristic Daoist positions on questions of ethics, politics, and the dimensions of the good life;
- characteristic Daoist positions on questions of metaphysics and the nature of reality, as well as typically Daoist methodologies for inquiry into the same;
- the significance of Daoism within the philosophical traditions of China and East Asia;
- the (historical and conceptual) relationship between Daoism and Western Philosophy.

Students who successfully complete the course will be able to:

- critically analyse primary sources in translation, paying attention to issues of origination;

- critically analyse recent literature in the fields spanned by the course: this includes primary philosophical literature and also some relevant research in Asian/Chinese Studies as well as Religious Studies;
- formulate and defend well-reasoned positions on the questions covered in the course in writing, presentations, and in-class discussions.

Course materials

I have tried to avoid structuring this course around an expensive textbook. Instead, we will be making use of resources that are available electronically in the library. Having said that, there are two indispensable primary texts that everyone will have to read: the *Dao De Jing* and the *Zhuangzi*. These are both available in innumerable translations and editions, including free online versions. As we'll see in this course, the quality and style of translations can vary widely and wildly, especially when it comes to the *Dao De Jing*. Use caution when selecting your sources. Solid and reliable editions include: Ivanhoe (trans), *The Daodejing of Laozi*. Hackett Publishing, 2003 (Ivanhoe's influential translation is also [freely available online](#)); AC Graham (trans), *Chuang-Tzu: The Inner Chapters*. Hackett Publishing, 1981/2001 (Graham's influential translation is also [freely available online](#)). My preferred editions are:

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- Ames & Hall (trans), *Dao De Jing: Making This Life Significant – a philosophical translation*. Ballantine Books, 2003. This translation is also [freely available online](#).
- Watson (trans), *The Complete Works of Zhuangzi*. Columbia UP, 2013. This translation is available [electronically through the UVic library](#).

For the sake of consistency, I will rely on these translations whenever possible. *And you will too!*

Additional materials, including commentaries and other readings will be provided through Brightspace. Each week will include two sessions dedicated to the specified reading; the third session will be in a more traditional 'Daoist' format, exploring a parable or other textual extract as a way to access some of the concepts and practices in a way more recognizable to this commentarial and experiential tradition.

A quick note on translation/transliteration

You will very quickly notice that Chinese terms appear to be romanized inconsistently in the English literature. Consider even the foundation term Dao, which sometimes appears as Tao. Or the 'author' Laozi, who sometimes appears as Lao Tzu or even Lao Tze. We can talk about this in class, but in general there have been two romanization systems. The older one (which was created in the 19th century by two imperial British scholar-diplomats, Thomas Francis Wade and Herbert Giles) is known as Wade-Giles romanization. In that system, we're studying Taoism and the main book is the Tao Te Ching. But then, in the 1950s, the Chinese state created the Hanyu Pinyin system, which renders Dao and Daodejing (or Dao de jing). Today, Wade-Giles has an old fashioned and rather imperial feeling. Where possible, I'd prefer to use Pinyin, as a system developed by China for transcribing Chinese. So, we are studying Daoism.

In this course I don't expect you to master these systems – this is not a Chinese Studies course. However, I once had a student submit a very long essay explaining the difference between the concept of the Dao and the Tao ... when these are the same word. So, just be careful to ensure you're aware of the concept to which the words refer and so avoid unnecessary sillinesses!

Course Logistics

This will be a hybrid *a/synchronous* online course. This means that the classes will be held in real-time online via **Zoom**. You can expect the first session in each week (on Tuesdays) to be (more-or-less) in lecture format, and you can expect the second session in each week (on Wednesdays) to be more discussion-driven, with the content based on the previous session.

For convenience and ease of access, the sessions on Tuesdays will be recorded and made available for the class to review on **Brightspace**. These recordings will remain available throughout the course so that you can refer to them as needed. Hence, if you are unable to attend the Tuesday class on time due to illness, you can still access the material. *Real-time attendance on Tuesdays is recommended*. In some weeks we may have guest teachers from other universities, in which case I hope you will all attend the Tuesday sessions out of respect for their freely-given time.

