An Introduction to Confucius Institute, and Confucianism in Modern China

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Confucius Institute program is a world wide program supported by China National Office for Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language (Hanban). The goal of this program is to promote a better understanding of the Chinese language and culture among the people of the world; develop friendly relationships between China and other countries; accelerate the development of multiculturalism at the international level; and help bring about global peace and harmony.
The Confucius Institutes shall provide the following services:

- Developing Chinese language courses for various social sectors;
- Training Chinese language instructors for local institutions and providing them with Chinese language teaching resources;
- Establishing local facilities for the holding of the HSK Examination (Chinese Proficiency Test) and for the administration of procedures for the Certification of the Chinese Language Teachers;
- Providing information and consultative services concerning Chinese education, culture, economy and society;
- Promoting research about Contemporary China.
Since the first Confucius Institute in the world was officially opened in Seoul, the Republic of Korea on November 21, 2004, about 130 Confucius Institutes have been established in 50 countries over the past few years.
In USA, there are:

- Confucius Institute at the University of Maryland
- Confucius Institute at San Francisco State University
- Confucius Institute in Chicago
- Confucius Institute at China Institute (New York)
- Confucius Institute at the University of Kansas
- Confucius Institute at the University of Hawaii
- Confucius institute at North Carolina State University

and many more...
All the Confucius Institutes get financial support from the Ministry of Education of China, through the National Office of Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language, or “Hanban”.

Chinese president Hu Jintao meet with the students of Confucius Institute as Nairobi, Kenya, April 29, 2006.
It is a cooperative project of North Carolina State University, National Office of Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language (Hanban) and Nanjing Normal University in China.

The goal of the Confucius Institute is to enhance intercultural understanding in the U.S. by sponsoring programs in Chinese language and culture. NC State’s institute will promote the mission through a range of educational and outreach activities to students, teachers, businesses, and community members. The institute will contribute to the expansion of Chinese language instruction at NC State and in North Carolina schools, enrich cultural opportunities and help North Carolina businesses understand and compete in the Chinese market.
Nanjing Normal University

Located at Nanjing, the capital city of Jiangsu Province, and historically the old capital of more than 7 dynasties in ancient China.

It was originally funded in 1902, and is among the one hundred top Chinese Universities included in the national “211” project, and get enhanced investment from both the central and provincial government.
There are about 30,000 students, more than 4000 faculty in Nanjing Normal University.

Some disciplines such as Chinese Language and Literature, Education, Law, Biology, and Geography are ranked very high on most of the Chinese University ranking list.
Nanjing Normal University is also one of the first few educational institutes assigned by the Education Ministry of China to provide Chinese as second language courses to international students.
The Confucius Institute at NCSU will be located in the Mckimmon Center. It will provide the following services:

- Supporting expanded Chinese language courses offered by the DFLL at NC State;
- Teaching non-credit Chinese language courses;
- Providing professional development opportunities for K-12 teachers of Chinese;
- Partnering with local schools to promote Chinese language and culture and develop new Chinese programs;
- Expanding NC State-Chinese partnership activities;
- Economic development opportunities for area businesses.
Hanban will also provide 3000-5000 pieces of books and multimedia materials concerning Chinese Language and culture for each Confucius Institute.
Confucius, the founder of Confucianism

Confucius was a famous sage and social philosopher of China whose teachings deeply influenced China and East Asia for more than 25 centuries.

Confucius

(circa 551-479 BC)
On the eastern pediment of the Supreme Court building, there is a sculpture entitled “Justice the Guardian of Liberty” by Hermon A. McNeil, which was intended to be a symbolic representation of three of the Eastern civilizations from which the laws of the USA were derived, personified by the figures of three great lawgivers: Moses, Confucius, and Solon (surrounded by several allegorical figures representing a variety of legal themes).
The basic Confucian doctrines are embodied in the following 5 characters:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>仁 (rén)</td>
<td>Benevolence, love, to be humanity, mercy and kindness;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>义 (yì)</td>
<td>Justness, to be righteousness, persist on principles;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>礼 (lǐ)</td>
<td>Rituals, custom and law, to be polite, respect, modest, harmonious with each other;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>智 (zhì)</td>
<td>Wisdom, to be knowledgeable, enlightened and well educated;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>信 (xìn)</td>
<td>Sincerity, reliable, obligated, creditable, accountable</td>
<td></td>
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The Analects of Confucius

The Lun Yü (The Analects of Confucius), a work compiled by some of Confucius’ disciples, is considered the most reliable source of information about his life and teachings. It contains the most important Confucius teachings, and was the most widely read books in ancient China.
Confucian Classics

Other basic Confucian Classics include the I Ching (or the Book of Change), the Book of Songs, the Book of Rituals, the Book of Documents, and the Spring and Autumn Annals. Thousands of annotations and commentaries composed by scholars from generation to generation, constitute one of the most important parts of Ancient publications and Library collections.
Since the Han Dynasty, Study of the Confucian classics became the basis of the government examination system and the core of the educational curriculum.

