

Module 3: Classical Civilizations and Religious Traditions

Topic 3 Content: Confucianism

Introduction

Confucianism



Click on each of the panels in the "accordion" to learn more about the Chinese philosophy of Confucianism.

Image: The Chinese character for Confucius

- Beginnings
- Writings
- Basic Beliefs
- Five Constant Relationships
- Confucianism and Government
- Confucianism Today

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Beginnings

Confucianism

Beginnings

Confucianism began in China, which was the birthplace of the Chinese philosopher, Confucius. Scholars believe that Confucius lived from 551 B.C. (B.C.E.) until 479 B.C. (B.C.E.). During his life, the Chinese government and the Chinese society were unstable. The ideas of Confucius were seen as a way to provide stability.



Image: An artist's depiction of Confucius

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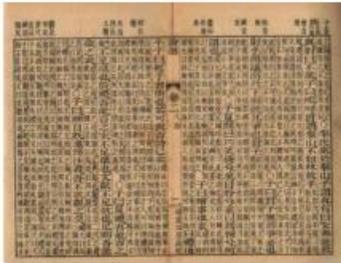
Writings

Confucianism

Beginnings

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The teachings of Confucius were recorded in the *Lunyu*, or *Analects*.

Image: A copy of Confucius' Analects

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Basic Beliefs

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Basic Beliefs

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Followers of Confucianism believe that humans are naturally good beings, and not bad. Confucianism advocates for the worship of ancestors, and many followers pay homage to deceased relatives. The teachings of Confucius place a high value on education, as Confucius believed that order could be maintained through education.

Image: Statue of Confucius in Shanghai, China



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The teachings of Confucius emphasize a respect for elders and a code of politeness within relationships. These attributes are still seen in Chinese culture today. According to Confucian teachings, Five Constant Relationships exist:

- Ruler to subject
- Parent to child
- Spouse to spouse
- Older sibling to younger sibling
- Friend to friend

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Parent to child
Spouse to spouse
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Confucius believed society would be harmonious if people respected different roles in each of these relationships. For example, an older sibling should be caring and watchful of a younger sibling, while a younger sibling should be admiring of an older sibling.

Image: An artist's depiction of Confucius with his students

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Confucianism and Government



Confucius believed that governing oneself meant respecting and appreciating others, and by doing so, a ruler would be fit to govern. A ruler should be virtuous and spread that virtue throughout the land. Confucian ideas were in line with the Chinese imperial bureaucracy, or civil service system, by which citizens could attain wealth and power based on their own merit and behavior and not through birth.

Image: A Confucian temple in Luzhou, China

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Confucianism Today

Today, Confucianism remains an important part of Chinese culture and is mainly practiced in China; however, it has also spread to Korea, Vietnam, and other areas where Chinese, Korean, or Vietnamese people have immigrated. Many people who follow Confucian principles are Buddhist, since observation of Confucianism does not prevent participation in religion.

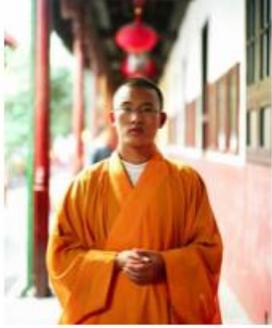


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