Daoism and Chinese Traditions: Religious, Cultural, and Philosophical Foundations

This course provides a window into the religious, cultural, and philosophical landscape of China out of which the great practice traditions of East Asia developed. We look at the interplay, including mutual borrowing and sometimes fierce conflict, between the major schools in China—Daoism, Confucianism, and Chinese Buddhism—as well as underlying folk religions and traditions and literati philosophical traditions. At the heart of the worldview expressed in these traditions is a fundamentally aesthetic and relationship-based conception of ethics and the Way. The course features extensive reading of primary and secondary sources, including the Daodejing, Zhuangzi, Confucian Analects, Sunzi’s Art of War, and Journey to the West. We look at modern works, including art and video, and appreciate current realizations of these ancient threads. Students learn how this worldview influences traditional and modern practices and are able to place their practice traditions within this context. Cross-listed as TRA552.

Course Number: TRA252
Unit: 3.0
Program: Traditional Eastern Arts