Wednesday classes will probably not be recorded since they should be more discussion-driven. *Hence, real-time participation on Wednesdays is especially important and will be recognized in your participation grade for this course* – if you are sick or have other good reason to miss the class, please let me know *in advance of the class* (or as soon as possible thereafter), and this may count as an excused absence.

You can expect sessions on Fridays to take a more traditionally ‘Daoist’ format. Rather than further analyzing the set-text for that week, the talk on Fridays will usually be based on exploring an extract from a primary source. The idea of this session is to encourage participation in another mode of learning and inquiry. Friday sessions will usually be recorded and posted to Brightspace, but attendance will be beneficial.

Academic Integrity

Everything you will be evaluated on in this course will be fully open book and untimed. You are welcome to talk about the course material as much as you like with anyone you like, but all answers to assignments have to be your own written work. This means that you are not allowed to provide answers for someone else, or *vice versa* or even *versa vice*. If you are ever unsure about what constitutes a violation of academic integrity, more information is provided on the University Calendar:

<http://web.uvic.ca/calendar/undergrad/info/regulations/academic-integrity.html>

And information on the Tri-faculty code of conduct for students is here:

<https://www.uvic.ca/services/advising/assets/docs/tri-fac-student-code-of-conduct.pdf>

Communication and Office Hours

Email is my preferred method of communication, as opposed to *Brightspace* messages or forum posts, especially for any official requests. If you ask me a question over email, you can expect a reply within about 1 working day. If you don’t hear back from me within that time frame, feel free to try again in case your message went astray. When you do address me (over email or otherwise), please do so as Chris, because that’s my name. If you feel more comfortable with titles, then please use either Professor (Prof.) Goto-Jones or Dr. Goto-Jones. No ‘sir’ or ‘mr,’ for various reasons, thanks! If you are ever nervous about sending me an email, or asking a question, feel free to include a funny anecdote, cartoon, or a picture of your pet with your request. This will not affect whether or not I will be able to help you with your request, but it will be much more fun for us all.

Finally, my pronouns are he/him. If you think I am unlikely to know the name you would prefer to be called, or the pronouns I ought to use for you (through the entry that I will see for you through your Brightspace/UVic registration), please don't hesitate to make me aware.

My default platform for office hours will be Zoom, Mondays and Thursdays 11:30-12:20 am, but if that does not work for you, please feel free to email me in advance to suggest an alternative time and/or platform. **Office hours will require pre-booking via Calendly (see brightspace for link).**

Evaluation

You are expected to maintain high standards of respect and academic integrity throughout this course. Discussion is essential to learning in this course, and it relies upon an atmosphere of trust. Everyone present should feel safe to express their views, which also means that everyone present is responsible for ensuring that they exercise academic freedom (rather than merely freedom of speech), treating each other respectfully and supportively.

• Continuous Assessment/Participation: 10%

In this course, your participation will be evidenced by attending and participating in classes and by submitting weekly 'reflections.' These 'reflections' will be short (approx. 150-200 word) responses to excerpts of text drawn from the weekly reading (or from a text adjacent to the reading). The prompt will be provided during or after class on Wednesday and will be due by 11.59pm on the following Tuesday. The purpose is to demonstrate thoughtfulness and reflection rather than to test your mastery of the material. These reflections are 'pass/fail.'

• First midterm assignment: 25% - deadline: Friday 14 October, 23:59

• Second midterm assignment: 25% - deadline: Friday 4 November, 23:59

*The midterm assignments will be open-book format. For each midterm assignment you will receive a list of questions from which you will **answer one** with **approx. 750-1,000 words**. The first midterm will address topics from early in the course (introduction and intellectual context), and the second will address topics from the middle of the course (Laozi).*

Your work will be assessed on: its relevance to the themes and materials of the course; its accurate use of sources; its coherence, sophistication and persuasiveness; the convincingness and effectiveness of your argument and writing. Personal reflection and engagement is encouraged.

