BLACK HILLS STATE UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM
Proposal to Offer a Colloquia Course

1. Names of Faculty Proposing Course (team-taught courses preferred):
   Sheng Yang, Chen Wu, Deaver Traywick

2. Disciplines and Colleges Represented:
   Economics, College of Business and Technology
   Humanities, College of Arts and Sciences

3. Name of Proposed Colloquia Course:
   China’s Balancing Act: Ancient Philosophy and Modern Economy

4. Preferred Schedule (Fall 2008 or Spring 2009): Spring 2009

5. A Rationale for the Course:
   Explain what ideas will be considered in this course and why they are important.
   Describe any specific skills or knowledge students would likely gain by taking this class.

   As the global economy of the 21st century develops, it becomes increasingly clear that the fates of the United States and China are bound together. China’s economy is now the third largest in the world, and China is America’s second largest trading partner. (Taken as a whole, the Chinese Diaspora—including mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore—accounts for nearly 50% of U.S. foreign trade.) Chinese investment in the U.S. has exploded in the past 20 years, and the inexpensive goods manufactured in China influence every aspect of the U.S. economy, from the cost of consumer products to the availability of jobs. If our students are to understand and succeed in this increasingly globalized world, it is imperative that they accrue greater knowledge and experience in Chinese studies.

   Students in this course will study the influence of three native Chinese philosophies (Daoism, Confucianism, and Legalism) both on historic economic and political systems and on China’s modern economic development. Our motivation for proposing such a course is three-fold. First, we believe this course offers BHSU students focused study of a culture with which they are generally underexposed. Secondly, by combining the study of classical philosophy with historic and modern economic theory, this course will demonstrate the enhanced value of a cross-disciplinary approach to a complex topic. Lastly, we believe this course will help meet several objectives of BHSU’s long-term strategic plan, including “developing international learning experiences” and “providing an environment that welcomes diversity and encourages global awareness.” In the past year, BHSU has opened an Office of International Studies, and the College of Business and Technology is currently finalizing an exchange program with Shanghai Normal University. This course will prepare students for the challenges and opportunities these international initiatives present.
Specifically, this course approaches the study of China’s economic development through the lens of philosophy for two important reasons. First, the Chinese civilization has a long and rich history of native philosophical thought dating to the 6th century B.C.E., and this traditional thought undergirds nearly every aspect of Chinese society. For example, China’s social control system can be characterized as a hybrid of the formal criminal justice organization and the informal community crime prevention network, and it traces its roots to the moral governance advocated in the Confucian and Daoist philosophies. As Confucius once said, “Lead the people with governmental measures and regulate them by law (fā) and punishment, and they will avoid wrongdoing but will have no sense of honor and shame. Lead them with virtue and regulate them by the rules of propriety (lĭ), and they will have a sense of shame and, moreover, set themselves right” (Analects). Therefore, by appealing to people’s morality and conscience, both Confucian and contemporary socialist doctrines promote communitarianism and collectivism for the common good. The second reason classical philosophy provides a strong structure for this class is because economics is at heart a social science, an interdisciplinary study of production and consumption that combines philosophy with history, sociology, psychology, and political science. To the degree that Daoism, Confucianism, and Legalism remain vibrant elements of contemporary Chinese economic systems and decisions, they provide a relevant and focused framework for making sense of China’s rapidly changing economy.

6. Proposed List of Readings:

I. Two or Three texts drawn from the following list:


II. A bound packet of journal articles, including selected readings from the following bibliography:


7. A Description:

Write 2-3 pages in which you give your reader a sense of the class in some detail. (Explain what topics you would cover in each part of the semester; describe plans for lecture and discussion in conjunction with each set of readings, and provide a description of tools for evaluation.)

This course is designed to appeal widely to students in history, political science, sociology, business and economics, and the humanities. The content of the course will draw from each of these disciplines, and students will be expected to take ownership of their learning by choosing readings and pursuing research relevant to their major field of study. Course delivery will maximize student engagement by alternating focused lectures with writing responses and discussions. To encourage peer-to-peer learning during these discussions, students will join 3-4 person reading groups that will self-select articles, discuss them during designated class time, then present them to the rest of the class.

