Confucian Virtue Ethics
(Course Outline)

While an ancient tradition, virtue ethics has experienced an impressive revival, especially in the English-speaking world, in the last a few decades, as a rival to the other two types of normative ethics, consequentialism (especially utilitarianism) and deontology (especially Kantianism). In the process, many scholars doing comparative philosophy have attempted to find the virtue ethics potentials in their respective traditions, among which Confucian virtue ethics is most fully developed and widely discussed. The main purpose of this course, however, is not to introduce Confucian ethics as a form of virtue ethics; instead, it will identify some main criticisms, serious deficiencies, major limitations of virtue ethics as we know it in its contemporary revival in the West, and then show what resources we can find in the Confucian traditions to respond to such criticisms, remedy such deficiencies, and overcome such limitations.

1. Virtue ethics as a rival to consequentialism and Deontology
2. Main features of virtue ethics
   Reading: Rosalind Hursthouse, "Virtue Ethics," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*
3. Confucianism as a virtue ethics
   Reading: Yong Huang, "Why Confucianism Is a Virtue Ethics, It Is Not a Bad Thing, and Neville Should Endorse It." *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 47 (2020): 283-294.
4. Ideal Type of Virtue Ethics: Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucianism
   Reading: Yong Huang, "Virtue Ethicist of the Ideal Type: Aristotle or Zhu Xi?" (Unpublished manuscript; to be distributed)
5. **(Presentation Session I)**
6-7. The self-centeredness objection to virtue ethics: Zhu Xi's response
   Reading: "The Self-centeredness Objection to Virtue Ethics: Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucian Response." *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 84 (2010).4: 651-692.
8-9. Agent-focused moral realism: Zhu Xi's Virtue Ethics Approach
   Reading: Yong Huang, "Agent-Focused Moral Realism: Zhu Xi's Virtue Ethics Approach," forthcoming in *Australasian Review of Philosophy*.
10. **(Presentation session II)**
11-12. Why Be Moral: The Cheng Brothers' Virtue Ethics Response
   Reading: Chapter 1 of Yong Huang, *Why Be Moral: Learning from the Neo-Confucian Cheng Brothers*, Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2014.
13. A Paradox of Virtue Ethics?: Confucius and Cheng Brothers on Virtue and Moral Responsibility
   Reading: Yong Huang, "Virtue Ethics and Moral Responsibility: Confucian Conception of Moral Praise and Blame." *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 40 (2013).3-4: 381-399.

14-15. Knowing-to: Wang Yangming's Virtue Ethics Approach to Moral Motivation
    Reading: <u>Yong Huang</u>, "Knowing-that, Knowing-how, or Knowing-to: Wang Yangming's Conception of Moral Knowledge." *Journal of Philosophical Research* 42 (2017): 65-94.
16. **(Presentation Session III)**