• Final assignment: 40% - deadline: Friday 16 December, 23:59

*The final assignment will be open-book format. You will receive a list of potential topics in reading week. From that list, you can select one question, which you will address in a more extended and sophisticated manner than in the midterm. I will expect **approx. 1500-2000 words**. The questions will pertain to material covered during the whole course.*

Your work will be assessed on: its relevance to the themes and materials of the course; its accurate use of sources; its coherence, sophistication and persuasiveness; the convincingness and effectiveness of your argument and writing. Personal reflection and engagement is encouraged.

Grades

Grades will be given as percentile marks.

Per UVic grading rubric, the percentile mark for the course will be converted to a letter grade in the following manner:

A+ = 90 - 100, A = 85 - 89, A- = 80 - 84, B+ = 77 - 79, B = 73 - 76, B- = 70 - 72, C+ = 65 - 69, C = 60 - 64, D = 50 - 59, F = 0 - 49.

- *The A range means exceptional, outstanding and excellent performance.*
- *A grade in the B range means a very good, good and solid performance.*
- *A grade in the C+ or C range means satisfactory, or minimally satisfactory, performance.*
- *A grade of D or D- indicates merely passable or marginal performance.*
- *An F indicates unsatisfactory performance.*

The full UVic grading rubric is provided in the Appendix to this syllabus. In the instance that it differs from this text, the UVic rubric takes precedence.

SCHEDULE

Week 1: No class on Tuesday 6 September

Wed 7 Sept – What Daoism Isn't (and Who We Aren't)

Optional readings:

Michael Puett & Christine Gross-Loh, 'The Age of Complacency.' In Michael Puett & Christine Gross-Loh, *The Path: What Chinese Philosophers Can Teach Us About the Good Life*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2016

Hans-Georg Moeller, *Daoism Explained*. Chicago: Open Court, 2004, pp.1-26.

PART ONE: THE INTELLECTUAL CONTEXT OF PHILOSOPHICAL DAOISM

Week 2: Tuesday 13 Sept – Kongzi (Confucius)

Peimin Ni, 'The Philosophy of Confucius.' In Vincent Shen (ed.), *The Dao Companion to Classical Confucian Philosophy*. London: Springer, 2014. pp.53-80

Week 3: Tuesday 20 Sept – Mozi (Micius)

Qianfan Zhang, 'Equality and Universal Love.' In Qianfan Zhang, *Human Dignity in Classical Chinese Philosophy*. New York: Palgrave, 2016. pp.143-172

Week 4: Tuesday 27 Sept – The Philosophy of Changes

Chung-ying Cheng, 'Philosophy of Change.' In Antonio Cua (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Chinese Philosophy*. London: Routledge, 2003. pp.517-524

Of follow-up interest in bridging from Yi-jing to Daoism (optional):

Livia Kohn, 'Reality: Ultimate reality + The world.' In Livia Kohn, *Daoism: A Contemporary Philosophical Investigation*. London: Routledge, 2020. pp. 13-35.

Hans-Georg Moeller, 'Yin, yang, qi, dao & de.' In Hans-Georg Moeller, *The Philosophy of the Daodejing*. NY: Columbia University Press, 2006. pp.21-53.

No class on Friday 30 September, National Day for Peace & Reconciliation.

First midterm assignment questions issued

PART TWO: ENCOUNTERING LAOZI

Week 5: Tuesday 4 Oct – Naming the Nameless Name

Required primary reading: *Daodejing* chapters 1-37 (The Classic of Dao)

Optional secondary reading:

Xiaogan Liu, 'Laozi's Philosophy: textual and conceptual analyses.' In Xiaogan Liu (ed.), *Dao Companion to Daoist Philosophy*. NY: Springer, 2015. pp.71-100.

Week 6: Tuesday 11 Oct – Cooking a Small Fish

Required primary reading: *Daodejing* chapters 38-77 (The Classic of De)

Optional secondary readings:

Tongdong Bai, 'How to Rule Without Taking Unnatural Actions.' *Philosophy East and West*, 59:4 (2009), pp.481-502

Hans-Georg Moeller, 'Paradox Politics.' In Hans-Georg Moeller, *The Philosophy of the Daodejing*. NY: Columbia University Press, 2006. pp.55-74.