Among other goals, the course will encourage students to:

- Compare East Asian philosophies and economic trends with those of the Western tradition
- Examine the influence of traditional Chinese beliefs on contemporary political, economic, and social systems
- Think critically about the competing demands in China for economic development, political democratization, and ecological conservation
- Engage deeply with a culture too often summarized or stereotyped in popular media

The course will begin with a 2-week introduction to Chinese history, focusing on political and economic systems. These meetings will be primarily lecture, although students will be asked to share their interest in Chinese culture and economics. Readings will be drawn from *China: Its History and Culture*, and Dr. Kathleen Parrow may be invited to enrich the historical perspective.
The next 2-3 weeks of the course will introduce and examine three uniquely Chinese philosophies: Daoism, Confucianism, and Legalism. This section will also demonstrate the role of these philosophies in determining historic Chinese political and economic systems from the Western Zhou to the Ming Dynasties (1050 B.C.E. to 1644 C.E.). Readings will come from *Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy* and *Understanding China: A Guide to China’s Economy, History, and Political Culture*. Classes during these weeks will begin with lecture but move into discussions that compare these philosophies with those of the Western tradition. Dr. David Cremeen may be invited during this time to speak on one of these philosophical traditions.

The 6-week heart of the course will examine closely how the three classical philosophies influenced the political and economic development of modern China (1650 C.E. to present) and trace their role in China’s contemporary economic boom. For example, Legalism has proven an effective instrument in creating a powerful military and economic system, and it still has an important role in modern Chinese bureaucratic government. Likewise, Daoism has exerted far-reaching influences on China’s philosophy, literature, arts, medicine and science. For instance, gunpowder, one of China’s four great inventions, was actually invented by Daoists during their attempts to create elixir. More recently, the Daoist concept of harmonious coexistence between humans and nature raises questions about modern China’s balance between economic development and environmental protection. Readings for this section will be drawn from *Understanding China: A Guide to China’s Economy, History, and Political Culture* and a course packet of journal articles selected from the list in Section 6 of this proposal.

The course will culminate with a 4-5 week extended discussion of China’s future as an economic power and its relationship to the rest of the world. Students will read *China Shakes the World: A Titan’s Rise and Troubled Future—and the Challenge for America or China, the United States, and the Global Economy*. Guest lecturers for this section may include Dr. Ahrar Ahmad on emerging economies, Dr. Christian Nsiah on international business, and Dr. Garth Spellman on the environmental impacts of economic development. In a final paper and presentation to the class, students will reflect on one of China’s many delicate balances, such as those between labor and industry, state control and entrepreneurship, or consumption and conservation of natural resources. This paper and presentation should not only examine the historic and present state of these equations, but should also project a reasonable path for China’s future development.

Students will be evaluated in several ways. A mid-term and final exam will test students’ comprehension of readings and ability to synthesize course content. A final research project and presentation to the class will demonstrate students’ ability to compose a focused argument. Informal reading responses, collected in a journal, will measure students’ engagement with the texts and prompt meaningful participation in class discussions.

8. Additional Resources Needed (including prices):
   Examples: lists of books to order for the library, necessary software or hardware.
We anticipate using several documentary films to animate our discussion of China’s physical and cultural landscape. Films that cannot be acquired through interlibrary loan or the library’s film collection may need to be purchased.

Deadline: December 1, 2007. Please submit electronically to Amy Fuqua, Director of the Honors Program: amyfuqua@bhsu.edu. All submissions will be posted on the university’s L: drive for review by Honors Advisory Council members and Honors students.

Please feel free to consult the director or council members about proposals. Council members are as follows: Steve Babbitt, Patty Bellamy, Dan Bergey, Rajeev Bukralia, Carol Hess (Joanna Jones is her substitute for 2007), Margee Husemann, Parthasarathi Nag, Laura Prosser, Sasha Pursley, Andrey Reznikov, Scott Stoltenberg, David Wolff, Byron Crowe (student member) and Amanda Scott (student member).