No serious attempt to replace Confucianism arose until the May 4th Movement in the 20th century.
“May 4th Movement” 1919:
Down with the old shop with the Confucian brand!

Chen Duxiu, One of the founders of CCP, and a fierce fighter to Confucianism during the May4th movement in 1919.

The magazine of New Youth
In 1912, Cai Yuanpei, the first Education Ministry of the newly established civic government of the Republic of China, give orders twice to abolish the reading of Confucian Classics as a subject in any schools.
Lu Xun, one of the most famous writers in modern China, believe that all the Confucian doctrines can be only summarized as two Chinese characters: “吃人”, meaning cannibalism.
Mao Zedong’s opinion is that Qinshihuang, the first emperor who united the Warring States, was much greater than Confucius. He said that the difference between CCP and KMT is that “they relay on Confucius, while we relay on Karl Marx”.

Yet Mao had quoted Confucius in his articles frequently, and he said that we should draw essence from the thought of all the thinkers in Chinese history, from Confucius till Dr. Sun Yat-Sen.
During the Cultural Revolution of 1966-1976, Confucius was compared with the former Chinese President Liu Shaoqi, who was criticized for “trying in vain to restore the Capitalism in China”.

The former Chinese President Liu Shaoqi was being denounced by ordinary folks in a mass meeting.

The cover of a picture book entitled “The Evil Life of Kong the Second (Confucius)”, published during the Cultural Revolution.
Confucius was also been linked with Lin Biao, a long term “close comrade in arm” and potential successor, but finally a betrayer of Mao. Lin was dead in a airplane crush when he tried to escape to former Soviet Union after a failed coup in Sept. 13, 1971.

Marshal Lin Biao

Cartoons of the campaign of Denouncing Lin and Kong
But there are also some intellectuals, who are considered as the new-Confucian, have been adhered to Confucian values. Liang Shuming was one of the representatives of the so-called “New Confucianism” in Mainland China, who has been persecuted for many years, yet survived till after the cultural revolution.

Liang Shuming
(1893-1988)
There are more such kind of New Confucian thinkers in mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong in the 50s, 60s and till later time.
After the Cultural Revolution, revaluation of Confucius and Confucianism soon appeared. Conferences and symposiums related to Confucianism held almost every year in everywhere in China.
Confucius’ statues gradually appeared in many university campuses everywhere, replaced that of Mao once can be fund in there.
Recently, traditional rituals to celebrate Confucius’ birthday is held every year in front of the Confucius Temple in Qufu, the Confucius home town, and many other places. Some of the central and local government officials are also attend this kind of ceremonies.
A Sacral Ceremony for Confucius held in Taipei, Taiwan, to memory the birthday of Confucius. Ma Yingjiu, the former mayor of Taipei city and the Chairman of KMT, was presiding the ceremony.
A sacral ceremony for Confucius, held by Chinese community in a Confucius Day in San Francisco.
Family based “Classic Reading” groups appeared in recent years in many cities.
“Meng Mu Tang”——a traditional private school or “Sishu” in Shanghai

Someone goes even further, a group of parents in Shanghai, the most modernized metropolitan of China, voluntarily organized a traditional private school (called “Sishu” in the old time) for their own children, which beside teaching a quite limited Math and English courses, put an emphasis on reading Confucius Classics.
A Confucian classic chant performance held in Zhejiang province.

A community Confucian Classic reading test in Taipei, Taiwan
But there are also strong voice against this kind of trend, for instance, Wen Huaisha, a famous contemporary Chinese writer and scholar, in a conference, fiercely criticized the Children Reading Classics movement.
Jiang Qing:

A contemporary Confucian recluse? Or a unrealistic "crazy Ru"?

Reconstruction of Political Confucianism?
Yu Dan, a Chinese version of Joyce Meyer?

Yu Dan: “the essence of Confucius Analects, is to tell us how could we live a happy life that our spirituality demands.”
Fierce debates on the issues related to Confucianism and its function and value in contemporary Chinese society can be found in many scholarly publications as well as many internet forums.
Some disputed issues:

- What’s the relation between tradition and modernity?
- What kind of roles Confucianism might play in contemporary Chinese society?
- Will Confucianism be an obstacle or an useful resource in China’s modernization, democratization, and market economy construction?
- Is it possible for Confucianism and its practice to come back, at lest in certain degree, to modern Chinese people’s daily live?
- What is the universal values in Confucianism? And its significance to contemporary world?
The role of a Confucian scholar is “to bring a heart to heaven and earth, to bring livelihood to the general population, to continue the lost teachings of past sages, and to bring about peace to ten thousand generations.”

Zhang Zai, a Song Dynasty Confucian Scholar
Some important references in English:

- Kam Louie:, New York: St.Martin’s Press. 1980. *Critiques of Confucius in Contemporary China*
Thank You!