First midterm assignment answers due – Friday 14 October, 23.59

Week 7: Tuesday 18 Oct – Laozi and Mystical Praxis

Harold Roth, 'The Laozi in the Context of Daoist Mystical Praxis.' In Harold Roth, *The Contemplative Foundations of Classical Daoism*. NY: SUNY, 2021. pp.279-306

Second midterm assignment questions issued

PART THREE: WANDERING WITH ZHUANGZI

Week 8: Tuesday 25 Oct – Changes and Butterflies

Required primary reading: *Zhuangzi* chapter 2, 'Discussion on Making all Things Equal'

Optional secondary reading:

Hans-Georg Moller, 'Zhuangzi's 'dream of the butterfly,' a Daoist interpretation.' *Philosophy East & West*, 49:4 (1999), pp.439-450.

Week 9: Tuesday 1 November – Butchers and Woodworkers

Required primary reading: *Zhuangzi* chapter 3, 'The Secret of Caring for Life' AND chapter 19, 'Mastering Life.'

Optional secondary readings:

James Sellmann, 'Butcher Ding, a meditation in flow.' In Karyn Lai & Wai Wai Chiu (eds), *Skill and Mastery: Philosophical Stories from the Zhunagzi*. London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019. pp.111-127.

Kim-chong Chong, 'Woodworker Qing: matching heaven with heaven.' In Karyn Lai & Wai Wai Chiu (eds), *Skill and Mastery: Philosophical Stories from the Zhunagzi*. London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019. pp.229-242.

Second midterm assignment answers due – Friday 4 November, 23.59

Week 10: Tuesday 8 Nov – READING BREAK

Final assignment questions issued

Week 11: Tuesday 15 Nov – How Happy is that Fish?

Required primary reading: *Zhuangzi* chapter 17, 'Autumn Floods'

Optional secondary reading:

Lea Cantor, 'Zhuangzi on 'happy fish' and the limits of human knowledge.' *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 28:2 (2020), pp.216-230

PART FOUR: A CONTEMPORARY QUESTION

Week 12: Tuesday 22 Nov – Daoism and the Environment

Eric Nelson, 'Nourishing life, cultivating nature, and environmental philosophy.' In Eric Nelson, *Daoism and Environmental Philosophy: Nourishing Life*. London: Routledge, 2021. pp.24-48.

OR:

Mario Wenning, 'Eurodaoism and the environment.' In Abe, Fritsch & Wenning (eds), *Environmental Philosophy and East Asia*. London: Routledge, 2023.

Week 13: Tuesday 29 Nov – review of the big themes and questions

Last class Friday 2 December

Final assignment due, Friday 16 December, 23:59

Please note that all assignments for this course and all materials posted to Brightspace are the intellectual property of myself and the University of Victoria. Do not circulate this material or post it to note-sharing sites without my permission. Posting course materials to note-sharing sites or otherwise circulating course materials without the permission of your instructor violates the *Policy on Academic Integrity*(<http://web.uvic.ca/calendar/FACS/UnIn/UARe/PoAcl.html>).

APPENDIX: UVIC GRADING RUBRIC

<https://www.uvic.ca/calendar/undergrad/index.php#/policy/S1AAgoGuV?bc=true&bcCurrent=14%20-%20Grading&bcltemType=policies>

A primary purpose of evaluation and grading is to further effective teaching and learning. Any practices which assign a predetermined percentage of students a specific grade, that is, a certain percentage get A, another percentage get B and so on, without regard to individual achievement are prohibited.

The table below shows the official grading system used by instructors in arriving at final assessments of student performance. For letter grades authorized for use in the Faculty of Law, see the entry under that faculty.

Passing Grades			
Grade	Grade Value	Point Percentage*	Description
A+	9	90 - 100	An A+, A, or A- is earned by work which is technically superior, shows mastery of the subject matter, and in the case of an A+ offers original insight and/or goes beyond course expectations. Normally achieved by a minority of students.
A	8	85 - 89	
A-	7	80 - 84	
B+	6	77 - 79	A B+, B, or B- is earned by work that indicates a good comprehension of the course material, a good command of the skills needed to work with the course material, and the student's full engagement with the course requirements and activities. A B+ represents a more complex understanding and/or application of the course material.
B	5	73 - 76	
B-	4	70 - 72	
C+	3	65 - 69	A C+ or C is earned by work that indicates an adequate comprehension of the course material and the skills needed to work with the course material and that indicates the student has met the basic requirements for completing assigned work and/or participating in class activities.
C	2	60 - 64	
D	1	50 - 59	A D is earned by work that indicates minimal command of the course materials and/or minimal participation in class activities that is worthy of course credit toward the degree.
COM	Excluded Grade	N/A	Complete (pass). Used only for 0-unit courses and those credit courses designated by the Senate. Such courses are identified in the course listings.
CTN	Excluded Grade	N/A	Continuing . Denotes the first half of a full-year course.
Failing Grades			
Grade	Grade Value	Point Percentage*	Description
E	0	0 - 49	Conditional supplemental. Supplemental examinations are not offered by all departments and the allowable percentage may vary by

Failing Grades			
Grade	Grade Value	Point Percentage*	Description
			program (e.g. 35-49). Students will be advised whether supplemental will be offered and if the percentage range varies when assessment techniques are announced at the beginning of the course.
F	0	0 - 49	F is earned by work, which after the completion of course requirements, is inadequate and unworthy of course credit towards the degree.
N	0	0 - 49	Did not write examination or complete course requirements by the end of term or session; no supplemental.
N/X	Excluded Grade	N/A	Did not complete course requirements by the end of the term; no supplemental. Used only for Co-op work terms and for courses designated by Senate. Such courses are identified in the course listings. The grade is EXCLUDED from the calculation of all grade point averages.
F/X	Excluded Grade	N/A	Unsatisfactory performance. Completed course requirements; no supplemental. Used only for Co-op work terms and for courses designated by Senate. Such courses are identified in the course listings. The grade is EXCLUDED from the calculation of all grade point averages.

Temporary Grades			
Grade	Grade Point Value	Percentage*	Description
INC	N/A	N/A	Incomplete. Used only for those credit courses designated by the Senate, to be replaced with a final grade by June 1 for Winter Session courses and by October 1 for Summer Session courses. Such courses are identified in the course listings.
DEF	N/A	N/A	Deferred status granted. Used only when deferred status has been granted because of illness, an accident or family affliction. See Deferred status .
INP	N/A	N/A	In Progress. Used only for courses designated by Senate, to be replaced with a final grade by the end of the next Winter Session except for TIED courses (identified in the Calendar). In TIED courses the INP must be replaced with a final grade by the end of the subsequent term (including Summer Session) or, where a COOP Work Term, or other activity approved by the academic unit, intervenes, within eight months. If a student fails to complete the second course of a TIED course sequence, then the final grade will be N.
CIC	N/A	N/A	Co-op Interrupted Course. See General Regulations: Undergraduate Co-op .

Grade notes			
Grade note	Grade Point Value	Percentage*	Description
AEG	N/A	N/A	Aegrotat. Transcript notation accompanying a letter grade, assigned where documented illness or similar affliction affected the student's performance or prevented completion of all course work.
WE	N/A	N/A	Withdrawal under extenuating circumstances. The WE registration status will replace a course registration or grade when approved by the Dean following a request for academic concession from a student. This registration status is excluded from the calculation of all grade point averages; it will appear on the official transcript.

* The grading scale for the evaluation of course achievement at the University of Victoria is a percentage scale that translates to a 9 point GPA/letter grade system. The 9 point GPA system is the sole basis for the calculation of grade point averages and academic standing. Standardized percentage ranges have been established as the basis for the assignment of letter grades. The percentage grades are displayed on the official and administrative transcripts in order to provide fine grained course assessment which will be useful to students particularly in their application to graduate studies and for external scholarships and funding. Comparative grading information (average grade [mean] for the class), along with the number of students in the class, is displayed for each course section for which percentage grades are assigned.